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2003

## Champion of Anzac: General Sir Brudenell White, the First Australian Imperial Force and the emergence of the Australian military culture 1914-18

John Bentley  
*University of Wollongong*

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**Champion of Anzac:  
General Sir Brudenell White, the First Australian Imperial Force  
and the Emergence of Australian Military Culture, 1914 – 18.**

A thesis submitted in (partial) fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**From**

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

**by**

**John Bentley, BA (HONS)**

**History and Politics**

**2003**

## **CERTIFICATION**

I, John Bentley, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.



John Bentley

28 September 2003

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## Abbreviations

AA&QMG	Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General
AAG	Assistant Adjutant-General
ADC	Aide-de-Camp
ADFAL	Australian Defence Force Library
ADMS	Assistant Director of Medical Services
AG	Adjutant-General
AHQ	Army Headquarters
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AQMG	Assistant Quartermaster-General
AWM	Australian War Memorial, Canberra
Bde	Brigade
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGGS	Brigadier-General, General Staff (of a Corps)
BGRA	Brigadier-General, Royal Artillery (of a Corps)
BGRE	Brigadier-General, Royal Engineers (of a Corps)
Bn	Battalion
Brig-Gen	Brigadier General
Capt	Captain
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
Col	Colonel
<i>CPD</i>	<i>Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates</i>
<i>CPP</i>	<i>Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers</i>
CRA	Commander, Royal Artillery (of a Division)
CRE	Commander, Royal Engineers (of a Division)
DA&QMG	Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster-General
DAA&QMG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General
DAAG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General
DAG	Deputy Adjutant-General
Div	Division
DMO	Director of Military Operations; Divisional Medical Officer
DQMG	Deputy Quartermaster-General
Gen	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GSO1	General Staff Officer, Grade 1
GSO2	General Staff Officer, Grade 2



GSO3	General Staff Officer, Grade 3
HQ	Headquarters
IGS	Imperial General Staff
IG	Inspector General
Inf	Infantry
LH	Light Horse
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt-Col	Lieutenant-Colonel
Lt-Gen	Lieutenant-General
Maj	Major
Maj-Gen	Major-General
MEF	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force
MGGS	Major-General, General Staff (of an Army)
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
NSW	New South Wales
NZ&A	New Zealand and Australian Division
Qld	Queensland
QMG	Quartermaster-General
Regt	Regiment
SA	South Australia
<i>SMH</i>	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

## Conversions

1 inch	2.54 centimetres
1 foot	30.5 centimetres
1 yard	0.91 metre
1 mile	1.61 kilometres
1 acre	0.4 hectare
1 stone	6.35 kilograms
1 gallon	4.55 litres

## CURRENCY

On 14 February 1966, Australian currency changed from pounds, shillings and pence (£, s, d) to dollars and cents at the rate of £1 = \$2.

12 pence	1 shilling
20 shillings	1 pound
1 pound and 1 shilling	1 Guinea

Amounts such as 2s 6d were frequently written as 2/6.

## **Abstract**

It is a curious fact that Brudenell White remains one of the least known and least analysed of Australia's military commanders. It is curious because White had a profound influence not only on the organisational culture of the First AIF but on the organisational history of the Australian military. This thesis examines White's influence from the perspective of organisational culture theory.

According to Peters and Waterman founders create both the tangible aspects of an organisation, such as structure and technology, as well as the symbols, ideologies, language, and beliefs that embody the organisation's culture. The founder provides the momentum that gets the organisation moving and chooses the original core members. As the organisation takes form the founder's responses to organisational problems create new values, beliefs and procedures to be followed by the group which are accepted as the way of doing things. In the First Australian Imperial Force this task fell largely to White.

At the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 White was a relatively junior Major, but was fulfilling the extremely important functions of both Director of Military Operations and Chief of the General Staff. It was White who shouldered the very large responsibility of advising the Government and organising Australia's initial military contribution which later became known as the Australian Imperial Force. It was his ideology and world view that shaped the new organisation and from that point on, White became a key figure in the development of the Australian Imperial Force.

White was appointed Chief of Staff, the most senior staff officer in the Australian Imperial Force. Under General Birdwood, White's inherent aptitude for administrative and operational matters was recognised and consequently White became the *de facto* commander of the Australian Imperial Force. During this period White planned and directed the two most successful Australian operations. The first, a tactical operation, resulted in the withdrawal of Australian troops from Gallipoli, an operation that was

achieved with only two minor casualties. The second operation was administrative and resulted in the expansion and restructuring of the AIF from two divisions to four divisions.

Whilst in Egypt White began to construct the administrative machinery that would lead to the administrative self-government of the Australian Imperial Force. This process began with the formation of an intermediate administrative base in Cairo. In France this was expanded when White successfully pressed for the establishment of an Australian Administrative Headquarters. White designed the principles upon which it would operate.

At Gallipoli and in France White quickly demonstrated his tactical aptitude. In the early operations White established tactical principles that guided the operational development of the Australian Imperial Force. Over time even British commanders came to regard White as the driving force behind the Australian Imperial Force. Hamel is often seen as the ultimate example of Australian expertise in the art of war. Although Monash gained the credit the original plans for the operation were prepared by White.

Throughout the war White played a major role in every facet of the development of the organisational culture of the Australian Imperial Force and protected what he had built by marginalising Australian officers he believed represented a threat to the First AIF. The beliefs, values and principles that were established during this period became the foundations upon which Australian military culture later developed. White established himself as the champion of Anzac and Australia's foremost soldier.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been attempted without the wonderful support of my wife, Stephanie. During the long gestation of this work she lived this thesis me, listening to my ideas, reading the many drafts, offering advice and always providing her support and much needed encouragement. This thesis is dedicated to her with much love and affection.

I am deeply indebted to my thesis supervisor and mentor, Dr John McQuilton, who has been a source of patient advice, valuable criticism, and suffered through the many manuscript drafts. Over the years he taught me to value scholarship and to pursue my interests.

My sincere thanks must also go to Lady Rosemary Derham, the daughter of General Sir C.B.B. White, who supported my idea of studying her father's career and kindly gave me access to his papers. I must also thank the staff, and my fellow postgraduate students, of the University of Wollongong History Department who provided constant encouragement and engaged me in many discussions of the material covered in this thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by the staff of the following institutions: the Australian War Memorial, the National Library, the Australian Defence Force Academy Library, the Mitchell Library, the State Library of Victoria, the National Archives of Australia, The Public Records Office in London, The British India House Library, and the Staff College Library at Camberley.

I must thank my family and friends for their constant support and encouragement. Andrew, Rebekah, Liam and Cindy always believed in me and gave me the encouragement and support required to complete this thesis.

## Introduction

We done a lot for Birdy,  
 An' we 'elped 'im on a few,  
 An' 'e's gathered in the limelight,  
 But give a bloke 'is due  
 And when the tale is proper told  
 With censors put to right,  
 You'll learn the Anzac champ-i-on  
 Was Major General White.

*Herald* (Melbourne)<sup>1</sup>

White's influence on the operations of the Australian Force in certain critical actions, and on the organisation of the AIF [were] more his work than that of any other man.

CEW Bean<sup>2</sup>

... few could realise how much [White] was responsible for so much that our Corps [1 ANZAC Corps] accomplished.

Field Marshall Lord Birdwood<sup>3</sup>

[General White] was Acting Chief of the General Staff when war broke out in 1914 ... From then until his retirement from the Army in 1923, Australia's military story was largely that of General White's career.

*Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>4</sup>

The viewpoints offered above point to one of the most interesting ironies in Australian military history. General Sir Cyril Brudenell Bingham White, or Brudenell as he was more familiarly known, is simultaneously one of the most important and yet, unknown figures in Australian military history. In a military career spanning more than a quarter of a century White established a professional record that was, at that time, unequalled and became

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<sup>1</sup> Melbourne *Herald*, 28 June 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Birdwood, 'General Sir Brudenell White', p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 14 August 1940.

widely regarded in Australian and British military and political circles as one of Australia's greatest soldiers and one of the founders of the Australian Imperial Force. Writing of White, Robert Menzies said:

What a great man he was in character, in attainments, in patriotism. Of all the men who served Australia in the military sphere, he is the one to whom my memory will turn in my last days as the very model of everything that an Australian should be.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, in spite of the general recognition of his contemporaries and peers White is mostly absent from the large body of Australian military historiography. This absence is for the most part due to the nature and tradition of Australian war writing which generally focuses on the actions of small individual fighting units and the experiences of the ordinary soldiers.

### **Frontline History**

The pattern of war writing in Australia originated with the official histories that were edited and written by C. E. W. Bean. He wanted to avoid the more typical histories of the day that were focused on the actions of generals and the grand strategy of the campaigns. For Bean, the central question was the character of the soldiers, and especially the Australian soldier. Bean's histories thus pushed the generals and their grand strategies and rivalries into the background where they are a backdrop to the experiences of the ordinary soldier.<sup>6</sup>

Later historians, followed closely in Bean's footsteps, and celebrated the deeds of ordinary soldiers. Bill Gammage's *The Broken Years*, is one of the most widely acclaimed Australian books on the First World War. It provides a vivid portrayal of the experiences of Australian front line soldiers based on the diaries and letters of more than one thousand soldiers but rarely mentions the organisational effort that sustained them throughout the war.<sup>7</sup> In *The Anzacs*, Patsy Adam-Smith supplemented more than eight thousand diaries

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Menzies, 'Foreword', in Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. viii.

<sup>6</sup> See Bean, *Official History*, vols. 1-6.

<sup>7</sup> Gammage, *The Broken Years*.

and letters with taped recorded oral accounts from First World War veterans. It is a tribute to the resolute soldiers who were sacrificed by the courageous generals who played games 'many miles from the battlefields'.<sup>8</sup> This emphasis on what Peter Simpkins has labelled the 'everyman at war' approach has resulted, at least within Australian historiography, in the experiences and in some cases even the existence of officers being neglected.<sup>9</sup>

So deeply entrenched in the Australian tradition of war writing has the focus on the ordinary soldier become that attempts to remedy this scholarly void have often been met with suspicion and ambivalence. In a review of David Horner's *The Commanders: Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*,<sup>10</sup> historian David Kent observed that

Without determined, resolute soldiers imbued with good morale, without the sort of men re-discovered by Gammage, and without adequate industrial support at home, the most brilliant commander could achieve little.<sup>11</sup>

There can be no doubt that determined soldiers are necessary to achieve victory in war, but equally so, the best soldiers in the world can do little to achieve victory unless supported by good leadership, military organisation and planning. These facets of military organisation are generally supplied by officers, and more specifically by senior officers, and not the common soldiers so popularised in Australian historiography.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, many important questions remain unanswered. How was the AIF structured? How did the Australian Imperial Force, as an institution, cope with the rapid social and

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<sup>8</sup> Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs*, p. x.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief discussion of the 'everyman at war approach' in Australian historiography see Simpkins, 'Everyman at War', pp. 305-307. For a recent corrective to the experience of officers see Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*.

<sup>10</sup> Horner (ed.), *The Commanders*.

<sup>11</sup> Kent, 'From Sudan to Saigon', p. 161.

<sup>12</sup> For a recent corrective to the experience of officers see Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*. In recent years there have a number of biographical studies of First World War commanders. See for example, Derham, *The Silent Ruse*; Wray, *Sir James Whiteside McCay*; Sadler, *The Paladin*; Tyquin, *Neville Howse*. Other biographies of First World War Generals include, Bean, *Two Men I Knew*; Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*; Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*; Serle, *John Monash*; and Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander*.



technological change of war? How was the Australian Imperial Force administered? What influence did Australian commanders have on the decision-making processes? What concepts of war did the Australian Imperial Force adopt? How did these concepts constrain the Australian Imperial Force's operational practices? These questions can only be addressed by subjecting the Australian Imperial Force's development and leadership to a more detailed scrutiny.

While the historiography of the war has been significantly shaped by Bean and the emphasis on frontline fighting men the historiography of military developments between Federation and 1914 has been shaped by notions of Australian nationalism. This historiography views the development of Australia's military forces has a contest or struggle between 'Imperialists' and 'Australianists'.<sup>13</sup> The argument pursued in this historiography asserts that Imperialist officers such as Bridges and White placed the interests of England and empire before those of Australia. Australianist officers such as Hoad and Legge, took a more independent view of Australian interests and attempted to have these interests take priority over imperial interests. These Australianists then are seen as early champions of Australian national identity and republicanism.

This perspective draws from earlier studies of Australian national identity. The work of Russell Ward, for example, argues that Australian nationalism and identity began to evolve in the convict experience of Australian history.<sup>14</sup> Richard White has challenged this view by pointing out that reforms of the post-federation period were shaped not by progressive nationalistic attitudes. Rather the underlying impetus for reform was the need to protect the nation from foreign aggression. Australia's position as a European enclave in a hostile environment heightened the Australian sense of vulnerability. This resulted in the increased expressions of support for the British Empire and the emphasis on the imperial context of Australian nationalism.<sup>15</sup> The Imperialist/Australian dichotomy in Australian military

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<sup>13</sup> For greater detail see Coutlhard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*.

<sup>14</sup> Ward, *The Australian Legend*.

<sup>15</sup> For greater detail see Richard White, *Inventing Australia*. For a discussion of the imperial context of Australian nationalism and its implications for military development in the post-federation period see Bentley, 'Australia's *Imperial Force*'.

history has further marginalised senior officers in the Australian military forces because it positions the reader to view them as anti-Australian and therefore not worthy of historical analysis. This thesis hopes to correct not only the emphasis of frontline soldiers but also the Imperialist/Australianist marginalisation of senior officers.

### **White and the Australian Imperial Force**

The contemporary views of White presented above anticipate current thinking in the area of organisational studies which views the role of organisational founders and strong leaders as significant. In their 1982 book *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and Waterman observed that

... the [founder] not only created the rational and tangible aspects of organisation, such as structure and technology, but also is the creator of symbols, ideologies, language, beliefs, rituals and myths.<sup>16</sup>

This was followed by the seminal study, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, by Edgar Schein in which he stated, 'leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin in that leaders first create cultures when they create groups and organisations'.<sup>17</sup> According to Schein

Leadership is originally the source of the beliefs and values that get a group moving in dealing with its internal and external problems. If what a leader proposes works and continues to work, what once was only the leader's assumption gradually comes to be a shared assumption.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, the leader provides the momentum that gets the organisation moving and chooses the original core members, frequently on the basis of their shared values and beliefs. The leader's responses to organisational problems create new values, beliefs and procedures to be followed by the group, becoming an accepted way of doing things.<sup>19</sup> In the case of the

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<sup>16</sup> Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

First Australian Imperial Force this social process was largely directed by Brudenell White.<sup>20</sup>

White joined the Queensland Permanent Artillery in 1897 and later served with the Commonwealth Horse during the South African War. Although White had served in the South African War it was not until his appointment to the British Army Staff College at Camberley in 1906 that his military career gained a significant boost. White was the first Australian soldier to attend Camberley and although lacking the experience and knowledge of his British contemporaries, he completed the course with distinction. This result brought White to the attention of senior British officers who quickly recognised his talents and subsequently arranged for him to be attached to the British General Staff at the War Office in London. When White returned to Australia in 1911 he brought with him an extensive (and in Australian terms an unequalled) theoretical and practical knowledge of military organisation, tactics and imperial strategy.

With the outbreak of war in 1914 circumstances determined that White, then a relatively junior Major and acting Chief of the General Staff, would shoulder the large responsibility of advising the government and organising Australia's initial military contribution, the expeditionary force that would become known as the Australian Imperial Force, or AIF for short. From this point on White became a critical figure in the administrative and operational development of the AIF.

White was appointed Chief of Staff, the most senior staff officer in the AIF, and hence served as the principal assistant to a series of commanders. Initially assisting Major General Bridges he quickly gained a reputation for presenting his commander with clear and perceptive administrative and operational advice. After Bridges' death at Gallipoli the AIF came under the temporary command of Major General Walker. Walker was an able commander but did not like administration. Consequently, White found himself more

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<sup>20</sup> Focusing on White breaks away from the traditional concentration on the frontline soldier and focuses attention of the senior officers and especially the workings of the organisation's top management. This approach provides a useful corrective to Australian military history which ignores the senior officers but also a useful way to examine creation and development of military organisations.

confined to administrative matters, but his results were no less impressive. Finally, under General Birdwood, White's inherent aptitude for administrative and operational matters was strengthened. Birdwood's style of leadership emphasised close contact with the men in the field, leaving the minutiae of detailed planning to subordinates. Consequently, under Birdwood, White found himself the 'tactical and administrative commander in all but name'.<sup>21</sup>

It was during this period that White planned and directed the two most successful Australian operations. The first, a tactical operation, resulted in the evacuation of 80,000 men from the shores of the Gallipoli Peninsula, a feat achieved without the knowledge of the Turks and at the cost of two minor casualties. Shortly after this he planned and directed the 'doubling' of the Australian Imperial Force and its relocation to France. This task White accomplished in six weeks. From then until the end of the war in 1918 White figured prominently in both the administrative and tactical development of the AIF.

In 1918 White was promoted to Lieutenant General and was performing in the dual roles of Chief of Staff, Australian Imperial Force and Chief of Staff, British 5th Army (the first Australian appointed to such a position). Upon his return to Australia he was appointed Chief of the General Staff and began reorganising the Australian Military Forces. In a moving eulogy the *Sydney Morning Herald* described White as 'the foremost soldier in Australia by virtue of his experience, the diversity of his training and the wide range of his very gifted intelligence'.<sup>22</sup>

White's military career therefore points to significant interconnections with the Australian Imperial Force and its subsequent direction and development. Hence, it raises some significant questions about White and his influence on the development of the Australian Imperial Force and its organisational culture. What was White's role in the development of the Australian Imperial Force? How much influence did White have over the development of the Australian Imperial Force's administrative and operational principles? Was White's

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<sup>21</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 222.

<sup>22</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1940.

wide ranging influence supported by General Birdwood, the commander of the Australian Imperial Force? If so, why did Birdwood allow White such a wide scope? To what extent did White's fellow commanders in the Australian Imperial Force embrace White's values and assumptions? While a narrative approach would provide answers to these questions, a more recent body of work focusing on organisational culture provides a point of view that allows a much deeper and more effective way in which to question White's role in the administrative and operational development of the AIF.

### **The Organisational Culture Perspective**

In the 1970s organisational analysts became disenchanted with traditional functionalist and structuralist approaches to organisational analysis and began examining an organisation's culture in order to explain variations in organisational behaviour. In a growing body of organisational studies it is argued that culture is the dynamic unifying theme that provides organisations with meaning and direction.<sup>23</sup> Culture represents a 'tool kit' or repertoire that provides lines of action for organising behaviour, defining and achieving goals. An actor's responses, actions and choices, then cannot be understood by recourse to explanations of functional needs or structural conditions. These responses need to be framed within the broader context of values, beliefs and formal knowledge that determine these responses.<sup>24</sup> 'Culture is to the organisation', wrote Ralph Kilmann and associates, 'what personality is to the individual – a hidden, yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction and mobilisation'.<sup>25</sup>

A glance at even a few works that use the term 'organisational culture' will reveal enormous variations in both the definition and usage of this term.<sup>26</sup> Although reluctant to enter this debate with yet another definition it is necessary to provide some understanding

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<sup>23</sup> See for example Kilmann, Saxton and Serpa (eds.), *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, p. ix.; Ott, *The Organisational Culture Perspective*, p. 69; Sackmann, *Cultural Knowledge in Organizations*, p. 18; Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Swidler, 'Culture in Action', p. 284.

<sup>25</sup> Kilmann, Saxton and Serpa (eds.), *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, p. ix.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion of the varying definitions of 'organisational culture' see, Ott, *The Organisational Culture Perspective*.

of how the term is used throughout this thesis. The creation of any long lasting human social group including nation states, social classes, professional or occupational groups, formal organisations, organisational subunits and others, may lead to the crystallisation of shared meanings, values, norms and formal knowledge. These shared understandings are consolidated, expressed and communicated in such forms as organisational structures, formal practices, customs and traditions, rituals, stories and historical accounts.<sup>27</sup> These forms socialise new members by teaching them accepted practices, who belongs and who is excluded, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, what constitutes a problem within the group and the strategies that may legitimately be used to address these problems.

Organisational culture is the product of historical processes and is never completely static over long periods of time. Rather, different elements of organisational culture are differentially resistant to change resulting in a loosely structured, and at best, incompletely shared system of values that emerges dynamically as members of the organisation interact with each other and experience events and the organisation's contextual features. Consequently, organisational cultures are rarely homogenous and can be manifest in differing forms across the organisation. These manifestations are coexistent and linked; sometimes in harmony, sometimes in bitter conflicts between groups, and sometimes in webs of ambiguity, paradox and contradiction.<sup>28</sup>

In recent years military analysts have begun applying the organisational culture perspective to the examination of military organisations.<sup>29</sup> This work generally acknowledges that military organisations do not have the same culture and that perceptions and understandings vary widely between military organisations.<sup>30</sup>

The values and attitudes that constitute the military's organisational culture govern internal processes such as the standards for selection promotion, training and education, allocation

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<sup>27</sup> Sergiovanni and Corbally (eds.), *Leadership and Organisational Culture*, p. viii.

<sup>28</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Martin, *Organisational Culture*.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Applegate and Moore, 'The Nature of Military Culture', pp. 302-305; Applegate and Moore, 'Warfare – an Option of Difficulties' pp. 13-20; Dunivin, 'Military Culture', p.534; Phelps, 'The Australian Army's Culture', pp. 37-43.

<sup>30</sup> Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine', p.70; For a more developed argument see also Kier, *Imagining War*.

of resources, use of technology and the vocabulary for internal and external debate. These elements give the organisation a distinct character and dictate the nature of military operations that it can conduct and, hence the forms and concepts of war it adopts.<sup>31</sup>

### **Organisational Culture and the Australian Imperial Force**

The formation of the Australian Imperial Force is one of the nation's most remarkable feats. Established in 1914 with a modest complement of twenty thousand men, the Australian Imperial Force had by 1918, recruited almost forty percent of Australian males between eighteen and forty-four. Of the 416, 809 Australians who had enlisted 331, 814 served abroad, of which sixty-five percent (214, 360) became casualties and 56, 639 had died.<sup>32</sup> Writing after the war General Brudenell White commented,

The men of the Australian Imperial Force have made for the country a history, and established for it a tradition. They have done more: they have created for Australia a national spirit, and brought to maturity a patriotism which earlier was but a germ. The development of that national spirit was a wonderful thing. Very few people realise how intimately it was bound up in the preservation from the outset of the national character of the Australian Imperial Force.<sup>33</sup>

The exploits of the AIF underpin the nation's most powerful and influential national mythology, Anzac. The Anzac legend is familiar to most Australians and can be summarised as follows. At Gallipoli, and then on the Western Front, the AIF established a reputation for being one of the most effective fighting forces of the war and a nation in spirit as well as in name. The Australian soldier of the legend is resourceful and self-reliant; he is courageous in battle, but a spirited and irreverent larrikin when out of the firing line. These qualities, according to the legend, are largely due to the unique Australian character, a character that was derived from the harsh Australian environment, the bush ethos and the egalitarian nature of Australian society.

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<sup>31</sup> Applegate and Moore, 'The Nature of Military Culture', pp. 302-305; Applegate and Moore, 'Warfare – an Option of Difficulties', pp. 13-20.

<sup>32</sup> Great War figures are notoriously variable. The figures quoted here are those in Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Appendix 2, p. 283. See also Scott, *Australia During The War*, pp. 871-4, 888.

<sup>33</sup> White, 'Australia in the Great War', p. 61.

Although this public ethos is widely accepted by Australian society it is not without its critics and is increasingly recognised as a problematic concept. Feminist historians view Anzac mythology as patriarchal and demeaning to women. It defines women as

... passive flesh, naturally weak, outside history, irrelevant to the making of nations, yet needed, like nurses at the front, to keep the military machine functioning or the home fires burning. Ideally, women waited and watched and wept while men fraternised and fought for freedom. Powerless, women consoled themselves with their innocence. While warrior men had blood on their hands, women had beautiful souls.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, the uniformity of values that is implicit in the Anzac legend has been challenged by recent historical studies. In his book *German Anzacs and the First World War*, historian John Williams provides an account of the war experiences of those Anzacs of German heritage.<sup>35</sup> Within this organisational subculture the group value system was significantly shaped and determined by a common ethnic heritage that was substantially different from the Anglo-Saxon tradition encapsulated in the Anzac legend. Although they would have shared the Australian colonial values of many Anzacs it is unlikely they would have embraced those more overt British Imperial values that shaped the Australian Imperial Force.

The work of Alistair Thomson also questions the Anzac legend's representation of the Australian war experience. In his oral history, *Anzac Memories*, Thomson argues that many ordinary 'diggers' had considerable trouble reconciling their own values, beliefs, experiences and memories with those of the 'Anzac tradition'.<sup>36</sup> For these 'diggers' Anzac was a world apart, an entirely 'other' culture. Thomson explains;

...memory is a battlefield. We fight within ourselves to make a particular memory of our experiences, and to repress alternative memories. We also engage in a public struggle between different versions of the past.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Damousi and Lake (eds.), *Gender and War*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, *German Anzacs and the First World War*.

<sup>36</sup> For more detail see Thomson, *Anzac Memories*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.



Although Thomson's work largely focuses on the Anzac mythology he identifies some of the more highly visible subcultures within the AIF. He observes, for example, that the war experiences and memories of officers and ordinary soldiers were extremely different, a difference that challenges the egalitarian nature of public notions and images of Anzac. Similarly, other differences existed between combatants and non-combatants, as well as between airmen, sailors and soldiers.<sup>38</sup> While Thomson's work is not specifically a cultural study it does point to potentially fruitful areas of future research, and raises many questions about the formation and interactions of subcultures that existed within the AIF.

Graham Seal has probed into the folklore of the Anzac tradition and challenges the synonymy of the terms 'Anzac' and 'digger', terms that are often used interchangeably to refer to Australia's military myth. According to Seal these terms represent distinct, divergent, complementary and intersecting traditions.<sup>39</sup> The 'digger tradition' is private and informal in that it is folkloric in character and is generated by the soldiers themselves through such media as word of mouth and ephemera. It is irreverent and anti-authoritarian with antagonism to officers and the British constituting a regular theme within digger folklore. The humour encapsulated within digger folklore is sardonic and consolidates the image of the larrikin Australian soldier as the dominant icon.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand the official 'Anzac' ethos is an invented tradition.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to the privacy and informality of the 'digger tradition' Anzac is a very public and formalised commemoration of Australian military ideals. This ideology embraced national ideals of

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> Seal, 'Two Traditions'.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-47. See also Seal, 'The Digger and Anzac', especially the 'Introduction'.

<sup>41</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*. Seal is following the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger in that the term 'invented tradition' refers to the 'set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature'. According to Hobsbawm many of the traditions that are normally believed to be quite old are in fact quite recent constructions. Most frequently these constructions occur during periods of rapid social change when the patterns of social relations supporting 'old' traditions are disrupted or destroyed. The reorganisation of social relations or contexts requires 'new' traditions to be constructed as expressions of social coherence and identity and to structure social relations. See Hobsbawm, 'Introduction', pp. 1-14.

duty, sacrifice and loyalty. These values are imbued in reverential and fundamentally authoritarian and hierarchical symbols, rituals and mythologies. The symbolism and rhetoric of Anzac represents the ‘digger’ in terms of his independence, inventiveness and his capacity for getting the job done, regardless of circumstances. These virtues are, so we are told, typically Australian.<sup>42</sup>

The ‘Anzac’ and ‘digger’ ideologies, whilst being two separate manifestations of organisational culture, often coincide, intersect and conflict with each other. The ‘Anzac’ and ‘digger’ traditions are simultaneously sites of contestation, mediation and maintenance, and illustrate the complex interrelations between the diverse cultural forms that exist in all organisations.

The work of these scholars points to an organisational cultural richness and complexity that is lost in the traditional approaches to Australian military history. This work suggests that in common with all organisations, the Australian Imperial Force did not form inadvertently; it did not emerge of its own volition; nor did it exist in a vacuum. Instead, the Australian Imperial Force like all organisations was goal oriented and was formed by one or more individuals with a vision of how these goals could be accomplished. Neither did the Australian Imperial Force operate in isolation but interrelated with a host of entities outside of the organisation’s boundaries.

These entities, which include nations, geographic regions, industries, occupations, religions, political parties, and other societal institutions, have cultures that can influence the development of the internal cultures of organisations. Although organisational cultures are generally formed from within, their content is significantly influenced and framed by the broader cultural milieu in which the organisation is located. Organisations are dependent on their external environment not only for resources such as money and raw materials, but also for cognitive and symbolic resources like beliefs, values, and norms. Also, people are an important resource and they do not enter an organisation without some prior form of cultural conditioning. Thus, many important elements of an organisation’s

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<sup>42</sup> For more detail see Seal, ‘Two Traditions’, pp. 38-47; also Seal, ‘The Digger and Anzac’, esp. ch. 9.

culture are imported with the entry of organisational members and other people, and the ideas they bring with them from outside the organisation's boundaries.

It is hard to imagine the social processes described above occurring without someone making the initial choices that direct the development of the organisation in its embryonic stage. Someone in a culture has to originate or recognise sets of ideas that reduce people's uncertainties, make those ideas understandable and convincing, and communicate them widely and repeatedly so that others come to share them.

White's military career then, especially between 1906 and 1918, provides an ideal case study for examining not only the professional development of a military officer but also the development of a military organisation such as the Australian Imperial Force. The focus of this thesis therefore dwells on the social attitudes, military theories and images of war that White embraced and espoused and the extent to which they are reflected in the structures, symbols, norms and practices of the Australian Imperial Force. The thesis aims to re-evaluate White's place in Australian military history as well as understand how military organizations function as a social system.

### **Thesis Outline**

This history thesis draws upon the perspectives offered by organisational studies and especially organisational culture research. Consequently chapter one provides an overview of the organisational culture perspective and illustrates the salient features of organisational culture, its creation and transmission. This material will be related to military organisations in order to demonstrate the applicability of this approach to the analysis of the social and cultural milieux of military organisations. This will provide the background for the material presented in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

In chapter one it becomes clear that organisational cultures, in the military and elsewhere, are products of human social interaction. The primary values of any organisation are brought into the organisation by individuals. Chapters two through five examine White's

social conditioning in the various stages of his life and career up to the beginning of hostilities in 1914. Chapter two deals with White's family and educational conditioning and demonstrates the formation of his world view and personality. Chapter three builds on this by examining his professional conditioning and socialisation as a member of the Australian Colonial Forces. This earlier colonial socialisation is contrasted in chapter four which examines White's professional shaping in various imperial military contexts. This chapter in particular examines the specific theories and images of war that White embraced and which would subsequently shape his actions and responses to war in later life. Chapter five continues in this vein by looking at White's role as a policy maker in the years preceding World War One.

From this point on the thesis uses this social and cultural profile of White to demonstrate his role in the development of the Australian Imperial Force and the shaping of its organisational culture. Chapter six examines the original organisation of the Australian Imperial Force and illustrates the key principles upon which it was founded. Chapter seven builds on this by examining how interaction with other organisations and external imperatives constrain organisational development and the role of White in minimising the effects of these constraints.

Chapters eight and nine move the analysis from the structural development of the Australian Imperial Force to Gallipoli and the development of the organisation in action. For many Gallipoli is the well spring of Australian nationalism and national military values. These chapters examine White's role in developing the practices of the Australian Imperial Force at Gallipoli. Chapter eight focuses on the initial planning, the subsequent changes, the landing and the operations on the first day. Chapter nine examines the subsequent operations undertaken by White and the eventual evacuation that was planned by White. This particular chapter illustrates the breaches with traditional British military thinking and how they became transposed in the evolving Australian military culture.

Chapter ten examines the post Gallipoli reorganisation of the Australian Imperial Force. It demonstrates White's role in this reorganisation and the subsequent development of an

administrative apparatus that continued to shape the Australian Imperial Force. The chapter also illustrates the way the cultural values that White had embedded into the organisation helped to shape internal adjustment and responses to this adaptation. White's values and knowledge had by this time become shared values and this shaped and constrained internal adaptation and debate. Responses to issues such as choices of commander were informed by these shared values.

Chapter ten examines White's role in the tactical development of the Australian Imperial Force. It shows that many of the principles of war that were embraced by organisational members were initially espoused by White. This is not a complete tactical history and primarily focuses on certain major operations in which tactical principles became visible. In this regard Pozières, Bullecourt and Hamel are regarded as important indicators of these principles.

The final chapter brings the thesis to a close. It provides a brief overview of White's post war military career and illustrates how White reshaped the Australian Military Forces by utilising the model provided by the Australian Imperial Forces. It also shows the extent to which White's opinion was valued by senior military figures thereby allowing him to shape the development of Australian military culture long after his retirement in 1923.

To finish the thesis the conclusion summarises the main themes of the study. It illustrates White's role in key aspects of Australian military development and the importance of White to Australian military history. It demonstrates that White was a key figure not only in the development of the Australian Imperial Force but also Australian military culture. The conclusion also offers some suggestions for future research on the development of Australian military culture and how this research could enrich our knowledge of Australian military history.