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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.

## Chapter 1

### The Organisational Culture Perspective

Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. It ... distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

Geert Hofstede<sup>1</sup>

Organisational cultures are rarely completely static over long periods of time. Rather, they are subject to continuous processes of development and change due to organisational learning which occurs as employees seek answers to problems of external adaptation and internal integration. In fact different elements of a culture are likely to be differentially resistant to change, with basic assumptions being the least likely to alter radically and artefacts being the most prone to evolutionary processes.

Andrew Brown<sup>2</sup>

The use of the cultural approach is not new. Its earliest application to an organisational setting seems to have been the well-known Hawthorne studies in late 1931 through to the spring of 1932. The Hawthorne Studies focused on the way work group culture affected the attitudes and performance of workers at the Western Electric Company in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>3</sup> An anthropologist, W. Lloyd Warner, initiated this study and it resulted in a number of studies being conducted throughout the 1940s after which interest in the cultural approach gradually declined. The approach did not die out and a resurgence of interest occurred in the 1970s and it has gradually increased in popularity since.

In the 1970s English sociologist, Andrew Pettigrew, following the anthropological tradition of participant observation, began to publish his work on the computerisation of the retail

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<sup>1</sup> Hofstede, *Cultures and Organisations*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, *Organisational Culture*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*, p. 24.

industry. In a highly influential article, published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Pettigrew went on to outline the concept of organisational culture for management research:

In the pursuit of everyday tasks and objectives, it is all too easy to forget the less rational and less instrumental, the more expressive social tissue around us that gives those tasks meanings. Yet, in order for people to function within any given setting, they must have a continuing sense of what that reality is all about in order to be acted upon. Culture is the system of such collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time ... and the offsprings of the concept of culture I have in mind are symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual and myth.<sup>4</sup>

Pettigrew's work led a revival of interest in the cultural approach. In the early 1980s the publication of three best selling books; *In Search of Excellence*, *Theory Z* and *Corporate Cultures* each argued that the cultural approach was an important method of understanding and managing organisations.<sup>5</sup>

There is increasing agreement that organisations develop distinctive sets of collective meanings and beliefs that influence members of the organisations to act in certain ways. There is not, however, any consensus between researchers on what culture is, why it should be studied or even how it should be studied. Consequently, they do not study the same cultural phenomena and apply a variety of theoretical, epistemological and methodological conventions to those manifestations they do study, such as rituals, ceremonies, symbols, myths, language and meanings.<sup>6</sup>

Critics of the organisational culture perspective have suggested that such theoretical diversity has resulted in its failure to deliver on its initial promises and consequently it has become separated from mainstream theory to such an extent that the entire cultural approach represents an epistemological cul-de-sac.<sup>7</sup> These same critics argue that a

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<sup>4</sup> Pettigrew, 'On Studying Organisational Cultures', p. 574.

<sup>5</sup> Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*; Ouchi, *Theory Z*; Deal and Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures*.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion on the myriad ways in which organisational culture is approached see Ott, *The Organisational Culture Perspective*.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Barley, Meyer and Gash, 'Cultures of Culture', pp. 24-60; Siehl and Martin, 'Organisational Culture'.

theoretical consensus is required if the organisational culture approach is to offer any useful future insights into the social worlds of organisations.

Answering the critics, Joanne Martin and Debra Meyerson, take on a subjectivist 'sociology of knowledge' position by arguing that each perspective reflects the subjective points of view that people (both researchers and organisational members) use to understand and interpret the meaning of what they see and experience. If three people witness the same event they will produce three different descriptions of the event based on their individual subjective points of view. Martin and Meyerson argue that theoretical oppositions cannot and should not be resolved in some form of unifying synthesis. The pressure to assimilate across the various approaches would undermine each perspective's oppositional stance toward the others. This would in turn threaten the integrity of each approach.<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Frost and associates have contended that 'the flame was still burning' and that a cultural framework still offers valuable and new insights into the study of organisations.<sup>9</sup>

Although there is a large body of literature applying the cultural framework to organisational studies, these focus primarily on corporate organisations. Military organisations have been ignored and yet, the military is ideally suited to a cultural mode of analysis. Although all military organisations form strong group cohesion and collective understandings they do not have the same culture and perceptions and understandings vary widely between military organisations. As military analyst, Elizabeth Kier, observed 'all military organisations can be classified according to a basic set of components, but not all military organisations share the same mixture of values and attitudes'.<sup>10</sup> Even military organisations raised within the same national boundaries and sharing the same overall goals often display vastly different perceptions of the world, understandings about the nature of their work and attitudes to the conduct of their mission. An understanding of the organisational culture concept helps to provide some valuable insights into these differing perceptions and attitudes.

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail see Martin and Meyerson, 'Organisational Culture and the denial, channelling and acknowledgement of ambiguity'.

<sup>9</sup> Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg and Martin (eds.), *Reframing Organisational Culture*, Introduction, pp. 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine', p.70; For a more developed argument see also Kier, *Imagining War*.



## Defining Organisational Culture

In order to understand organisational culture it is helpful to review current definitions ascribed to the term.<sup>11</sup> Edgar Schein, who is possibly the most influential proponent of organisational culture, suggests that culture consists of two important elements: structural stability and integration.<sup>12</sup> The first element, structural stability, refers to a set of commonly held beliefs 'deep' within the organisation. When viewing the surface behaviours and practices these 'deep' beliefs or 'shared basic underlying assumptions' may not be easily discernable. These 'basic underlying assumptions' distinguish one organisational culture from another and establish the organisation's identity.<sup>13</sup> Integration, Schein's second element, refers to the myriad patterns of behaviour, the 'rituals, climates and values' that combine to shape the organisation's identity.<sup>14</sup>

In Schein's view culture is:

A pattern of basic assumptions — invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration — that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.<sup>15</sup>

Schein describes culture in terms of three discernable and observable levels of phenomena: artefacts, values and basic assumptions. Artefacts are the visible structures and processes of

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<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the various definitions of culture see Ott, *The Organisational Culture Perspective*, pp. 70-73.

<sup>12</sup> Throughout a large corpus of organisational culture literature, Schein's definition is referenced numerous times as the one that most comprehensively captures the essence of the cultural approach. Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. Schein is a proponent of the idea that organisations have a core culture. A single set of beliefs and values that exist throughout the organisation. In recent years the notion of cultural multiplicity has forced a rethinking of the entire cultural approach. The formulation of the differentiation model, for example, 'emphasises subcultures and usually does not even acknowledge sources of organisation-wide agreement'. For more detail see Martin and Meyerson, 'Organisational Culture and the denial, channelling and acknowledgement of ambiguity'.

<sup>14</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

the cultural system. They are the concretised manifestations and expressions of the deeper values and assumptions.<sup>16</sup> This level of phenomena is, according to Schein, the easiest level at which to observe culture but the most difficult level to decipher.

The next stratum is that of espoused values. These are the explicit goals, strategies and philosophies of the group. These provide the social justifications for the group's actions.<sup>17</sup> In the early stages of an organisation's development these values generally reflect those of the founder. Schein states that

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>

Schein's third level of observable phenomena consists of basic assumptions. These are historically moulded, unconscious, taken-for-granted and deep structures. They are the implicitly accepted beliefs, thoughts and feelings that provide the ultimate source of values and action.<sup>19</sup> Although Schein suggests that all three levels need to be studied in order to fully understand a group's culture he points out that the 'essence of a culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions'.<sup>20</sup> If one understands this level it makes the other two levels much easier to comprehend.

Organisational cultures represent tool kits or repertoires for organising behaviour and defining and achieving goals. According to Ann Swidler, 'a culture has an enduring effect on those who hold it, not by shaping the ends they pursue, but by providing the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action'.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, an organisation's culture governs many of the internal processes that allow the group to function.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

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

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Swidler, 'Culture in action', p. 284.

First, the organisation's culture provides a common language and shared conceptual categories within which to frame debate and provide it with meaning. Second, organisational culture establishes the mechanisms for the allocation of authority, power, status, property and other resources. Third, it provides the criteria used for the selection, promotion, training and education of members of the group. Finally, it provides the means of identifying and reducing deviance and dispensing rewards. These processes give the organisation a distinct character and identity.

For Harrison Trice and Janice Beyer organisational culture is a 'network of shared ideologies' that is produced during the formation of a social system.<sup>22</sup> Trice and Beyer argue that culture consists of two elements: a 'distinctive pattern of shared ideologies' and a 'distinct set of cultural forms'.<sup>23</sup> The first element, ideologies, refers to the abstract beliefs, models of moral order that crystallise within any long term human social group. They embrace beliefs about how things work; values that indicate what is worth having or doing; and norms that tell people how they should behave. They are the articulated 'oughts' and 'ought nots' of group behaviour and are consequently imbued with powerful emotive and moral obligations. Over time they develop into ongoing clusters of belief and become taken for granted, that is, 'common sense'.<sup>24</sup> Organisational cultures provide a sense of community, an identity amongst group members thereby contributing to *esprit de corps* and unity within the organisation. Additionally, a basis for decision-making is created upon which members share a common understanding.

This common understanding does not necessarily guarantee clear-cut and unambiguous meanings. Ideologies according to Brenda Beck and Larry Moore, 'never provide a completely consistent set of ranked values, or action guideposts; there are always ambiguities, even contradictions'.<sup>25</sup> They may 'be vague and very general ... may also be

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<sup>22</sup> Trice and Beyer, 'Studying Organisational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials', p. 654. See also the more detailed cases presented in Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*.

<sup>23</sup> Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*.

<sup>24</sup> Swidler, 'Culture in action', p. 273.

<sup>25</sup> Beck and Moore, 'Linking the host culture to organisational variables', p. 335.

highly integrated or made up of values that are disconnected and, perhaps, inconsistent'.<sup>26</sup> In most organisational cultures there are a multiplicity of ideologies, often in competition, and sometimes intersecting and conflicting. Some will render crisper meanings than others and conflict less with other ideologies within the culture. Others are fuzzier and deliver less precise messages. Contradictions are likely to occur as cultural forms act to deliver meanings, so that ambiguities pervade practically all expressions of culture: liberty conflicts with order, stability with inevitable change, and precision with flexibility.<sup>27</sup>

The definition of organisational culture offered by Joanne Martin is more generalist in nature allowing for a deep interpretation of shared meanings that are variable and include conflict and ambiguity. Martin's concept of organisational culture includes both ideational and material manifestations of culture.

When organisations are examined from a cultural viewpoint, attention is drawn to aspects of organisational life that historically have often been ignored or understudied, such as the stories people tell to newcomers to explain 'how things are done around here', the ways in which offices are arranged and personal items are or are not displayed, jokes people tell, the working atmosphere (hushed and luxurious or dirty and noisy), the relations among people (affectionate in some areas of an office and obviously angry and perhaps competitive in another place), and so on. Cultural observers also often attend to aspects of working life that other researchers study, such as the organisation's official policies, the amounts of money different employees earn, reporting relationships, and so on. A cultural observer is interested in the surfaces of these cultural manifestations because details can be informative, but he or she also seeks an in-depth understanding of the patterns of meaning that link these manifestations together, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in bitter conflicts between groups, and sometimes in webs of ambiguity, paradox, and contradiction.<sup>28</sup>

Although these approaches differ in methodology and focus these scholars all agree that studying shared understandings, artefacts and behaviour within organisational settings offers valuable new insights into organisations. This thesis therefore borrows from this body of work, and in particular from the viewpoints offered by Trice, Beyer and Martin. For the purpose of this thesis organisational culture is defined as the loosely structured and incompletely shared system of values, symbols and meanings that emerge as cultural

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<sup>26</sup> Ritzer and Walczak, *Working: conflict and Change*, p. 391.

<sup>27</sup> Geertz, 'Ideology as a cultural system', p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> Martin, *Organisational Culture*, p. 3.

members experience events, the organisation's contextual features and interact with each other. These values and meanings become embodied in the material objects and ritualised practices, such as physical structures, customs and traditions, historical accounts, language, behavioural norms and ways of doing things that set the pattern for activities and action within the group, and which are instilled in new members.

### **Cultural Multiplicity: Subcultures and Countercultures in Organisations**

Although organisations have distinctive cultures it would be a mistake to assume that any particular organisation has a single homogeneous, harmonious culture. Ward Goodenough states that cultural multiplicity 'is the normal experience of most individuals in the world today, for they are perforce drawn into the micro cultures of administrators, teachers, physicians, and others who have power over them'.<sup>29</sup> As various scholars have observed, most organisations have multiple cultures.<sup>30</sup> It is customary to refer to the cultures within an encompassing culture as subcultures. Distinct clusters of ideologies, cultural forms, and other practices emerge as different groups of people in an organisation form and interact. These distinct clusters of beliefs and values represent subcultures and although they share aspects of the core organisational culture in which they are embedded, they either intensify its understandings and practices or diverge from them. Subcultures also differ noticeably from each other.

Subcultures are even found in such tightly controlled and insular societies as the military. Harold Wilensky describes how military subcultures contributed to the Pearl Harbour disaster:

In the armed forces, intense rivalries between services and within services — among supply and procurement, plans and operations, research and development, intelligence — led to intelligence failures. ... In 1941, the signals of pending attack on Pearl Harbour lay scattered in a number of rival agencies; communication lines linked them, but essential messages never flowed across the lines, let

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<sup>29</sup> Ward H. Goodenough cited in Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, p. 141.

<sup>30</sup> Gregory, 'Native views paradigms'; Louis, 'Organisations as Culture-Bearing Milleux'; Louis, 'Sourcing Workplace Cultures'; Martin and Meyerson, 'Organisational Culture and the denial, channelling and acknowledgement of ambiguity'.

alone at the top. The Army and Navy presented a picture of cordial, respectful communication, empty of solid substance.<sup>31</sup>

The Australian Imperial Force provides yet another example of subcultures within military organisations. Alistair Thomson 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>32</sup> The general attitude of Australian soldiers towards officers provides a clear example of divergent values:

One night a 2nd Battalion captain accompanying a brigadier on inspection noticed a guard on duty eating a pie. Hotly he ordered the soldier to present arms, at which the man asked the brigadier to hold his pie while he performed the required ritual.<sup>33</sup>

During one period of the Gallipoli campaign there was a certain Major, noted for his bulky figure and wonderful luck in escaping from danger. One morning, however, news came down our trench that the Major had been injured. "What!" exclaimed one of the men, "has the old chap stopped one at last?" "No", was the reply, "they were lowering him into his dug-out, and the rope broke."<sup>34</sup>

These stories illustrate the general scepticism of authority that generally characterised officer / other rank relations in the AIF. In some of the folklore officers are depicted as a callous group who show little regard for the men under them.<sup>35</sup> This and other organisational stories provide evidence of the formation of subcultural values within the Australian Imperial Force.

The daily life of an organisation presents many opportunities for the formation of subcultures. Informal groups such as cabals and coalitions provide culture-forming opportunities. The formalisation of group activities, however, provides the most significant opportunities for the formation of local subcultures. The creation of task teams, new project

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<sup>31</sup> Wilensky, *Organisational Intelligence*, p. 48.

<sup>32</sup> Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> *The Kia-Ora Coo-ee*, March 1918, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> See for example 'The Purple Platoon' in Seal, 'Two Traditions', p. 41.

teams, departments and management bureaucracies are just a few examples of culture bearing sites. Occupational groups and groups defined by demographic factors – age, sex, ethnicity, also provide significant sites for the formation of subcultures.<sup>36</sup>

Occupational groups are perhaps the most highly organised and distinctive sources of subculture in any organisation. Occupations are a substantial part of any individual's experience and signify social identity and status. Occupational subcultures consist of distinctive clusters of ideologies and cultural forms that are, from an organisational perspective, externally derived. John Van Maanen and Stephen Barley have identified a number of characteristics that are exhibited by most occupational subcultures.<sup>37</sup>

1. Members share a 'consciousness of kind'.
2. Members of the occupational group take each other as reference points in deriving meaning from their experiences.
3. Members have in common certain unusual emotional demands of their work.
4. Members' self-images and social identities are enhanced by their work.
5. Members extend their social relations into non-work life.

One of the most powerful and pervasive subcultures within any organisation is that formed by the top management.<sup>38</sup> This localised administrative culture generally holds to the belief that they govern how work is organised and divided between the divisions of the organisation and employees. They also believe they should decide who will do tasks, how new members are selected and trained, and the system of administrative rules and regulations. In the words of one author they represent 'the quintessential bureaucratic work group in our society'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For a more detailed discussion of subcultures see Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*.

<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Van Maanen and Barley, 'Occupational communities'.

<sup>38</sup> Interestingly enough many scholars of occupations do not regard management as a distinct occupation. It is argued that the scope of tasks performed by managers is too broad and diverse to allow categorisation. In addition managers do not generally band together to claim exclusivity over these tasks.

<sup>39</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, p. xii.

The 'top management' represents a relatively homogenous social group, both within and across organisations. They generally share the same ethnic background and have similar religious and educational backgrounds.<sup>40</sup> A 1977 study of United States corporations suggested that 'top management' were typically male, middle-class white Protestants with college educations. Although more recent comparative studies have not been conducted a recent survey of the top companies in the US suggested that little had changed in the intervening period except for a greater tendency towards graduate education, especially the Masters degree in Business Administration.<sup>41</sup>

The small group of sixty-eight General officers who formed the top management of the AIF exhibit very similar social patterns. Occupation and education have often been regarded as important correlates of social status. In our group of General officers two-thirds came from professional or business backgrounds. The social specificity was equally apparent in the educational backgrounds of this group. Forty-five had attended private schools, with twenty-four attending schools affiliated with the Headmasters' Conference of Australia and twelve attending the four leading schools in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.<sup>42</sup> An examination of the AIF Gradation lists demonstrates that in all but two cases these men held rank in the AMF and the small fulltime Administrative and Instructional Staff.<sup>43</sup> These men already embraced a preformed occupational culture and shared experience. When the AIF was formed they brought this pre-established managerial culture with them and embedded it in the AIF's core culture.

As noted earlier subcultures share understandings and forms with the core culture in which they are embedded, but at the same time they have a distinctiveness of their own. Consequently, the subculture can either enhance or deviate from the core culture. In some

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<sup>40</sup> For more detail see Ouchi and Johnson, 'Types of organisational control and their relationship to emotional well-being'.

<sup>41</sup> Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*, pp. 236-7.

<sup>42</sup> For more details of the social distinctions in Australia's officer corps see Encel, 'The Study of Militarism', p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> Australian Imperial Force. Staff, Regimental and Gradation Lists of Officers, 22 September 1914; Australian Imperial Force. Staff, Regimental and Gradation Lists of Officers, 6 December 1914; Staff and Regimental Lists of the Australian Military Forces, 1 January 1914. Bound copies of these lists can be found in the Australian War Memorial.



instances the subculture will differ only slightly from the core culture. On other occasions the differences are so significant and conflict between the subculture and core culture so intense that the subculture forms a counterculture.<sup>44</sup> But countercultures do not necessarily exert negative effects on the organisation. The military provides at least one example where the outcome has been positive:

... in the late 1950s Brigadier General Hutton (faced with official opposition based on written agreements among the department of Defence, the Army, and the Air Force) developed the armed helicopter. Starting with baling wire and lashing machine guns to the frame, a group of young, middle-ranked officers evolved the quick-strike mobile air cavalry.... The Army's air force is now the third largest in the world.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, the famous Flying Tigers fighter squadron of the late 1930s became highly successful by becoming a counterculture. The group's orders were to use fighter planes in the then traditional role of auxiliary support for ground force movements. The squadron was commanded by the United States General Claire Chennault and operated in the China theatre as World War Two approached. It was an ethnically diverse group with members being drawn from the disintegrating Chinese Air Force, as well as other nationalities including a number of American pilots. Chennault defied orders from his superiors and engaged enemy planes at every opportunity and perfected the techniques of air-to-air combat tactics, which would be used by US pilots in World War Two. The pilots of the 'Flying Tigers' celebrated and emphasised their cultural distinctiveness by employing such dramatic symbols as painting flying tiger sharks on their planes and wearing cowboy boots instead of regulation military boots.<sup>46</sup>

The counterculture that developed the armed helicopter helped to justify the development of the Army's own air force. This counterculture exaggerated the ideology of its parent organisation, the Army, in opposition to the official ideologies embodied in a joint-services agreement. The official policy and practices stipulated that air support in ground combat

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<sup>44</sup> For greater detail see Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, esp. ch. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Zald and Berger, 'Social Movements in Organisations', p. 824.

<sup>46</sup> Love, 'The absorption of protest'.

would be provided by a separate organisation, the US Air Force. A cadre of Army officers disagreed and developed the capacity to provide air support from within the Army itself. Neither of the subcultures embodied in the Flying Tigers and the armed helicopter group differed from the general military culture in terms of its aims; they disagreed with prescribed ways to achieve those aims and, by defying military authority, succeeded in demonstrating the efficacy of what they believed in.

### **Organisational Environment and Culture.**

Organisations do not exist in a vacuum, but interrelate with a host of entities outside the organisation's boundaries. 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 culture are imported from outside the organisation's boundaries when new people join the organisation and bring new ideas, values and beliefs with them.

The boundaries of organisations are usually fuzzy and quite fluid, even porous letting in many different influences. As one analyst has suggested, '... organisations are not fortresses, impervious to the buffeting or the blessings of their environments. On the other hand, organisations are not wind tunnels responding to the perturbation in their context'.<sup>47</sup> Organisations can be regarded as open systems that require inputs from their environments in order to survive. Without these external inputs the organisation would rapidly exhaust its resources and die. Many of these inputs have cultural content that becomes embedded within the organisation's culture.

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<sup>47</sup> For more detail see Scott, *Organisations: Rational, Natural and Open Systems*, p. 133.

Some cultural systems that may influence the development of an organisation's culture even transcend recognised national boundaries. The ideology of science, for example, is almost universally accepted. Even nations that are diametrically opposed in deep religious and political ideologies will still engage in regular scientific exchange. The core of scientific culture rests upon the universal scientific method. This prescribes an objective methodology for the conduct of scientific investigation and is so pervasive that it allows scientists in Russia, France and Canada to progress along similar lines and even read and publish in the same journals. The supposed universalism of science has witnessed its application to virtually all of humanity's problems and hence its penetration into every facet of modern society.<sup>48</sup>

National and regional cultures may also have a significant influence on the development of an organisation's culture. During the Cold War, for example, the German army's creative outlook on warfare differed markedly from the managerial approach adopted by the American army. American army manuals attempted to predict, and quantify, all possible future scenarios. German officers criticised this approach for its rigidity and believed flexibility was the order of the day. This view had been articulated in an earlier period when Helmuth von Moltke stated, 'adherence to a battle plan must not be allowed to crush the initiative of individual commanders'.<sup>49</sup> When the Israeli army was formed after the War of Independence its military leaders wished to avoid the British army's spit and polish parade ground approach and embraced a paratrooper ethos that required all officers to attend jump school.<sup>50</sup>

Underpinning the distinctive features of each national culture lies the historical development of its political, social, economic and other institutions and the socialisation processes (discussed later in this chapter) that reinforce these institutions within society. From these developments emerge the distinctive ideologies and cultural forms that persist across generations. Although there is some decrease in values across successive

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<sup>48</sup> For a detailed discussion on the ideology of science on organisational culture see Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 150.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

generations, socialisation processes preserve and transmit many elements of cultures and in this way form unique cores of cultural substance that are reflected in subsequent cultural development. The development of the British Royal Air Force and the German Luftwaffe during World War Two provides a useful example of the difference that historical context can have on the development and cultures of similar organisations.<sup>51</sup>

Germany's national culture was preoccupied with, and reflected, the fact that as a continental state their neighbours represented close potential enemies. The solution to this perceived threat lay in the development of a large and powerful standing army. The national ideology was underpinned by a strong sense of duty and subordination of the individual to the welfare of the state and this provided the military with a ready supply of new members. To utilise the substantial size and power of the army the military envisaged a highly mobile all arms force that could be concentrated rapidly at any point of weakness — this became known as blitzkrieg. The German High Command visualized a force spearheaded by an elite corps comprising tanks, mechanised infantry, artillery and aeroplanes. Consequently, pilots were trained to closely support ground operations and they were allocated by army commanders on a piecemeal basis throughout the corps. This precluded the development of an independent air force organisation. An independent organisation was also precluded under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and this made it necessary to embed the air force in the army in order to camouflage its existence.

The Royal Air Force, on the other hand, grew out of a substantially different set of historical circumstances and cultural traditions. Britain was an island nation and this resulted in the development of a powerful navy. The navalist orientation of British strategic policy gave very little thought to the role of the army. The emergence of airpower allowed a more rapid response than could be provided by the navy and was subsequently viewed as an extension of the navalist projection of power. Hence, the emphasis was on long range bombing capabilities. This allowed the air force to develop independently and because the

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<sup>51</sup> Teitler, 'Profession, autonomy and time perspective', pp. 373-86.

air force did not have to meet the demands of the army it allowed a more flexible approach that resulted in autonomous commands for coastal defence, fighters and bombers.<sup>52</sup>

The organisation's environment may also develop cultural systems that are in themselves disparate from the cultures that prevail in the broader environmental milieu of the organisation. Linda Smircich argues that the 'transactions of the participants within the organisation result in a social reality that may or may not reflect the culture outside the organisation'.<sup>53</sup> This is especially true of the military where powerful assimilative processes can often displace the influence of the wider society. This may explain why some militaries become dogmatic in their commitment to certain worldviews.

The British landed-gentry and officer corps, for example, have had a long association. During the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century the majority of British officers were drawn from the aristocracy. The values, beliefs and attitudes of the aristocracy became embedded in the British command structure, which closely resembled the hierarchical social structure of the British aristocracy. The idea that a subordinate should exercise initiative was anathema to the British officer who generally believed he had 'an inborn right and duty to lead others'. The ordinary soldier for his part showed his 'betters' the same deference his rural cousins did to the master of the estate.<sup>54</sup>

Officers with aristocratic backgrounds have not dominated the British army since the Second World War, yet the aristocratic culture has been institutionalised in the army to such an extent that these values persist and are even assumed. As Correlli Barnett explains:

Among modern armies the British officer corps remains the last donjon keep of neofeudalism because the manners, values and attitudes of the aristocratic past have become institutionalised. After ten years in the British army, the grammar school [middle-class] boy is to be distinguished only by an expert [if this is possible at all] ... from the son of a country gentleman educated at a famous public school. Indeed the grammar-school boy may well – quite understandably – adhere even more closely to the neo-feudalist ideal than the true 'gentleman'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Pepper, *Communicating in Organisations*, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, esp. ch. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Barnett, 'The Education of Military Elites', p. 27.

A further facet of the organisational environment is the very nature of the organisation and its interaction with other similar organisations. Organisations with similar functions and structures often contribute shared understandings to each other because they attract people with similar backgrounds, beliefs and professional interests. Members of occupations have shared beliefs, values and skills that they bring with them upon taking up employment in an organisation. Furthermore, these occupational skills are transferable across organisational boundaries allowing ideas, values and skills to influence the culture of different organisations.<sup>56</sup>

In military organisations the transfer of employment from one organisation to another is not common but an interchange of ideas and skills nevertheless take place. Many military organisations initiate cooperative arrangements that take the form of large exercises and exchange programmes. The purpose of these programmes is to facilitate the exchange of current ideas, techniques and skills. This exchange provides the vehicle for a cultural transfer as new ideas and ways of doing things become embedded in the different organisations.

Competitive pressures between organisations often impose specific environmental constraints upon an organisation. They compete for a wide range of resources and markets and this forces new patterns of learning to be formed so that the organisation is in the best position to take advantage of environmental and competitive circumstances. This creates opportunities for new cultures to be created or influences changes within the existing culture. Some theorists argue, in largely Darwinian terms, that the most adaptive organisational cultures achieve the greatest success while the less adaptive cultures are doomed to potential bankruptcy and dismemberment.<sup>57</sup>

These competitive pressures are unlikely to provide an adequate explanation for a military's culture because the military occupies a monopolistic position within the state. As Kier

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<sup>56</sup> Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*, p. 219-20.

<sup>57</sup> Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 155. See also Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine'.

observes 'Armies may lose wars, but unlike firms, they do not go bankrupt; they are not dismantled and their facilities sold to the highest bidder'.<sup>58</sup> The United States Army's inability to adapt to demands and contingencies of counterinsurgency warfare during Vietnam may have resulted in considerable loss of prestige but it did not lead to the army being dismantled and replaced by another army.

While the Darwinian evolutionary model of organisational development does not apply to military organisations, interaction with other military organisations does result in a degree of cultural adaptation and change. Military organisations compete with other armed services for resources, specific roles and missions forcing adaptive changes in the organisation's culture. In addition the imperatives produced in the modern battlespace may force changes in the patterns of learning and concomitant changes in the organisation's culture. These are areas that are currently untouched by academic scholarship and are possible directions for future research.

### **Founders and Organisational Culture**

Possibly the most important and pervasive influence on the development of an organisation's culture is its leadership. An organisation's founder(s) draw on her/his (their) visions of what the organisation should be like and how it should accomplish its goals and creates the substance and forms of culture within the organisation.<sup>59</sup> As noted earlier, the founder provides the momentum that gets the organisation moving and chooses the original core members, frequently on the basis that these members share similar beliefs, values and attitudes to the founder. The leader's responses to organisational problems create new values, beliefs and procedures to be followed by the group. If what the leader proposes works and continues to work, it gradually becomes a shared assumption, an accepted way of doing business. Other leaders preserve the culture by embodying in their actions and words what it means to be a member of the organisation. They are especially adroit at performing and dramatising its myths, symbols, and ceremonies. According to Edgar

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<sup>58</sup> Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 155.

<sup>59</sup> For a greater discussion on the role of founders in creating organisational culture see Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*.

Schein, 'the unique and essential function of leadership is the manipulation of culture'.<sup>60</sup> Leaders are skilled at constructing, performing and embellishing the myths, stories, songs, symbols and other cultural forms that convey a culture's meaning. In particular, leaders dramatise what it means to be a member of the culture and makes being a member of it important.<sup>61</sup>

Military analysts have generally been reluctant to embrace this view of leadership and in some cases have argued the perspective has little relevance. It is argued that the longevity of most existing military traditions, or cultures, provide little opportunity for individuals to exert any influence.<sup>62</sup> This argument adopts a rather monolithic view towards organisational culture and ignores a substantial body of evidence that suggests otherwise. Hugh Trenchard had a substantial impact of the Royal Air Force's culture, and Lord Lovat's influence on the development of the Commando role within the Royal Marines significantly changed that organisation's culture.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the strong personal leadership displayed by Admiral Hyman Rickover and his emphasis on engineering excellence undoubtedly influenced the culture of the US Navy's Reactor Branch.<sup>64</sup> When David Stirling founded the Special Air Service Regiment he could not have predicted the influence this subculture would have on the British Army as a whole.<sup>65</sup> These examples are not exhaustive and yet provide ample evidence of founders and/or key leaders creating and/or changing organisational cultures within the military.

In the early stages of an organisation's development leaders are presented with numerous opportunities in which to embed their beliefs and values into the fabric of the organisation. This process is facilitated by a number of primary and secondary mechanisms. Schein argues that primary mechanisms are culture creators and secondary mechanisms are cultural reinforcers. In later stages of an organisation's development, when a new leader

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>61</sup> For a more detailed discussion on this process see Pfeffer, 'Management as symbolic action'.

<sup>62</sup> See for example Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 152.

<sup>63</sup> For a discussion of Trenchard see Higham, *The Military Intellectuals in Britain, 1918 – 1939*, and Boyle, *Trenchard*; For a detailed discussion of the Royal Marine Commandos see Saunders, *Green Beret*, and Lovat, *March Past*.

<sup>64</sup> Rockwell, *The Rickover Effect*.

<sup>65</sup> Strawson, *A History of the SAS*.



may be in control, these secondary mechanisms can be used to create a new culture or shape the existing culture. But, as Schein points out, this process will be significantly influenced by the pre-existing culture because it is now taken-for-granted. Although this may limit opportunities for creating new cultures or changing existing ones, nevertheless opportunities are still there.<sup>66</sup>

The first, and potentially most powerful mechanism for communicating a founder's beliefs and goals, are the issues and details that a founder systematically pays attention to, deals with and, just as importantly, ignores. These issues and details clearly communicate what the founder considers to be important and what is not important and thereby represent clear indications of the founder's own priorities and goals. Meetings and other activities related to planning and budgeting are important managerial processes and indicators of a founder's beliefs and assumptions. The questions asked by a leader at these meetings will clearly indicate to subordinates the leader's views on particular issues and how they should be addressed.<sup>67</sup>

Organisational crisis is another culture creating mechanism that aids in the formation of new norms, values and work procedures. At these times founders are closely observed for the manner in which they deal with situations and thereby represent role models. As Schein points out

... crises are especially significant in culture creation and transmission because the heightened emotional involvement during such periods increases the intensity of learning ... If people share intense emotional experiences and collectively learn ... they are more likely to remember what they have learned.<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps the most subtle and yet powerful mechanism for embedding and perpetuating cultural assumptions is the process of selecting, promoting and excommunicating members of the organisation. Founders normally choose members who resemble themselves in style,

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<sup>66</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 253.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

values and beliefs. This establishes a pattern for the future selection and recruitment of members and provides a clear indication of the founder's assumptions.<sup>69</sup>

These criteria are further reinforced by the symbolism associated with who does or does not get promoted, who is retired early, and who is in effect excommunicated by being fired or given a job that is clearly perceived to be less important, even if at a higher level.<sup>70</sup> Equally symbolic and pervasive is the manner in which rewards and punishments are allocated. This quickly establishes normative behaviour and communicates what the founder considers to be appropriate and inappropriate.

As will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis the original group of senior officers within the Australian Imperial Force were originally selected by White. These officers were known to White and shared similar views of the world. When the Australian Imperial Force began to grow the Minister for Defence appointed officers to key positions within the organisation. White protect the organisational culture he created by effectively marginalising and replacing these officers.

The design and structure of the organisation can often indicate and reinforce the assumptions that underpinned the organisation. Founders often have strong theories about how the organisation should be structured in order to achieve maximum effectiveness. Consequently, the initial design of the organisation and the periodic restructuring that organisations go through provide opportunities for founders to embed their assumptions about organisational goals, the appropriate strategies to accomplish these goals, the nature of people, and the right kinds of relationships to foster among people.

The routine systems and procedures of the organisation are another mechanism through which beliefs and values can be embedded or reinforced. The daily routines, reports, forms, and recurrent tasks that constitute daily life within the organisation are highly visible means of communicating and formalising those details and issues considered important by a founder. Such tangibles as organisational charts, personal appearance standards, and overtly

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<sup>69</sup> For a more detailed study of these issues see Van Maanen, 'The Smile Factory', pp. 58-76.

<sup>70</sup> See for example the very public nature of dismissal at Disneyland. Van Maanen, 'The Smile Factory', p. 76, note 3.

stated values are illustrative artefacts and both communicate and reinforce the culture embraced by an organisation. Similarly, formal statements and organisational charters highlight the founder's philosophies and represent public articulations of the organisation's culture and reinforce these values.<sup>71</sup>

Some organisational researchers have suggested that rites and rituals are central to understanding and communicating cultural assumptions.<sup>72</sup> This is especially so in military organisations, which more than any other organisational form, exhibit the greatest variety of rituals and ceremonies. In the United States Navy, for example, there are established rituals governing which visitors enter a vessel first and who enter it last. The lower ranks enter first because it is presumed that persons in senior ranks should not have to waste any unnecessary time on board. When someone as important as a vice admiral visits, he is accorded a formation in dress uniform, an 'admirals march' music, full guard, a 17-gun salute on arrival, 15 on leaving, 3 drum ruffles and flourishes, and 8 'side boys'.<sup>73</sup>

Rites, rituals and ceremonies involve sets of planned and elaborate activities that are carried out through processes of social interaction. They are publicly performed social dramas that are physical manifestations of cultural systems. Many of these rituals begin with a founder's formalisation of certain behaviours and thus become indicative of the founders priorities and assumptions.

From this it will be seen that much of the process of embedding cultural assumptions in young organisations is essentially a question of socialisation. This socialisation is, at this stage of an organisation's development, in the hands of the founder and key leaders. In order to understand the process of cultural growth one must focus on the role of founding leaders and their behaviour.

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<sup>71</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, pp. 251-252.

<sup>72</sup> See for example Deal and Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures*; Trice and Beyer, 'Studying Organisational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials'; also Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*.

<sup>73</sup> Evered, 'The language of organisations', p. 134.

### **Organisational Socialisation: Learning to be an Insider**

To become a member of an organisational culture, a newcomer must learn the culture's distinctive ways of viewing and acting in the world. The new member must become socialised by interacting with members of the culture learning what is expected of them, what they can and/or cannot do, what is right and/or wrong. Socialisation also occurs as people take on new roles and statuses. Socialisation has two specific benefits; new members of cultures do not need to make the same mistakes and discoveries as the preceding generations; and new members will know how to fit in and not disrupt group life.

Socialisation however, is not always equally successful and never perfect. New members are not cultural carbon copies of the old. Individual differences and experiences result in cultural messages being received differently. Socialising agents and events also vary in their efficacy; some are more persuasive, coherent and inspiring than others. These variations in socialisation are one of the factors that help to produce cultural change.<sup>74</sup>

Socialisation is a lifelong process but it is the basic and primary socialisation that occurs during infancy and childhood that has the most pervasive influence on individual development. It is much easier for a child to embrace these values because they have few other competing expectations or values. The experiences gained through family, school and church provide a general preparation for adult roles but they cannot anticipate the many specific modes of learning, values and expectations of adulthood.<sup>75</sup>

More specific adult socialisation is provided by organisations and differs significantly from childhood socialisation because it entails a certain degree of unlearning and the confronting of conflicting values and expectations. Training and indoctrination are important aspects of organisational socialisation. According to Henry Mintzberg, 'training refers to the processes by which job-related skills and knowledge are taught, while indoctrination is the

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<sup>74</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, p. 115.

<sup>75</sup> For a more detailed discussion of socialisation see Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*, Prentice Hall, ch 4; Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, ch 5.

process by which organisational norms are acquired'.<sup>76</sup> Both help transform new members from one role and status to another. Such training and indoctrination is often featured in the rites of passage process that is frequently the most common mode of organisational socialisation. This is especially the case with rites of passage in military organisations.

The most important feature of rites of passage is that they involve more than a mere acquisition of new social position, they make and signal an essential change in the identity of the persons involved in the passage. According to Moore and Meyerhoff, rites of passage are ceremonies,

... especially dramatic attempts to bring some particular part of life firmly and definitely into orderly control. ... In the secular affairs of modern life [they are used] to lend authority and legitimacy to the positions of particular persons, organisations, occasions, moral values, views of the world, and the like.<sup>77</sup>

This ritualistic acceptance is generally comprised of three distinct rites: rites of separation, of transition, and of incorporation, and unless all three are completed, then the passage itself is not completed and acceptance and inclusion can be denied.

Rites of separation according to Meryl Louis, facilitate the 'unfreeing, moving away, or letting go ... [that is a] ... necessary preliminary step in effecting change at individual and group levels'.<sup>78</sup> They act to detach people, often physically but more frequently symbolically, from their former roles and reposition them symbolically in a transitional, 'betwixt-and-between' phase. This separation phase encourages newcomers to let go of their current status and roles and symbolically prepares them for the transitional phase, where they actually learn the values, beliefs and ways of doing things that characterise the group or organisation.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Mintzberg, *The Structure of Organisations*, p. 95.

<sup>77</sup> Moore and Meyerhoff, 'Secular ritual', p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Louis, 'Surprise and sense making', p. 231.

<sup>79</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, p. 118.

The letting go involved in the separation phase is especially well illustrated by the extreme form of this rite used in military organisations. Within an hour after arriving at a United States Navy recruit training camps,

The new recruit is told to remove all civilian clothes, his jewelry [sic], religious medals, etc., and place them, along with wallet, comb, key ring, and the like into the shipping box that has been given him. He stands there nude and wraps and addresses the box containing the accouterments [sic] of his civility. When finished he proceeds through a line in which he is issued his naval attire.<sup>80</sup>

Rites of transition are, according to Victor Turner, characterised by 'liminality', a phase when 'the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape'.<sup>81</sup>

Newcomers are neither in their old roles nor in their new roles but are eager to learn and be transformed into their new roles. This liminal period is characterised by 'a peculiar unity: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both'.<sup>82</sup> Barbara Meyerhoff sees rites of transition as the period when the group 'seeks to make the individual most fully its own, weaving group values and understandings into the private psyche so that internally provided individual motivation replaces external controls'.<sup>83</sup> This transitional period is the time when newcomers learn their new role and demonstrate their competency and commitment to the role. The learning process can take many forms, including bastardisation, and can vary in length.<sup>84</sup>

Again, the military provides the most explicit and dramatic examples. During basic training in the United States Army, it is during rites of transition that new recruits learn the basic skill associated with their new identity; shooting a variety of weapons, marching, obeying orders promptly and without question. Efforts are made to rebuild their bodies through rigorous physical training, long and arduous marches and other physically demanding

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<sup>80</sup> Zurcher, 'The Naval recruit training centre', p. 91.

<sup>81</sup> Turner, 'Betwixt and Between', p.354

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>83</sup> Meyerhoff, 'Rites of Passage: Process and paradox', p.112.

<sup>84</sup> My research on military rites of passage revealed that in many cases forms of bastardisation are germane to the eventual acceptance of newcomers in military organisations. An example of this is the infamous 'Blood Winging' ceremony of the US Airborne forces, for a more detailed discussion see Bentley, 'Wrongs of Passage'.

exercises. Debasing rituals include the wearing of plain clothing, frequent inspections, and endless saluting of those in superior status positions. Typically, the non-commissioned officers responsible for training treat the recruits with contempt. Toward the end of the transition phase the recruits are repeatedly tested, presumably to determine what new permanent roles they are capable of assuming.

Rites of incorporation signal acceptance and inclusion to members of the group. Newcomers are no longer considered ignorant in the ways of the world and have demonstrated an understanding of the group's esoteric knowledge and skills. As such, newcomers are now accorded the rights and privileges of 'insiders'. This inclusion also brings with it an obligation to promote the welfare of the group and defend it from external intrusion and/or threat.<sup>85</sup>

Within some occupations becoming a member involves a mentor or sponsor. This is a special and intense form of role modelling. Traditionally, mentoring is a relationship between two males, one possibly 10 to 15 years younger than the other. Mentoring takes on the form of informal sponsorship. The mentor acts as a teacher, guide and even exemplar for the younger person. Such relationships can be especially valuable to those just beginning their careers.

Mentoring typically lasts three to five years and is a transitional relationship in that it facilitates the realization of careers hopes and aspirations for the younger person. This relationship provides the younger person with such benefits as knowledge, psychological support, organisational intervention, protection, and sponsorship in career development from the mentor. Whenever an opportunity presents itself the mentor exerts both formal and informal forms of influence to further the career of the younger person. The younger person learns the basic skills needed to perform the job as well as the best methods of leading people. In addition, the mentor provides the younger person with an understanding

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<sup>85</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, p. 121.

of the organisational structure, and an appreciation of the less visible aspects of politics and ethics in the organisation.<sup>86</sup>

The mentoring relationship also becomes one of intense, nonsexual friendship and is 'best understood as a form of love relationship'.<sup>87</sup> Others liken it to the intense qualities of child/parent relations, with the younger person moving through phases of initiation, cultivation of planned opportunities, and separation as the drive for independence becomes more and more intense.<sup>88</sup>

Victorian British military culture provides an ideal example of institutionalised mentoring as a socialisation tactic.<sup>89</sup> It was argued that mentoring, or patronage, provided a means through which young and capable officers were able to assume command at a much earlier age than would be possible under other systems of promotion. It was this system that had allowed Lieutenant General Arthur Wellesley, later Lord Wellington, at the age of forty years to advance above his more senior peers and assume command of the Peninsula army in 1808.<sup>90</sup>

The mentoring system not only benefits the young person but also has important benefits for both the mentor and the organisation. From the perspective of the mentor the younger person serves as a source of organisational information and intelligence, and often becomes a trusted advisor. Over time, a successful and hard-working protégé enhances the mentor's career by performing job duties well, which, in turn, contributes to the mentor's reputation and career.<sup>91</sup> From an organisational point of view mentoring provided a clear line of leader succession that ensured the continuation of organisational values and culture from

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<sup>86</sup> Much of the available literature on mentoring explains its applicability to the corporate environment where it is currently regarded as an important facet in cultural transmission and change. See for example Zey, *The Mentor Connection*; Myers and Humphreys, 'The Caveats in Mentorship'; Bowen, 'The Role of Identification in Mentoring Female Proteges'.

<sup>87</sup> Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, p. 100.

<sup>88</sup> Kram, 'Phases of the mentor relationship'.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of the British Army's mentoring system in operation see Travers, *The Killing Ground*, esp. ch. 1. Harries-Jenkins discusses the Army's patronage system and its relationship to professionalism with its emphasis on open competition. See Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, pp. 13-14, 17, 19-20.

<sup>90</sup> Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, p.13

<sup>91</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the machinations of the patronage system. See Travers, *The Killing Ground*, pp. 7-10.



one generation to another. Gwyn Harries-Jenkins points to other benefits to be derived from mentoring:

Politically ... it had ensured the recruitment and promotion of those who had an interest in the preservation of the system. Structurally, a system of patronage had discouraged deviancy. Professionally, it had brought into organisations the amateur whose attitudes and actions were not motivated by considerations of career or personal advancement.<sup>92</sup>

Socialisation makes life within a cultural group less capricious and helps to reduce problems of coordination, and supports at least a modicum of shared values within the cultural group specifically and organisational life generally. More importantly, socialisation, even when only partly effective, assists new members in learning how to become insiders and how to perform new roles in new settings and in new relationships.

This chapter presents a number of interrelated themes that shape the remainder of this thesis. First, an organisation's culture is fundamentally a system of human social values shared, albeit inconsistently, by group members. People who belong to a given organisational culture share to some degree its basic properties: its substance and its forms. Collectively, they embrace certain ideologies about how to deal with recurrent problems and uncertainties. They arrive at their shared ideologies through collective experience and repeated social interactions over time. They use a variety of cultural forms to communicate and reinforce these shared ideologies. Organisational cultures, like other cultures, develop as groups of people struggle to make sense of, and cope with, their worlds.

It becomes clear from this that culture, organisational or otherwise, is constructed, maintained and reproduced by people. It is people rather than autonomous socialisation processes, rites, social practices and societal macro-systems that create the meanings and understandings that are fundamental to cultural systems. Consequently, culture can best be understood by studying people as cultural subjects. Individuals not only create and reproduce culture they are themselves cultural products and formed by culture. As Geertz

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<sup>92</sup> Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, p.13.

has argued, culture is not locked into people's heads but embodied in public symbols, ideas and ideologies.<sup>93</sup>

Organisational cultures are not monolithic or homogeneous. Rather they are collections of potent and often discrete subcultures. These subcultures share many of the ideologies of the wider organisational culture but they will also consist of subtle nuances, clusters of beliefs and values that make the subculture a distinct entity. These subcultures interact with one another and may either enhance or deviate from the core culture in which they are situated.

The third, and final, theme is the process of socialisation that occurs throughout an individual's life. Although childhood socialisation provides people with their key values and beliefs it does not prepare individuals for the occupational roles that form the major part of adult life. This is achieved through various modes of socialisation that help new members become conversant with organisation culture and hence become organisational insiders. Socialisation can be achieved in many ways but rites of passage are the most common and comprise three phases: rites of separation, of transition, and incorporation. Another mode of socialisation is the system of mentoring which forms a close relationship between an older veteran member of the organisation and an aspiring newer and younger member of the organisation. Socialisation teaches new members how to behave and how to solve problems. It reduces conflict and promotes organisational commitment within the membership of the organisation.

Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter the remainder of this thesis will examine White's role in the development of the Australian Imperial Force. It begins by examining his family background and his subsequent socialisation in both the Australian military forces and key British imperial military institutions.

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<sup>93</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*, 1973.

## Chapter 2

### The Formative Years

Every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society ... he lives out a biography, and ... he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of his society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove.

C. Wright Mills<sup>1</sup>

When I fulfil my obligations as brother, husband or citizen, I perform duties which are defined, externally to myself and my acts, in law and custom. Even if they conform to my own sentiments, and I feel their reality subjectively, such reality is still objective, for I did not create them; I merely inherited them through my education ...

Emile Durkheim<sup>2</sup>

In the previous chapter it was argued that individually and collectively people live in a social world characterised by complex networks of relationships, institutions, organisations, groups and practices. These networks of relationships are interwoven by various shared cultural norms, values and symbols. Lives are worked out individually and collectively by drawing on shared ideas about what is desirable and undesirable, appropriate and inappropriate, good and bad, right and wrong.

The work of C. Wright Mills and Emile Durkheim, which is quoted above, makes it clear that identity formation and individuals' perceptions of themselves are not and cannot be totally unbounded; the views, opinions and reactions of others are clearly significant in contributing to and influencing the conceptions individuals have of themselves. But as conscious agents individuals endeavour to deal with varied and frequently conflicting responses from others so as to develop a coherent sense of self or identity. Thus, those

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<sup>1</sup> Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 1-2.

responses are not simply absorbed or imposed; they are filtered, evaluated, accommodated, cunningly manipulated, or even ignored. For instance, people do not simply or invariably take on board the views or evaluations of any other social actors with whom they interact: they are, often consciously, selective in according importance and legitimacy to some (especially individuals who represent significant others) while granting little or none to others.

This chapter examines the development of Brudenell White during the formative years from childhood to adulthood. In particular it will look at the influence of significant individuals, such as his friends, family and teachers, in the growth of his personality and the shaping of his point of view. This profile will then be used in later chapters to demonstrate how these experiences and influences shaped his decision making in later years.

Cyril Brudenell Bingham White, or Brudenell White as he was more familiarly known, was born at the 'The Warren' on the Inglewood Road, in the small Victorian country town of St Arnaud on 23 September 1876.<sup>3</sup> He was the seventh child born to the Irish emigrant couple, John Warren White and Mysie White (née Gibton). In many ways the outlook and personalities of White's parents were different though complementary. They were both the products of a Victorian upper/middle class upbringing.

John Warren White, of Caherblonick, County Clare was born in 1828. He was the eldest son of a barrister, Thomas White. John White was a tall man standing six feet three inches with blue eyes and fair hair. He was a man who commanded respect but tended to have a quick temper. His demeanour and outlook reflected all the lofty aristocratic pride of his social position and ancestry. He was after all a Baronet, Baron D'Albi, and Marquis D'Albaville.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Brudenell White did not start keeping a personal diary until he was nineteen years old and few other primary sources have survived. Consequently, there is a significant gap in the primary sources relating to White's early life. To provide an adequate account of White's early life and family background it has been necessary to closely paraphrase Brudenell White's daughter, Rosemary Derham, who has published an account of her father's life. See Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, esp. chs. 3, 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 115.

Mysie Gibton was born in Dublin in 1836 and came to the Colony of Victoria in 1853 aboard the clipper *Africa* when she was seventeen.<sup>5</sup> Her mother had died in 1850 and her father Robert Nassau Gibton of 'Tallaght', County Dublin, decided to leave Dublin and take his three daughters and two sons to the colonies. Unfortunately for the family Robert Gibton became ill during the voyage and died a month later in the family's Collingwood home.<sup>6</sup> As circumstances would have it Mysie Gibton's uncle had married Adelaide White, the sister of John White and Maria Lucinda White. Maria Lucinda White and her husband Francis Beggs had travelled to Victoria some time before and it was through this family connection in Ireland that Mysie Gibton was able to secure the position of governess to the Beggs family, first in Geelong and later at Eurambeen.<sup>7</sup>

Mysie Gibton's personality and nature proved to be the ideal complement to that of the tall, proud, fiery and aristocratic John White. She had a slender petite build. Her diminutive stature belied her strength of character and endurance. She was sympathetic, compassionate and gentle. Being a deeply religious woman she disliked overt displays of aggression. During her life she endured many hardships, but she never lost her sense of proportion or dignity and always ensured her family maintained the standards and level of behaviour appropriate to their class position and ancestry.

Both John and Mysie White believed in the value of good manners and speech, the cultivation of courteousness, and the maintenance of high ideals. Their insistence upon these virtues is not surprising given the imperatives of their upper/middle class heritage and upbringing. Good manners, speech and high moral principles and values were signifiers of class and social status. They were symbols of breeding that set one apart from those they regarded as the common people.

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<sup>5</sup> Pixley, 'John Warren White and Family', p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120.

## The Pioneering Years

John White set sail for Port Phillip Bay on the Clipper *Lightning* on 14 May 1854 and arrived seventy-seven days later on 31 July 1854. At this time Ireland was still suffering from the consequences of the Potato Famine and there seemed to be little hope for the future. John White, like many of his countrymen, decided to leave Ireland and seek his fortune in a foreign land.<sup>8</sup> His decision to come to Australia was possibly made easier by the fact that his sister Maria Lucinda and her husband had already emigrated to the Colony of Victoria where gold had recently been discovered.

The journey to Australia was uneventful. Upon arrival he found a colony undergoing transformation. The discovery of gold had been the catalyst for widespread and significant social, political and economic change. Many people had left their jobs and families in search of gold. Employers found it difficult to find labour. The labour shortage was compounded with a shortage of goods and increasing prices. The discovery of gold had resulted in an influx of immigrants. In Victoria the population grew from 97,489 in 1851 to 283,942 at the end of 1854. This placed considerable strain on the existing infrastructure of the colony.<sup>9</sup>

John White had only been in Victoria for a short time when he found himself travelling to Ballarat with elements of the 40th Regiment. The exact reason why John White was with the 40th Regiment is unclear. In *The Silent Ruse*, Rosemary Derham speculates that it may have been due to either a call for officers or at the invitation of a friend.<sup>10</sup> Riots had occurred on the gold fields as a result of the introduction of a new mining licensing system, which angered the miners. Disenchanted miners, chartists and radicalists established the Ballarat Reform League to voice miners' grievances and press for parliamentary reform. The Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, decided to restore order on the goldfields and

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail on the Irish Potato Famine see Edwards and Williams (eds.), *The Great Famine*; Kerr, *A nation of beggars?*; Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*.

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed examination of the goldrush period in Victorian history see Serle, *The Golden Age*; Quaife (ed.), *Gold and Colonial Society 1851-1870*.

<sup>10</sup> See Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 119.

despatched elements of the 12th and 40th Regiments, along with detachments from *HMS Electra* and *HMS Fantome*. On Sunday, 3 December 1854, the military and police made a surprise attack on the miners who were barricaded in the Eureka Stockade which resulted in the deaths of thirty defenders and the removal of the Southern Cross flag.<sup>11</sup> John White's exact role in this attack is unknown but in view of his military background it is likely that he took an active part in the attack on the stockade.

The following year John White travelled to Eurambeen, in Western Victoria, to stay with his sister Maria Lucinda and her husband Francis Beggs. The Beggs family had immigrated to Australia in 1849 in the hope of making sufficient money to retire in Ireland. They began sheep farming at Geelong and later moved to Eurambeen. John White may have had similar intentions of returning to Ireland but for now he was content to work for his brother-in-law and learn all he could about sheep, cattle and crops.<sup>12</sup> It was here at Eurambeen that he met Mysie (Maria) Gibton.

John White and Mysie Gibton were married on 13 June 1860 at St Stephen's Church, Richmond.<sup>13</sup> During the next few years the Whites travelled around the Wimmera and Mallee regions of north-western Victoria. This was a region of extremes, blazing hot summers and freezing winters. They eventually found themselves at Lake Hindmarsh where they settled for a period of three years. During this time they endured makeshift housing, poor seasons and for at least two years of their stay they found themselves faced with severe drought. John White rode four miles each day to obtain water sufficient for their daily needs. In the years between 1865 and 1876 the White family lived an almost nomadic life moving across north-west Victoria. In later years Brudenell White wrote of his mother's life:

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<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed examination of the Eureka Stockade see Gold (ed.), *Eureka: Rebellion Beneath the Southern Cross*; Molony, *Eureka*.

<sup>12</sup> John White earned a small income from his estates in Clare. In 1876 he arranged a mortgage on these estates and continued to receive a small income. In 1912 the Bank of Victoria arranged the sale of the estates to the tenants. See Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 125.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

It is difficult to describe in a few words the pioneering experiences of Mysie White for in those days amenities which we now regard as the essentials of life were entirely lacking.<sup>14</sup>

Brudenell White's sister, Mabel shared her brother's admiration for their mother's early exploits. Some years later Mabel wrote to her brother and recollected their mother's pioneering years:

During mother's time on the various stations and farms she had some long and hazardous and fatiguing drives and campings out.

There was great hardship and much endurance for both Mother and Father, but the two of them were always making the best of whatever situation they found themselves in, and they gave no thought for themselves but always strove to do the best they could for their young family.

Mysie was a wonderful woman, she was moved hither and thither and yet she never lost her sense of proportion, and she managed to keep herself and her family up, and maintained her dignity through all her difficulties, and many times there was barely enough to keep the wolf from the door. She was an accomplished woman, she rode of course, and drove, and sang well, and was fond of her needlework and reading, but was always ready to put any of her interests aside for the needs of her family.<sup>15</sup>

In 1876 the White family settled in St Arnaud. The area around St Arnaud was reasonably benign and was rich with tree shaded crystal clear streams. This was a sharp contrast to the desolate, dry and burning expanse of the Mallee to the north-west. In September Mysie White gave birth to Brudenell White, her seventh child. The members of the family at this time were Maud Letitia, John Warren, Dudley Persse, Katherine Gertrude, Mabel Elizabeth, Cyril Brudenell Bingham. Some eighteen months later, Eustace Nassau White was born. In a short article for the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Norman Pixley only mentions seven children.<sup>16</sup> This discrepancy is possibly due to the death of a third child, Elizabeth, who died some years before. Elizabeth was born after John Warren (exact date unknown) and died at the age of 13 months at Eurambeen.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in *Ibid* p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> See Pixley, 'John Warren White and Family', p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> See Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 121.



For the White family, the four years spent in St Arnaud was a period of relative stability and prosperity. John White had established a business as a grain and wool buyer and had interests in a number of other local businesses including Fry's Mills and the chaff mills in Queens Avenue. He was also keenly interested in public affairs and was mayor of the town in 1878.<sup>18</sup>

Daily activity included duties around the family home and caring for the horses and dogs that were a large part of the family environment. Brudenell White would recall in later years that he was 'practically brought up on horseback'.<sup>19</sup> It was expected that the needs of the animals would be fulfilled before the needs of their owners and that a rigorously high standard of care was to be maintained.

Evenings were devoted to the family and they would gather around the piano and everybody was encouraged to sing. Mysie White had strong religious views and used this time to attend to her family's religious instruction. The family would pray together and reflect upon the texts that Mysie White used to illustrate particular lessons and to imbue her children with certain modes of behaviour or attitudes. The Whites were a close and loving family. Brudenell White, in particular, had a close affinity with his mother. Her influence permeated his character and personality.

White developed a quiet, gentle, courteous and unassuming nature. He was often embarrassed by outward displays of aggression, even his father's fiery temper occasionally caused embarrassment. In later years he wrote:

To be gentle, thoughtful and kindly are virtues that you have, and which will take you farther and make the journey easier than anything that is assumed or cultivated.<sup>20</sup>

White's devotion to his mother had also imbued him with a deep respect and admiration for women. At one point in his childhood some nuns provided his educational instruction.

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<sup>18</sup> *St Arnaud Times*, 25 February 1921.

<sup>19</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p.80.

<sup>20</sup> Letter Brudenell White to Rosemary White, 1934, quoted in Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 126.

According to Derham, White admired their kind nature and devotion to duty and developed a great respect for them.<sup>21</sup>

His self-effacing, easy going nature was underpinned by a set of strong and unwavering Christian values. These teachings provided him with a tremendous self-discipline and a resolute sense of duty and honour and shaped his ideals and attitudes throughout his life. White also became imbued with his mother's strength of character and determination. These facets of his character and his ideals were explicitly expressed in his early diary entries:

Mottos for 1895

Have life — see everything  
 Never tell a lie  
 Have your own opinion  
 Never drink or swear  
 Guard against immorality  
 Be straightforward and not afraid of anyone  
 Be determined, if you say a thing do it  
 Do all work well.<sup>22</sup>

In later years White earned considerable respect for his ability to speak his mind in a polite but forthright manner. In an analysis of White, Birdwood remarked that White gave his views to his leader 'fearlessly and unhesitatingly' and then carried out his commander's recommendations, even when they were contrary to his own.<sup>23</sup>

White's diaries also reveal a very strong work ethic. His father appears to have been particularly influential in this area. White recalled with some pride that his father had on three occasions been forced into poverty by various crises and on each occasion had picked himself up.<sup>24</sup> White's diaries reveal a deep concern for doing well in any task that he was set. Comments such as, 'work well done and away in good time', and 'work is only fair and

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<sup>21</sup> Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 126.

<sup>22</sup> Diary Entry, 1 January 1895, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 1.

<sup>23</sup> Birdwood, 'General Sir Brudenell White', pp. 5-7.

<sup>24</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p.80.

the ledger is a little out — not in a good humour today — swore plenty', are quite common.<sup>25</sup>

White confessed in his diaries to a certain ambitiousness. Like many idealistic young men he dreamed of making a mark upon the world and of being a person of some importance, if not greatness. On his twenty-fourth birthday White wrote in his diary:

In the ambitious dreams of my boyhood I had pictured myself as a person who would be of great importance at that age and I'm a somewhat insignificant and more or less dull subaltern of Austn [sic] Artillery. 'Oh fate hast thou any prizes in store for me — something to preserve me from the stale, flat and unprofitable plane of mediocrity...' <sup>26</sup>

For the lower classes ambition often relates to notions of social mobility and improving one's economic position. White was already situated within the upper class and hence social mobility was less important. For White, ambition was related to making a name for himself within the confines of his upper class social or professional group, in White's case the Permanent Military Staff. Great importance was placed on social status and name. He appeared to have little interest in social mobility. Nor was he openly opportunistic or prone to self-advertisement. Indeed, in keeping with his upper class family background White regarded this as uncouth and vulgar.

White was four years old when the family moved to Queensland in 1880. John White's pastoral interests had begun to decline and upon hearing Queensland was rich, expanding rapidly and currently enjoying an economic boom he decided that his family would be better off in this prosperous colony. The family spent several months in Albert Park in Melbourne before moving to Queensland. During this time Brudenell White developed a close bond with his brother Eustace. They were often seen playing together in the front garden. They never argued, always defended each other and were inseparable. On those few

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<sup>25</sup> Diary Entries, 10 July 1895, 7 November 1895, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 1.

<sup>26</sup> Diary Entry, 23 September 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 5.

occasions when they were apart their father would frequently ask 'where's the other fellow?'<sup>27</sup>

John White decided to travel ahead and prepare for his family's arrival. Mysie White auctioned their Albert Park home and made arrangements for the voyage to Brisbane. Initially the family moved around Queensland living in Gympie, Charters Towers and Gladstone before settling in Clayfield near Brisbane. In 1885 the Brisbane Stock Exchange was inaugurated and John White became its first president and the family was again reasonably comfortable.<sup>28</sup>

When Brudenell White reached school age he attended the local government school in Clayfield. Colonial educationalists believed; 'the true object of education is to train the mental faculties for the use, whatever it may be, to which they may be put [after school]'.<sup>29</sup> The curriculum emphasised the traditional subjects, the 'three Rs', but the cornerstone of the curriculum was English language and grammar. This was supplemented with object lessons, drill and gymnastics, and music. Geography and history lessons gave 'many opportunities for the cultivation of a love for Empire, and a pride in its extension'.<sup>30</sup>

In the later stages of his education White attended the Brisbane Normal School at the corner of Edward and Adelaide Streets in Brisbane. Normal Schools differed from State Schools because the primary function was to train 'pupil-teachers'. Pupil-teachers were mostly talented children, often as young as fourteen, who functioned as class teachers during the normal school day and were given teacher training immediately before and after school.<sup>31</sup> The school's liberal curriculum included drawing, vocal music, history, geometry, algebra and Latin. Language was considered an important aspect of liberal

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p.80; see also Pixley, 'John Warren White and Family', pp. 11-23.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Harlin, first headmaster Brisbane Grammar School, opening address 1 February 1869, quoted in Goodman, *Secondary Education in Queensland, 1860 – 1960*, p.48.

<sup>30</sup> *Queensland Official Year Book* (1901), p. 311.

<sup>31</sup> For a brief discussion of the Queensland Education System see Logan and Clarke, *State Education in Queensland*.

education and students were required to choose from either French or German.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the 1890s the pupils of the school were prepared according to the strict programme of its enthusiastic headmaster, J. S. ('Bully') Kerr. Consequently, the school dominated the annual scholarship examinations. In 1894, for example, pupils from the Brisbane Normal School won 14 of the 39 scholarships available to Queensland boys.<sup>33</sup>

Scholarships were an important means of entering the grammar schools which provided higher education but whose fees precluded entry for all but the economic and social elite. In 1891, the Brisbane Grammar School charged fees of £16. 16s per year. A further option was a full board secondary course offered at Nudgee College in Brisbane, at a cost of £10 per term.<sup>34</sup>

At this time the White family were once again overtaken by poverty as a result of the depression of the 1890s and there seemed little chance for Brudenell White to further his education in spite of his keen intelligence and imagination. The situation changed however, when White's eldest brother Jack, who was a member of the Queensland Police Force, paid the tuitions fees to enable his younger brother to attend Eton High School at Nundah for one year.<sup>35</sup> The school was modelled on its English counterpart and provided the children of Queensland's wealthy social elite with a classical education. This education included as compulsory subjects; arithmetic, English history, shorthand, bookkeeping, 'precise writing', geography, and English. A list of six optional subjects, including Latin, Greek and French, were provided with students being required to select one option.<sup>36</sup> The headmaster of Eton High School was Major A. J. Boyd who had been a master at Eton. It is unknown if

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<sup>32</sup> Wyeth, *Education in Queensland*, pp. 112.

<sup>33</sup> Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, p. 156.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Very few records about Eton School have survived. The school has a rather interesting history. It started as Eton Preparatory School and was situated at Milton, between 1877 and 1886. It was then moved to Nundah (1886 – 1893). As a boys' school it was known as Eton High School and achieved a good reputation through its results in the Sydney Junior and Senior Public Examinations. It was then sold to the Church of England and became known as St Francis Theological College. After the College moved out, the Society of the Sacred Advent moved in and established a boarding school for girls. In 1895 it returned to its former name Eton High School. The school moved to Toorak Hill and finally to Albion Heights in 1910 and became known as St Margaret's Church of England High School for Girls. A brief mention of the school is made in Goodman, *Secondary education in Queensland, 1860 – 1960*, p.130.

<sup>36</sup> Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, p. 165.

White actually graduated but during the twelve months that White spent at the school he not only gained a prize in shorthand but also established a close rapport and friendship with Boyd that was to last many years.

White was fifteen years old when he started his first job as a clerk at the Australian Joint Stock Bank in Brisbane on 19 January 1892. In later years he recalled

Just before Christmas my mother broke the news that I was to be a bank clerk. It nearly broke my heart, because I wanted to be a barrister like my grandfather ... my mother simply went to an old friend of the family, John Palmer Abbott – he was an inspector of the Union Bank ... and said: ‘You’ve got to take Brudenell into your bank’ ... and he very gravely and courteously replied: ‘very well Mrs White, if those are your orders!’<sup>37</sup>

White was determined to continue his education as far as possible and become a barrister like his grandfather. Each day White devoted a period of time both before and after work to furthering his studies. He would rise at 6am and undertake his studies until 8am at which time he rode from his home in Clayfield to the bank in Brisbane. Each evening he would return, sometimes very late if he had to work back, and then at 9pm he would continue his studies until midnight, reading everything that he could lay his hands on. Major Boyd, his former headmaster, suggested many books and subjects to broaden White’s knowledge, and generally guided White in his studies. White maintained this lifestyle diligently over the next three years.

It was possibly during this period that White became aware of and embraced the ideals of ‘The Coming Man’ thesis. By the 1880s Australians were becoming increasingly disillusioned with comparisons to the Old World stock and found ‘The Coming Man’ thesis of popular literature and the works of Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard attractive.<sup>38</sup> Incorporating the Social Darwinian concerns of late Victorian society ‘The Coming Man’ thesis argued that the industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain had stultified the Anglo-Saxon race and only at the fringes of empire

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<sup>37</sup> White reported in the *Melbourne Herald*, 16 March 1940.

<sup>38</sup> White mentions in his diaries that Kipling and Haggard were favourite authors, See for example, Diary Entries for 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, Item 5.

and frontier could the true Anglo-Saxon be found. The greatness of empire, it was argued, rested not the natural superiority of the English gentleman but rather on the 'the adventurer ready to take up the burden of empire, the ordinary soldier at the outposts of empire, [and] the settler civilizing its fringes'.<sup>39</sup>

Australians readily embraced this argument and found its embodiment in the Australian bushman. Henry Lawson's association of the 'real' Australian with the 'Coming Man' is explicit in a poem first published in the *Bulletin* in 1892:

Ye landlords of the cities that are builded by the sea  
 You toady 'Representative', you careless absentee  
 I come, a scout from Borderland, to warn you of a change,  
 To tell you of the spirit that is roused beyond the range;  
 I come from where on western plains the lonely homesteads stand,  
 To tell you of the coming of the Natives of the Land!  
                     Of the Land we're living in,  
                     The Native of the Land.  
 For Australian men are gathering — they are joining hand in hand  
 Don't you hear the battle cooeey of the Natives of the Land?<sup>40</sup>

The bushman quickly became imbued with the qualities of the 'Coming Man'. These qualities included comradeship, self-confidence, generosity, restlessness, and resourcefulness. The Australian bushman valued initiative rather than blind obedience; practicality rather than theoretical intellectualism; and independence rather than subservience.<sup>41</sup>

White accepted these ideas, as did many middle and upper class Australians. Indeed for White and many others the First World War provided an explicit validation of these beliefs. Writing after the war White stated:

Prior to the great war [sic] we had no history. But we had, free of tax, the legacy bequeathed us by our forefathers — a self-consciousness and a character founded on British tradition, and ready to respond to the challenge of British history. There is no doubt but that the great fighting qualities of the Australian soldier and of the workers at home were the result of

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<sup>39</sup> Richard White, *Inventing Australia*, p 78.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p 103.

<sup>41</sup> For more detail on the 'Coming Man' thesis see White, *Inventing Australia*.

development of the character possessed by our forefathers, in conditions of life which tended to strengthen and enlarge the best it contained. We must remember this.<sup>42</sup>

The bushman and the ideals of the common man were to receive their apotheosis in Bean's *Official History* and the subsequent articulation of the Anzac legend.<sup>43</sup>

### A Militia Trainee

While working in Brisbane White received his first taste of military life. Richard Dowse, an older colleague and friend of White's, was an enthusiastic volunteer soldier. Dowse was originally from England and his eagerness resulted in a rapid rise through the ranks. At the time he met White he was adjutant of the Queensland Volunteer Rifles. Dowse asked White to accompany him on a military camp. White enjoyed the camp and retained fond memories of it. However, he did not at this stage consider taking up a military career.<sup>44</sup>

In 1895 White was transferred to the branch at Gympie. This transfer provided White with a significant financial remuneration by increasing his salary from £52 to £120 per annum. This now allowed White to send a third of his weekly income to his mother, engage the local schoolmaster as a tutor so that he could continue his studies, and to pay for his upkeep. White was still determined to become a barrister and with the realisation that this would require a significant capital outlay he began to set aside a small weekly sum.<sup>45</sup>

At Gympie White made friends with Thomas William Glasgow who worked at the Queensland National Bank. White wrote:

... a young chap named Bill Glasgow was a clerk in the Joint Stock Bank in Gympie ... — I was there for the Union — and we had no clearing house. I had to deliver the cheques around the town which was all up hill and down. So Bill and I hit on a plan whereby one day he would take all the uphill deliveries and the next day it would be my turn. It was he

<sup>42</sup> White, 'Australia in the Great War', p. 59.

<sup>43</sup> Bean, *Official History*.

<sup>44</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.



who aroused my interest in the Militia and we became trainees together in the Wide Bay Regiment.<sup>46</sup>

While Glasgow may have aroused White's dormant interest in the militia his provisional commission was due to the efforts of C.B. Steele, a local mining surveyor and friend of White's, who also happened to be the local commander for the Wide Bay Regiment. White was provisionally commissioned into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queensland (Wide Bay and Burnett) Regiment on 7 October 1896.

It appears that at this juncture White began to seriously reconsider his future and consider a military career. The reason for this change after many years of diligent study is not clear but Derham speculates that it may have been due to the heavy financial burdens of becoming articled and also the lack of a university in Queensland.<sup>47</sup> Or it may have reflected his family's sense of tradition. Certainly, to gain a position as a Bank Manager was not a part of White's long term plans and he seemed keen to escape the drudgery of life as a bank clerk. The tedious nature of bookkeeping perplexed White and he became increasingly disenchanted with the lack of intellectual stimulation.<sup>48</sup>

White's consideration of a military career was not surprising given his upper class background. The military establishment had always identified with the interests of the landed social elites. It was not uncommon to find the second and third sons of these social elites in the army. Indeed within the upper class of Victorian society an army career was highly regarded.<sup>49</sup> In White's case a military career was a continuing chapter in a family history that was in many ways a chronicle of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. In a history that goes back to the beginnings of Norman Britain, the White family had established a long-standing custom of serving the crown and the state. White merely added his own distinguished chapter to that tradition.

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<sup>46</sup> White reported in the *Melbourne Herald*, 16 March 1940.

<sup>47</sup> Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 130.

<sup>48</sup> Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 129.

<sup>49</sup> For a much greater discussion of Victorian attitudes to the military see Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, esp. ch. 2.

The first White, or De Wit, stepped upon England's shores with William the Conqueror and after the defeat of Harold at Hastings in 1066 was rewarded for his support with an estate in Wiltshire. His son, Ethelbert, later became Lord Justice of Wales. A century later another ancestor, Walter Whyte, found himself called to arms in support of his monarch. This time it was to support Richard FitzGilbert de Clare's (traditionally known as Strongbow) campaign in Ireland. Henry II rewarded Walter Whyte's service and loyalty with a knighthood and in 1198 he became the first bailiff of Limerick.<sup>50</sup> During the Wars of the Roses another ancestor, Maurice Whyte, 'The Lancastrian', supported the House of Lancaster.

Under the House of Stuart the head of the family, Dominick Whyte was created Baron and Count D'Albi, both high titles of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1677 Sir Ignatius Whyte was created Marquis D'Albaville. A steadfast supporter of the Stuarts he supported James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 against the Protestant William of Orange. After the final defeat of James II, and his Irish allies, at the Battle of Aughrim in 1691 the English sought to crush Irish rebellion for good. James II and many other Irish nobles, including Ignatius Whyte, fled to France in exile. An estimated 120,000 Irish sailed for the safe haven of mainland Europe. This exodus became known as the flight of 'the Wild Geese' and rather than resulting in the defeat of Irish Catholicism served to spread Irish influence throughout Europe.<sup>51</sup>

Fifty years later support for the Stuarts and Jacobism was still strong. On 16 April 1746 Prince Charles Edward Stuart supported by a small Jacobite army met the forces of his cousin, the Duke of Cumberland, on a bleak Scottish moor at Culloden. This was the last pitched battle fought on British soil and at the end of the day an estimated 2000 Jacobites lay dead. With them was John White. The last hope of the Jacobite cause had been crushed.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p.79.

<sup>51</sup> For more detail see Hayes-McCoy, *Irish Battles*; Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*.

<sup>52</sup> Prebble, *Culloden*.

John White's son, Thomas, converted to Protestantism and returned to Ireland. From this point on the White family established themselves as members of the legal profession. Brudenell White's great grandfather, John White became a King's Counsel and his grandfather, Thomas Warren White, became known as the 'father of the Irish Bar'.<sup>53</sup> Brudenell White's father, John Warren White, had chosen a different path and joined the army. He served as an officer in the Rifle Brigade in Canada before migrating to Australia.<sup>54</sup>

John White told many stories about his ancestor heroes to his children.<sup>55</sup> They are important role models and establish key values and patterns of life not only for Brudenell White but also for other members of the family. White's family heroes are illustrative of a number of important themes. Firstly, they instilled service as an important family value, a tradition to be followed from generation to generation. But it was not any mere form of service; it had to be appropriate to the social position of the White family, appropriate to members of the middle/upper classes. The middle/upper classes of Victorian society believed they had an inherent right to lead the lower classes and consequently service involved leadership, be it military, professional or civic.<sup>56</sup> It was no coincidence then that members of the White family followed this long-standing tradition.

Loyalty and self-sacrifice is a second theme that emerges from these hero stories. In these stories White's ancestors put loyalty to the cause before self-interest and even life. Not until the cause itself died did the White family return to their estate and rebuild their life. Sacrifice is often associated with resolute and courageous leadership, a very appealing concept in Victorian society.<sup>57</sup> In later years the sacrifice of self-interest would become a characteristic of White's career and life.

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<sup>53</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> See Pixley, 'John Warren White and Family'.

<sup>55</sup> White's daughter, Rosemary Derham, mentioned these stories to the author during an interview on 15 June 1996.

<sup>56</sup> For a more detailed examination of middle/upper class attitudes see Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, esp. ch. 1. The relationship between the middle/upper classes and military leadership is mentioned in Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home*; Farwell, *For Queen and Country*.

<sup>57</sup> Kaye, *Myth-Makers and Story-Tellers*, pp. 81-83.

Late in 1897 the opportunity arose for White to attempt the officers' appointment examination for the Queensland Defence Forces. The examination that White was now preparing to sit normally required twelve months of intensive study. White did not have this luxury and had to accomplish all the required study in six weeks. On 15 October 1897 White wrote:

Headquarters have been pleased to allow me to attend the [Military] Class of Instruction from 28 October to 5 November 1897 and I have now to apply for leave from the Bank.<sup>58</sup>

In order to prepare for this examination his old headmaster, Major Boyd, and Major John Byron, who was at the time acting Commander of the Queensland Permanent Artillery, coached him. Byron was later confirmed as commander of the Queensland Permanent Artillery and later went on to become a Brigadier General in the South African Army. He was widely recognised as a very independent commander and a brilliant tactician and administrator. These were the individuals who provided White with his early military education.

One week before the examination White began to have doubts and told his mother, 'I cannot do the work — there just is not the time'. 'Try for my sake', she replied, 'I feel sure you'll succeed'.<sup>59</sup> White attempted the examination and passed close to the top of the list. On 12 December 1897 he wrote:

The 'Gazette' came out announcing that I passed the Queensland Defence Force Exam for Lieutenant obtaining 77% which is the second highest for lieutenants and the third highest on the list.<sup>60</sup>

After the examination White returned to his duties at the bank. Several weeks later on 9 December 1897 White travelled to Brisbane to undertake shooting instruction. He had not

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<sup>58</sup> Diary Entry, 15 October 1897, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 82; cf. Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 131.

<sup>60</sup> Diary Entry, 12 December 1897, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

mentioned this trip to his parents and upon arrival called in to see his brother Jack. White wrote:

Jack was pleased to see me and walked round to Mother's with me delighted at the idea that I had not apprised them of my visit. (Jack had a mischievous sense of fun.) He went into the house and found Mother and told her that he had a young fellow that he wished to put up for the night. Mother said she would try, anxious to oblige Jack, and he called out to me, 'Come in Mr. Williams and I'll introduce you to my mother'. Imagine Mother's surprise at meeting 'Mr. Williams' in uniform!!<sup>61</sup>

White was equally pleased the following day with his first attempt at rifle shooting. He top scored on the day with a score of 21 points at 300 yards.<sup>62</sup>

White again visited his family for a brief period at Christmas. On 25 February 1898 White left to return to Gympie and then on to Gladstone. His brother Eustace went to the railway station with him. Little did either realise this would be the last occasion that they would see each other. In April White was transferred to Charters Towers and it was here, in December, that White received news of his brother's death. White recorded in his diary:

At 12.50 on 14 December 1898 I received a wire from Dudley saying that he had received word that Eust [sic] was killed on Merivale Station, Mitchell, on the morning of Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> by a fall from a horse; the poor dear little chap broke his neck, how little I thought when I casually said Goodbye to him on 27 December 1897 that it would be goodbye forever.

'Oh for the touch of a vanished hand  
Or the sound of a voice that is still'.<sup>63</sup>

This was a considerable blow for White and he was deeply saddened by the news. He would often remember his brother in the years to come and wore a small silver ring, which his brother had given him, on the little finger of his left hand. White had recently applied for leave from the bank so that he could attempt to join the Queensland Permanent Artillery. The day after he received news of his brother's death he received news that his leave had been granted. White left Charters Towers on 18 December 1898 and travelled to

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<sup>61</sup> Diary Entry, 9 December 1897, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>62</sup> Diary Entry, 10 December 1897, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>63</sup> Diary Entry, 14 December 1898, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

Brisbane first by train to Townsville and then by steamer. Captain Victor Sellheim, who would later achieve prominence in the AIF, accompanied him to Brisbane.<sup>64</sup>

White's father and brother Jack were waiting at the dock when he arrived in Brisbane on 22 December 1898. It was a sad Christmas for the White family: every member of the family was deeply saddened by the loss of Eustace. Mysie White made special arrangements for his body to be collected from Merivale Station and returned to the family. On 9 February 1899 Eustace White was buried at Toowong Cemetery.<sup>65</sup>

After Christmas White visited Major Byron who was temporarily commanding the Queensland Permanent Artillery. Byron informed White that on 23 January 1899 an examination would be held for appointment to the Permanent Staff. White decided to attempt the examination and on 27 January 1899 received a letter from Byron requesting White to report for duty the next day. White had achieved the necessary score for an appointment to the Permanent Staff but needed to improve his French. White wrote in his diary:

... I had obtained the necessary aggregate but had not got 40% in the French paper which was necessary. I was however to do it again as soon as possible. I took up my duties at Barracks at once, and shortly afterwards procured the assistance as French coach, of Major Boyd (my old schoolmaster). Nothing much has occurred from that time up to the present. I worked, and am still worked pretty hard at French and at the same time am learning as much of my duties as possible.<sup>66</sup>

On 7 June 1899 White was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Queensland regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery. He was very pleased since the Royal Artillery was one of the more famous British Imperial regiments. White spent the first few months as a newly commissioned Permanent Officer living at home, in barracks or in camp. In August while White was waiting for his first posting his sister Mabel was married to Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Hutchison at St Johns in Brisbane. In November White gained his first intimation

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<sup>64</sup> Diary Entry, 22 December 1898, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>65</sup> Diary Entry, 9 February 1899, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>66</sup> Diary Entry, 9 February 1899, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

of his destination. 'The Major', White wrote in his diary, 'told me I would probably spend Christmas on Thursday Island'.<sup>67</sup>

White's appointment to the permanent staff marked a new chapter in his life. During these formative years White had learned, through the vehicle of his friends and family, middle/upper class values, beliefs and ideals. His family had taught him the importance of service and love of empire. This would always be an important facet of his life and he would always call England 'Home'. He learned the importance of hard work and good manners and like many members of his social class displayed an excessive politeness that would be fondly remembered trait in later years. When he became chairman of the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency in July 1928 White was responsible for approving loans and those whom he rejected often left smiling.<sup>68</sup> 'I've come out empty-handed', said one, 'but I couldn't be disappointed. It rather made me feel foolish to have asked him'.<sup>69</sup> Another applicant said, 'I never had "No" said to me so nicely'.<sup>70</sup>

White's family had instilled in him the beliefs and values of his aristocratic Irish ancestry. These values were combined with the beliefs, values and ideals of the Australian middle/upper classes. Friends, teachers and other influential people in his life reinforced the attitudes of the 'Australian Briton'.<sup>71</sup> His education had emphasised these values and especially a belief in empire and Australia's place in that empire.<sup>72</sup> White would never waver from the acceptance of England as the Mother country but over the years it would become tempered with a love of Australia.

When White joined the Army he was taught new values, beliefs and ways to act. White would necessarily embrace many of the new ideas but some would be changed, rejected or

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<sup>67</sup> Diary Entry, 11 November 1899, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>68</sup> Diary Entry, 1 July 1928, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 37.

<sup>69</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 200.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Cole, 'The Crimson Thread of Kinship', pp. 514-15.

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed discussion on empire and Australia's place in the British Empire see 'Observations' by Lieutenant CBB White. Papers of General Sir Brudenell White in possession of Lady Derham.

manipulated. He would interpret his social world within the framework of values, beliefs and values that had been so solidly reinforced during these formative years.



## Chapter 3

### Defending the Periphery

[Colonial] officers and men alike proved superior in this war [South Africa] to their British brethren; more adaptable to the business at hand; more used to the life in the open; handier to make shift under difficulties. They were horsemen, not men on horses. They have eyes and can use them, having been reared in countries with big distances and dazzling mirages. They are not intellectually fettered by rule of thumb, nor by red tape. The officers are not hampered by aristocratic habits and mannerism, but are more in sympathy with their men. The men are not mere machines without individual intelligence; but being used to think for themselves make better use of cover, and are less liable to panic when deprived of their leaders.

Richard Jebb<sup>1</sup>

... the performance of the splendid citizen army of Australia in the First World War was largely due to the training and experience its senior officers received with citizen soldiers in the various colonial militias.

D. H. Johnson<sup>2</sup>

When White joined the Permanent Staff of the Queensland Defence Force, it was at its peak establishment of 22 officers and 233 other ranks. The land force consisted of 200 officers and 2,745 other ranks.<sup>3</sup> The small cadre of permanent officers and other ranks undertook specialist tasks and the supervision of military instruction. There were no training schools or academies in which to learn the art of war. To make a career in this type of army required considerable enthusiasm and optimism, especially given that most of the highest appointments were held by officers on loan from the British army or men who had formerly held positions in the British service. In the defence estimate for 1885-86, for example, the

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* cited in Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence, 1870 – 1914*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Volunteers at Heart*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 197.

breakdown of nationalities in the permanent artillery was: twenty-three English, twenty-one Irish, four Scots, two Danes, one German, and three native-born Australians.<sup>4</sup>

This heavy preponderance of British officers within the colonial forces resulted in British military practices and social mores being embedded into, and imposed on, the Australian military landscape. These British practices and values were embraced and extended by Australian colonial officers who were largely drawn from the middle and upper stratum of colonial society and were consequently already predisposed to embrace the practices, beliefs and values of the imperial metropolis. This is substantiated not only by an examination of White's background but also an examination of the backgrounds of other Australian officers who influenced the development of Australia's various defence forces.<sup>5</sup>

With no coherent Australian military doctrine or formal military training colonial officers were often forced to engage in tactical military exercises with only limited knowledge. White seems to have been better situated than most of his contemporaries having received the tutelage and guidance of his former headmaster, Major Boyd and Colonel Byron, who was now Assistant Adjutant General of the Queensland Defence Forces, on a wide range of military subjects. The advantages of such patronage and mentoring would not have occurred to White as he travelled north to his first official military appointment and neither would he have given much consideration to the strategic importance of this first tour of duty.

### Frontier Garrison

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century many Queenslanders considered themselves to be the outpost of the Australian colonies in an increasingly dangerous and

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<sup>4</sup> 'Report of the Commandant upon the Queensland Defence Forces for 1885-86', quoted in *ibid*, p.128.

<sup>5</sup> For example see Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*; Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*; Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*. In an essay in 1967 sociologist Sol Encel examined a later period but pointed out that of the sixty senior AIF officers all came from middle/upper class backgrounds with two-thirds of them coming from professional and business oriented backgrounds. Similarly, forty-five of these officers had been educated at private schools, thirty-six of these at prestigious grammar schools. See Encel, 'The Study of Militarism in Australia'.

hostile Pacific region. The Queensland Defence Act of 1884 has been described as the most comprehensive defence scheme to be formulated by any of the six colonies.<sup>6</sup> Few had forgotten the Queensland initiative in annexing eastern New Guinea to the Crown in April 1883 and the rapid German annexation of north-eastern New Guinea following the British Government's refusal to support the Queensland enterprise.<sup>7</sup>

In New Caledonia the French were closer than the people in Sydney and the French were no friendlier to the British Empire than the Germans. The expansion of German and French influence elsewhere in the Pacific was not lost on the Queenslanders and they felt the jolt that was given to Europe and Asia alike by the swift victory of Japan over China in 1895. Some feared the development and expansion of Russian power even more than a resurgent Japan.<sup>8</sup> These anxieties had been given substance by 1885 with increasing Anglo-Russian tensions along the North-West Frontier in India.

In March 1885 a small Russian force occupied the village of Penjdeh in the northern Afghanistan border area. This directly challenged the British policy of maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer zone. The British administrators in both Delhi and London interpreted this move as a prelude to further Russian expansion. The British could no longer ignore the threat to India and were ready to go to war. Every colonial administration had responded to this supposed threat by placing their defence forces on alert. This tension was more acutely felt in Queensland where there was a perception that they occupied a colonial front line. Major General Bevan Edwards, who was conducting a survey of Australian military forces, stated;

Queensland is more open to attack than any other part of Australia, and while the southern portion can be assisted by the other colonies the northern part would have to rely on the Navy and its local forces.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*, pp. 103-7.

<sup>8</sup> Australian attitudes to various external threats in the 1890s, especially Japanese, are discussed in Sissons, *Attitudes to Japan and Defence 1890 – 1923*, esp. ch 1.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, *Volunteers at Heart*, p. 122.

Lieutenant General Sir Peter Scratchley had prepared a Report on Australian Defence in 1881. Scratchley believed that a small maritime force tasked with causing significant damage to the main population centres was of more direct concern to Australian defence than any potential occupation force. Consequently Scratchley recommended the development of a series of coastal fortifications in order to protect strategic harbour entrances and areas that were of great importance to merchant and war ships making their way from eastern Australian ports to Europe. Of particular importance within this strategic plan were King George's Sound in Western Australia and Thursday Island in Queensland.<sup>10</sup> In February 1886, the Federal Council of Australasia recommendations, accepted Scratchley's, yet nothing concrete was done until 1891.<sup>11</sup>

On 6 April 1891 a committee of the commandants of the military forces of the eastern colonies visited Thursday Island, King George's Sound and Port Darwin. Their report released in May suggested that for Thursday Island

... three six-inch guns should be mounted in a battery on Green Hill, supported by two six-pounder quick-firing guns on a lower level. A military road around the southeast end of the island would allow the garrison to deploy nine-pounder R.M.L. guns to repel a boat attack through the eastern approaches. The permanent garrison should consist of 2 officers and 48 other ranks of the Queensland Permanent Artillery, to be supplemented by 250 infantry in time of war.<sup>12</sup>

The new garrison arrived to take up residence at the recently completed Green Hill Fort in 1893. Early in 1899 Captain Walter Coxen assumed command of the garrison. Coxen was a skilled mathematician who had recently returned from England where he had been training at the Royal School of Gunnery at Shoeburyness and the Royal Artillery at Aldershot.<sup>13</sup> This was the strategic background that preceded White's appointment.

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion on these Colonial defence arrangements see Nicholls, *The Colonial Volunteers*; Johnson, *Volunteers at Heart*.

<sup>11</sup> Federal Council of Australasia, *V & P.*, 2 February 1886, quoted in Johnson, *Volunteers at Heart*, p.117.

<sup>12</sup> 'Report of Committee of Officers on the Defence of Thursday Island', 18 May 1891, quoted in Johnson, *Volunteers at Heart*, p.121.

<sup>13</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1899-1939, Vol 8, pp. 130-131.

On 12 December 1899 White and his two dogs, Fencer and Cash, boarded *Isman* and departed Brisbane. He noted in his diary:

Nothing eventual occurred during the voyage as far as Townsville, which place we reached at 6 a.m. on the 15th December. I was not sick and rather enjoyed my trip. The dogs too were quite comfortable and enjoyed their daily run.<sup>14</sup>

The *Isman* departed Townsville at noon and after an uneventful journey arrived at Port Kennedy at 10 am on 18 December 1899. Upon arrival at Thursday Island White reported to Coxen. White described his arrival and his first few days on Thursday Island in his diary:

[I] walked up to the Quarters and met captain Coxen who was very nice to me. Both dogs arrived safely and seemed glad to be on terra firma again . . . Since my arrival here I have been busy learning my work and becoming acquainted with the nice people about. I spent Xmas day . . . after church parade . . . at a Mr Beors — a solicitor here — and nice people. The day before I did not go to church in the morning, but after tea with the Beors went with the family, and was anything but pleased with the service which savoured of mockery . . . Since my arrival here the work has been going well and Coxen and I are good friends . . . I think that my twelve months here ought to pass pleasantly . . .<sup>15</sup>

White's comments regarding the service are intriguing; there is no mention in his diary as to the nature of the mockery. It may have been that the service did not accord with his traditional Christian views. For the next few weeks each day progressed in a similar manner, early morning parades, tea with the Beors family and the occasional ready stations at the appearance of a foreign vessel.

In February White noticed a significant change in Coxen's attitude and was baffled by the sudden change. White wrote in his diary:

Firing exercise on morning parade. Further trouble with Coxen today. Must have rubbed up against him somewhere as he is making things fairly unpleasant.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Diary Entry, 11-18 December 1899, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>15</sup> Diary Entry, 24 December 1899, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 3.

<sup>16</sup> Diary Entry, 6 February 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 4.

The following day White again experienced problems with Coxen:

6 inch . . . gun drill early morning parade. CO gave me a further scotching today for imitating Footts [sic] style of return of salutes to men. Not a very pleasant day.<sup>17</sup>

In her recent biography of White, *The Silent Stunt*, Derham speculates the change in attitude was due to Coxen's relationship with Miss Adelaide Rebe Beors, whom Coxen later married.<sup>18</sup> Derham may be correct in suggesting Coxen regarded White as a possible threat but White's comments regarding the method of saluting suggest that Coxen's shift in attitude could have been due to the perception that White was embracing attitudes and mannerisms that Coxen found disagreeable. As White's commanding officer Coxen may have felt honour bound to ensure that White's behaviour was impeccable, especially since this could possibly reflect on Coxen in later years.

Personality differences could also explain the unpleasantness that characterised the relationship between White and Coxen during the remainder of their time together on Thursday Island. White's leisure time was frequently spent walking around the island or reading. His favourite authors at the time were Rudyard Kipling and Rider Haggard (both proponents of 'The Coming Man' thesis). In his diary White provides an interesting insight into his thoughts on literature and science.

I am reading for a second time, Kiplings [sic] *Light that Failed* and think it more beautiful than ever. Would like to induce Coxen to read it but he has a deep rooted objection to fiction in any form — an objection apparently born of an absurd idea that all books other than on science in some form or another are 'perfect rot' to use his own words. I'm sorry for him as although I see the value of scientific books yet I like not my bread without butter.<sup>19</sup>

In one sense the entry illustrates the differences in character between Coxen and White. This contrast in their personalities may explain, at least in part, the antagonism between the two men. It also demonstrates a degree of ambivalence on White's part towards scientific

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<sup>17</sup> Diary Entry, 7 February 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 4.

<sup>18</sup> Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 144.

<sup>19</sup> Diary Entry, 26 July 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 5.

knowledge. This ambivalence may in part be due to White's own upper class upbringing. The upper classes had a traditional dislike for the more technical and scientific fields of endeavour.<sup>20</sup> It may also be a reflection of White's acceptance of 'The Coming Man' with its emphasis on practical rather than theoretical epistemologies. Certainly, White never fully embraced the technological progressivism of some of his later colleagues. He always qualified his position with recourse to more humanist arguments.

In March the Governor of New Guinea visited and during a conversation with White mentioned that he had contacted Brisbane for an aide-de-camp (ADC) to be appointed. Seeing an opportunity to escape the unpleasantness imposed by Coxen White offered his services. The Governor informed White that he would be happy to have White as an ADC and the next day White applied for six months unpaid leave so that he could accept the position. For reasons unknown White's application was unsuccessful and he was forced to remain at Thursday Island.<sup>21</sup>

As if this was not unpleasant enough, White began to suffer from severe migraines. On some occasions the headaches were so severe that a doctor had to prescribe medication.<sup>22</sup> Although White suffered from migraines for the remainder of his life it was at Thursday Island that he learnt to come to terms with them and he does not appear to have allowed them to overly affect his performance.

White's first practical application of basic tactical principles came during his stay on Thursday Island and he was certainly pleased with the results. On 21 February 1900 he wrote:

In the afternoon we had a sham fight and did battle firing. I had command of 28 men and attacked OC with 13. Very satisfactory taking it all thro' [sic]. Would have been a complete victory for me if scouts had more efficiently carried out their duties. Battle firing very satisfactory all though under trying service conditions. Finished with brilliant bayonet charge. Did a big afternoon's work and much enjoyed a bath on my return . . . feel very fit.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of this issue see Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, esp. ch. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Derham, *Silent Ruse*, p. 145

<sup>22</sup> Diary Entry, 22 June 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 5.

<sup>23</sup> Diary Entry, 21 February 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 4.

In June White took part in a more rigorous tactical operational exercise. White was again pleased with his overall performance.

At 12 o'clock [sic] the battery was handed over to me to arrange all details for and take up a position on Aplin Hills. Made all necessary arrangements and marched out at 3.30 p.m. Bivouacked on Aplin Hills, placed sentries carefully and during the night made desultory attacks with good morale effect on [Lieutenant] Smith who was holding field gun position . . . Did not sleep at all myself — spent all night among sentry lines making sure of vigilance. Learnt since that my first night attack had them all under arms three hours after their withdrawal, and that second attack was commenced as soon as they . . . had retired. My men were all given a good tea and fifteen out of twenty-eight camped the whole night. Sentries were divided into two picquets of two sentries each — they did their work excellently. Coxen and [Doctor] Chesson visited me a couple of times during the night.

Before daybreak withdrew sentries whose place was taken first by an extended screen. March remainder in two sections to a hill on the left flank and commenced a sham attack with screen covered by good fire from remainder, withdrew gradually and marched round the island and attacked again in rear, as much as possible under cover. Did not see my way clear to charge fort, however, although party reached Sgt Tobins qtrs (sic) with comparative safety. Formed up and were addressed by Coxen at about 8.30 and marched to Barracks. Feeling a bit tired and seedy. Dealt with a couple of prisoners after breakfast and spent remainder of day sleeping, frightful head — Chesson had to give me some medicine.<sup>24</sup>

These tactical exercises were the highlight of White's stay on Thursday Island, which ended on 12 March 1901 when his tour of duty concluded. White left Thursday Island onboard *SS Eastern* and arrived in Brisbane on 17 March.

### **The Commonwealth Horse**

The transfer to Brisbane provided White with a refreshing change that allowed him to put the difficulties of Thursday Island behind him. It was a happy period with much time spent playing tennis and attending parties with friends and family. White's newfound happiness was, to some extent, due to his recent though blossoming relationship with Amy Ricardo, the daughter of Colonel Ricardo.

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<sup>24</sup> Diary Entry, 22 June 1900, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 5.



On 1 January 1901 Australians celebrated Federation and the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia. In large and very public celebrations Australians had inaugurated the birth of a new nation-state with resounding demonstrations of support for the crown and the imperial connection. In Sydney a procession marched through the streets after which the new Governor General, Lord Hopetoun, was sworn-in at Centennial Park. Melbourne was chosen as the interim site for the new federal Parliament, which was to be opened on 9 May 1901. In April White was appointed as adjutant of the Queensland contingent that was sent to Melbourne to celebrate its opening. Upon his return he was appointed ADC to the Commandant.

The following months were pleasant though busy. In between his duties as ADC White followed the progress of the Boer war and collected all the information that he could.<sup>25</sup> Although White does not explicitly state a reason for this interest it is probable that White hoped to get an opportunity to participate at some juncture.<sup>26</sup> Like many young, and often idealistic soldiers, White dreamed of his first encounter in battle. He wished to be tested in combat and on 3 January 1902 his wish was granted.

Colonel Byron sent for Woodcock and I at about 10 a.m. and told us that we had been provisionally appointed to the Queensland Unit of the First Commonwealth Contingent. Awfully delighted. Could hardly stand still while the Colonel told us. Feel sorry for the little Mother and Amy's sake.<sup>27</sup>

Byron had recommended White for the appointment to the Commonwealth Contingent.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The war was also known by several other names such as Anglo-Boer War and the South African War.

<sup>26</sup> The war between Britain and the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State began on 11 October 1899. It brought to a head almost a century of distrust and tension.

<sup>27</sup> Diary Entry, 3 January 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7; White's appointment was confirmed in a memo, AAG QDF to Secretary, Department of Defence, 10 January 1902, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 24.

<sup>28</sup> Memo AAG QDF to Secretary, Department of Defence, 10 January 1902, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 24. The decision to raise a Commonwealth Contingent was made after Chamberlain made a request for 1,000 mounted troops. This request came as a result of manoeuvring by Victorian politicians W. McCulloch and A. Peacock. Peacock was premier at the time came dangerously close to violating the federal constitution prohibiting the raising of military forces. See Field, *The Forgotten War*, pp.145-6.

Recruitment for the Australian Commonwealth Horse proceeded along the guidelines set down by the Imperial authorities in London. These criteria demanded that preference be given to recruits who were single and had previously served in South Africa. It was also necessary that such recruits had demonstrated abilities in shooting and horsemanship. There was no shortage of volunteers and many of those selected were returned men. They were to be paid 1s 2d per day prior to embarkation and 5s per day after they embarked. The British government was to reimburse the Commonwealth for the costs of equipping and transporting this contingent.<sup>29</sup>

The preparations were slow, volunteers had to be selected and equipped, and horses had to be selected, checked and dipped. These preparations continued quietly and unobtrusively. They were not accompanied by any of the fanfare and expressions of support that greeted earlier contingents. In his book *The Forgotten War* Laurie Field speculates this public ambivalence may have stemmed from the public disclosures about the inhumanity and appalling conditions of the concentration camps.<sup>30</sup> This public lack of interest contrasts sharply with the number of recruits available and the dominance of Imperial loyalty that still existed with the wider society.<sup>31</sup>

The Queensland contingent left Brisbane railway station without any public demonstration at 6.45 am on 27 January 1902.<sup>32</sup> After a short stay at the Sydney showgrounds the Contingent was embarked at short notice and without ceremony on 18 February 1902.<sup>33</sup> White described the embarkation in his diary:

Took the horses down, two companies at a time, one poor fellow of A Company was killed going down with the horses. Dragged along the street.

The boat cast off at about 1 p.m. and now we are lying out till tomorrow evening, am now beginning to feel in earnest that I have truly left all I love. May God keep them.

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<sup>29</sup> CPD, Vol. 7, 4 January 1902, p. 8740; *Daily Telegraph*, 24 January 1902.

<sup>30</sup> Field, *The Forgotten War*, p. 149; The *Daily Telegraph* reported that in September, 447 Adults and 1964 children died out of a total of 55,092 adults and 54,326 children. *Daily Telegraph*, 21 October 1901.

<sup>31</sup> Field, *The Forgotten War*, p. 151.

<sup>32</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1902.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 1902.

Ugh, how I hate the sea, except from a distance. The morning commenced with the wind apparently in search of something in a hurry and that something not hereabouts, the pace increased, so the seas has risen to rebuke the wind and between them they are playing solid havoc with the peace of the ship. And with me. I'm not sick, but every time she sinks into a trough it makes me giddy. The same routine today, fire stations told off at afternoon parade...

Stables, parades — parades, stables same old never tired sea, then bed and rest, and on Sundays Church services...

Troop clothing inspection this morning. Really some men want horses to look after them.<sup>34</sup>

### The Last Drive

The voyage aboard the *Custodian* was uneventful and the first contingent of the Commonwealth Horse arrived in Durban harbour on 17 March 1902. The Australians disembarked and moved into a wet encampment. The stay in Durban was brief and White, as adjutant, was responsible for organising the men and horses in readiness for the journey to Newcastle. The contingent travelled north by train via Ladysmith, Elandslaagte and Dundee. The landscape was different from his experiences in Queensland but nonetheless White found it interesting:

Gloriously interesting journey . . . the country I saw before dark was pretty. Newcastle is surrounded by mountains and kops [sic], the high range of the west being the border. Greatly stuck by the absence of trees everywhere.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of March more than 2,000 Australian and New Zealand troops were camped outside Newcastle near Mount Majuba. The main duty involved actively patrolling and holding the passes through the Drakensburg Range. This was intended as a blocking force that would trap De Wet's commandos. A large British force was harrying this Boer force and driving it towards the Drakensburg. The weather intervened and the resulting storms

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<sup>34</sup> Diary Entries, February 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

<sup>35</sup> Diary Entries, 24 March 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

and mists, however, allowed the De Wet and his men to slip through the cordon.<sup>36</sup> White recorded his impressions of his first patrol:

Started out on the patrol to Monkey's Pass with twenty men. The country is beautiful but the most deceptive imaginable. Looking from afar I thought I had nothing but beautiful grassy plains to cross. The ground was grassy, certainly, but full of holes, and everywhere water-courses with steep banks. Arrived safely and took over from Weir. Posted the piquet on Monkey's Pass at 4.30 p.m. The awfulness of charging the Kopjes has dawned on me. I started, thinking the post under a mile, and the rise steep, but nothing terrible. The walk proved much more than a mile and the hill made us rest some half dozen times during the ascent, and this taking it easily.<sup>37</sup>

Kitchener reacted to De Wet's escape by moving his forces into the far western Transvaal where he organised what became known as the great Western drive. It was the last drive of the war and was intended to force De la Ray's commandos back against a chain of blockhouses. The Australian Commonwealth Horse was ordered to Klerksdorp where it was to join Colonel Thornycroft's column for the drive. The Australians and New Zealanders travelled by train via Volksrust, Standerton and Potchefstroom. During the journey a train collision near Frederikstad resulted in the deaths of 14 New Zealanders. White mentions this accident in his diary:

Pretty but monotonous train trip. Saw my first armoured train at a station a few miles above Volksrust. About 7 p.m. we were disturbed by many shots which appeared to strike the train. Gave us quite an exciting time. We had to put our light out and the train stopped. Did not feel as much fear as I thought I would. No marks on the train, it is possible the firing was from a block house. Ran through Johannesburg at night, passed Elandsfontein and Krugersdorp, reached Frederikstad at about 11 a.m. and heard that through a collision a few miles on, 14 New Zealanders were killed and 16 injured. How thankful I am that we just escaped that, it might so easily have been us. Had to stay here until 8 p.m. The horses were taken out and watered, they seem to have travelled well. Was awakened at Potchefstroom and heard more of the train collision. The injured were there. Passed the scene of the disaster when I was asleep. Such a number of graves here. In one 'Bed' — at the head of which is a wooden cross — lie 19 Boers.<sup>38</sup>

Upon arrival at Klerksdorp the scene was one of disorder and confusion:

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<sup>36</sup> For a brief account of the operations conducted by the Commonwealth Horse see Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, pp. 387-8.

<sup>37</sup> Diary Entry, 4 April 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

<sup>38</sup> Diary Entry, 11 April 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

After much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth we got the horses and luggage out of the train. The men's trucks were a sight, everything littered all over the place. Nothing together anywhere.

We walked over to camp and led our horses, about a two mile tramp, then we sat down and waited for our horse lines and camping gear ... My old horse travelled up without mishap. [I] hear we are to go under Colonel de Lisle's Command and our new title is De Lisle's Australian Brigade.

Today produced events promising amusement, but they failed in fulfilment. Colonel De Lisle was to have inspected us, but while at it he must have received some information for out we all went in warlike array. Colonel Keckewich's column coming in relieved our anxiety. Nothing happened. My signallers were quite useful, I have them separate now. Colonel De Lisle has great ideas about travelling light.<sup>39</sup>

Twenty thousand men assembled at Klerksdorp and were commanded by General Sir Ian Hamilton. After an inspection by Kitchener on 22 April 1902 the Commonwealth Horse left camp and travelled towards the western railway and away from the line of blockhouses between Klerksdorp and Ventersdorp. The purpose of this drive was to force the enemy towards the western railway, which was being constantly patrolled by six armoured trains. A secondary and slightly more distasteful task (at least as far as the men were concerned) was the application of a scorched earth policy. This entailed the complete destruction of crops thereby denying the Boers necessary food supplies. The success of this tactic is evidenced by seizure of 7,000 rounds of ammunition and almost 200 wagons. In addition thousands of cattle and mules were seized and 367 Boers surrendered.<sup>40</sup> 'Most of the prisoners', Kitchener wrote on 2 June 1902, 'fell into the hands of Lieut-Colonel De Lisle who, with the 1st and 2nd battalions of the Commonwealth Horse Regiment, formed part of Thornycroft's column'.<sup>41</sup> White describes this operation in more detail:

We passed over a regular desert of a plain, with a skyline showing clear but unattainable. Not a drop of water anywhere along the way, it was my first experience of a real mirage, with beautiful water showing on the skyline here and there but always moving ahead of the thirsty men ... I had a troop in the advanced screen, and saw the Boer rearguard retreating before me over the skyline. Before dawn we moved out as a screen, and shortly afterwards, fired on what we took to be a Boer. The men were certain it was a Boer Scout, but I 'hae me doots', I fancy it was a bush. It was a weary thing remaining out all day on observation post. Coming in I expected each moment to be fired on by our outposts. Great excitement tonight at the chance of a fight.

<sup>39</sup> Diary Entry, 15 April 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

<sup>40</sup> Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, p. 388.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

... we had our outposts entrenched behind a barbed wire fence, and several times during the night we turned out and manned the trenches owing to heavy firing, most of which was on our right. We learned today that the Boers with the aid of cattle made a rather determined effort to cross the line but failed. There was very little bloodshed, one Boer only being killed. Halfway between Bodenstein and Devondale on the Mafeking Line, 250 Boers surrendered to De Lisle and with them a number of horses etc were captured. Strange enemy, they held a church service as soon as the formalities were done ...

... Yesterday's result earned us a rest, we shifted camp to Colonel Williams column today as Colonel De Lisle is going home. The New Zealanders now form a brigade of their own in our place under their own Colonel Davis.

... The prisoners went away yesterday afternoon by train, with an armoured truck fore and aft. Great fun over the distribution of their horses, and I got a Mauser rifle, the Colonel kindly securing it for me.

... I should like to get some fighting shortly. Camp routine is no novelty.<sup>42</sup>

For four days the Commonwealth Horse advanced across the savannah. Each evening they entrenched a six-mile front and dug strong redoubts to afford protection for twenty men from possible artillery bombardment. In the 100-yard interval between the redoubts they strategically placed wagons and barbed-wire entanglements.

This tactic combined with the blockhouse lines, the approach of a third winter and increasing shortages of food and clothing convinced the Boer military leaders to enter into peace negotiations. On 15 May 1902 the Boer Assembly of Delegates met at Vereeniging to hear reports from the leaders of the various commandos. The Boer leaders signed the Treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902 thereby losing their independence and bringing the conflict to an end.<sup>43</sup>

After the western drive, which was the last one of the war, the Commonwealth Horse camped along the Ventersdorp – Klerksdorp line and engaged in routine patrolling. With the proclamation of peace they returned to Durban by way of Johannesburg, Elandsfontein and Newcastle. There was some time to relax and enjoy other activities:

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<sup>42</sup> Diary Entries, May 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

<sup>43</sup> Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, pp. 388-9.

... on then to Potchefstroom ... pretty little village like an English one, with quantities of running water, willows, birches and mill wheels ... Had a day's shooting on the right flank with Woodcock, Weir and Rigall — a splendid day, shot very little but enjoyed ourselves like schoolboys. I rode my old chestnut Forward ... on 25<sup>th</sup> June to dusty camp in Elandsfontein after two days of long treks and fast travel, dirty dusty and tired on arrival ... the next day horses handed in. It went to my heart. My old horse gave me quite a reproachful look as personally I loosened him amongst hundreds of others ...<sup>44</sup>

On 28 June 1902 White wrote to his father from Elandsfontein. This was the last letter he wrote in South Africa and describes his experiences in South Africa.

The terms offered by the Govt on the Conclusion of Peace, to those desirous of settling here, are by no means good. Small lots, and a 5% interest would not be as productive of good results as some of the Downs repurchased lands at the same interest.

From Newcastle we went to Klerksdorp in the SW Transvaal. Going thither we just escaped the railway accident in which fourteen New Zealanders were killed. At Klerksdorp we had the honour of being inspected by Lord Kitchener. He is a fine looking man, not as hard looking as his photographs would have, but stern and energetic. A face characteristic of what he is — the greatest soldier of the age. Lord Roberts is not quite the God, out here, that the papers led us to believe. His prowess is acknowledged but no fighting man thinks he can compare with Buller and Kitchener. 'Tis wonderful the love the British Soldier has for Genl Buller. And there is no doubt that he accomplishes an almost superhuman task.

We spent a good deal of the time in the vicinity of Klerksdorp, destroying corn and mealies (a poorer sort of corn). This greatly disgusted the men, the work was not congenial to them. Their spirits were restored, however, upon hearing that they were to participate in a drive to the Bechuanaland Border. I will describe the modus operandi of a 'drive' on my return; 'twould take too long here. Sufficient here to say that about twenty columns, about a thousand strong each, formed up in an extended line of fifty miles. The advance daily was simultaneous and continuous. The work cannot be described as arduous, altho' getting into camp at about 4 p.m. daily after marching from 7.30 a.m., and then turning to and digging trenches to hold half a squadron, and which had to be occupied before dark, was not — well all beer and skittles. Towards the end of the drive the trenches were held by whole squadrons, each one guarding the same extent of front as they had occupied during the day. Rather trying work, in the trenches, for it is at night that the wily Boer makes his attempt to get thro'. Our drive was very successful for we marched up to the last day without a fight. On the last night the Boers tried to rush the line just on my right but the attempt failed. The following morning 260 of them surrendered to us — and since then I have been riding one of their horses — a real beauty.

After staying some time on the Mafeking Railway line, we trekked quietly back to Klerksdorp, passing on the way many battlefields of interest. At Klerksdorp we heard the news of peace, somewhat to our personal chagrin. I would have liked to see a little fighting.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Diary Entries, June 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

<sup>45</sup> Letter, 28 June 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6288, item 28.

White's letter, and diaries, in many ways reproduces the 'Boy's Own' adventures so popular during this period.<sup>46</sup> White rather romantically portrays war as an adventure and a game, which is contested by the 'wily Boer' and the British Empire. For White the champions of the British Empire are Kitchener and Buller. White's comments about Lord Roberts not being the 'God' of popular culture nor measuring up to either Kitchener or Buller are interesting. In the late Victorian period Roberts was regarded as one of Britain's best military leaders (the other being Lord Wolseley) and he was apotheosised after his early victories in the Boer War.

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the British army command was highly factionalised between Field Marshal Lord Wolseley's 'Africans' and Field Marshal Lord Roberts's 'Indians'. There had been a struggle for the control of the British Army and the prestigious position of Commander-in-Chief at the Horse Guards in London. When Buller was appointed to command British forces in South Africa he was then Wolseley's heir apparent and the main rival to Roberts. Roberts' supporters in parliament managed to restrict Buller by appointing their own people to Buller's staff. The failure of the British during 'Black Week' provided the ideal vehicle to remove Buller from contention and position Roberts to take over from Wolseley.<sup>47</sup> White's support for Buller and criticism of Roberts suggests that White may have been influenced by this factionalism and was taking a specific position, albeit as a colonial and outsider. It may also reflect the much closer association that Buller enjoyed with troops in the Natal, the area in which White served.

White's comments may also reflect the growing ethnocentrism of Australian soldiers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 'Coming Man' articulated an 'Australian type'. Although largely characterised by specific behaviour, the Australian type was also distinguished from its British cousin by perceptions of physical stature. The Boer War provided a crucible in which the Australian type was tested and was perceived to be

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<sup>46</sup> For a greater discussion of the 'Boy's Own' narrative and its associated 'soldier hero' see Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*.

<sup>47</sup> Pakenham suggests that Buller was a victim to the factionalism within British military command and attempts to portray him in a more favourable light. See Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 76, 457-8.



superior to the old world Briton, thus laying the foundation for the 'digger' mythology of the First World War.

White's acceptance of the 'Coming Man' thesis and the 'soldier hero' of popular culture, then, may have influenced his comments regarding Roberts.<sup>48</sup> Standing five feet three inches in height Roberts appeared to be the very antithesis of the 'soldier hero'. Kitchener, in comparison was tall, aristocratic and could be physically imposing. Although Buller was not as imposing a presence as Kitchener, he had won the Victoria Cross during the Kaffir War in 1878. Yet, both of these generals appeared to epitomise Britain's 'soldier hero'. White's comments may have been a reaction to the difficulty he faced in reconciling the popular image of Roberts against the reality of his diminutive physical stature. This was the first impression recorded by A.B. Paterson who described Roberts as a 'small grizzled old man' of seventy.<sup>49</sup>

White's letter and diaries, also provide an indication of his sense of place. Place is an important aspect of both individual and communal identity because it represents a grounding metaphor which defines where 'we' belong. It helps define who 'we' are and provides the linkages to a much broader 'imagined' community.<sup>50</sup> White's 'imagined community', like that of many Australians of his generation, embraced two facets. The first was his identification with England, the Imperial Mother. He regarded England as home and often compared the townships of South Africa with those of England, a place he had never seen. This, combined with his upper class upbringing, predisposed White to embrace a wide spectrum of imperial values. The second facet was White's identification with Queensland. He comments on the poorer quality of the South African farmland when compared with that of the Darling Downs in Queensland. This duality linked White to the 'imagined community' of an Anglo-Saxon British Empire and at the same time rooted him

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<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of the 'Coming Man' see White, *Inventing Australia*. For a discussion of the 'soldier hero' see Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*.

<sup>49</sup> Paterson, *Happy Despatches*.

<sup>50</sup> For a more detailed discussion of place see Keith and Piles (eds.), *Place and the Politics of Identity*; The concept of 'imagined community' is discussed in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

to the Empire's periphery in Queensland. In some ways this romanticism would be modified as a consequence of his journey back to Australia.

### The Voyage Home

The Commonwealth Horse reached Durban in July and British authorities quickly embarked the colonial troops for the journey home. The *Drayton Grange* was a steel steamship with a high superstructure and Admiralty authorities in Cape Town chartered it to transport 1,500 troops to Australia. On 11 July 1902 the *Drayton Grange* left Durban with 41 officers and 1,946 other ranks on board.<sup>51</sup> The ship's master took the *Drayton Grange* along a southerly route where the weather was generally inclement and the heavy seas, light draught and overcrowded conditions made the journey uncomfortable. The *Drayton Grange* was not long out of Durban when an outbreak of measles occurred, exacerbating the already uncomfortable conditions and making it clear that the preparations for the voyage had been inadequate.

White was orderly officer to Colonel Lyster, the officer commanding the troops, and his duties kept him busy and as a consequence he did not maintain his diary during the voyage. The following entry is typical of those few he made:

An alarm of a man overboard tonight, a buoy with a patent luminous substance attached was thrown over and the ship stopped, a boat was lowered, great excitement ... and false alarm ... Much pressed for hospital accommodation. Good deal of sickness, measles and pneumonia.<sup>52</sup>

The *Drayton Grange* left Durban with hospital accommodation sufficient for forty patients. Just prior to leaving it had been necessary to put two men ashore because they were suffering from measles. Unfortunately there were others embarked who also had measles but the symptoms had not yet appeared. The day after leaving Durban the first instance of measles and influenza became apparent. The cold wet conditions, the close atmosphere of

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<sup>51</sup> *Argus* (Melbourne), 31 July 1902.

<sup>52</sup> Diary Entry, 16 July 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.

overcrowded troop decks and other unsanitary conditions soon intensified the problem and the hospital accommodation rapidly became inadequate.<sup>53</sup>

With the ship's hospital soon filling it became necessary to establish temporary hospitals in other parts of the ship. The main troop deck was first, followed by the officer's smoking room and then the orderly room. This was not sufficient however and it was necessary to establish a hospital in the troop quarters. The frustration caused by the conditions became apparent and some of the men voiced their opposition. White was responsible for making these arrangements and the men 'threatened to toss him in a blanket', but according to Bean, White's polite and forthright explanations led to their co-operation and he remained untossed.<sup>54</sup> White does not mention this incident in his diaries and Bean's brief biography only mentions the incident. It is unknown exactly how White managed to avoid being the victim of a potential mutiny.<sup>55</sup>

The *Drayton Grange* landed at Albany on 30 July and the medical officers who were concerned about the condition of the sick recommended that they be landed at Albany. The quarantine station was empty and it was argued that it would be ideal for a temporary hospital. A telegraph was sent to Major General Sir Edward Hutton, who commanded the Australian Military Forces, requesting permission to land the men in order to save lives. The Acting Minister of Defence, Sir William Lyne, gave permission and instructed the ship's officers to make the necessary arrangements. The medical authorities at Albany, however, refused permission for the sick to be landed and would only allow healthy men to land. Unable to effectively relieve the conditions onboard, the vessel was forced to continue to Queenscliffe in Port Phillip Bay. When it arrived on 6 August five deaths had occurred

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<sup>53</sup> Between leaving Durban on 11 July and arriving in Sydney on 10 August 234 men had been hospitalised: 154 with measles, 39 with influenza, 23 with pneumonia, 4 with dysentery, 4 with tonsillitis and 1 with enteric fever. *CPP*, 1901-1902 Session, Vol. 2, 'Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into and Report upon the Arrangements made for the Transport of Troops returning from Service in South Africa in the SS Drayton Grange', p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 83. In a conversation with White's daughter, Rosemary Derham, she told the author that White had received a number of similar threats during the voyage.

<sup>55</sup> The report tabled in parliament mentions two incidents of insubordination but does not mention mutiny as such. Some doubt was cast on the veracity of evidence for the first incident. The second incident was explained as a rejection of a suggestion rather than refusal to obey orders. *CPP*, 'Report of the Royal Commission', pp. 11-12.

and a further 12 men died in the weeks following their return to Australia.<sup>56</sup> The vessel stayed in Melbourne for two days before continuing on to Sydney and it finally completed its journey on 10 August.

In his official investigation into the conditions onboard the *Drayton Grange*, Major General Hutton reported:

... the number of troops for which this ship was allotted was not exceeded, and it may be assumed that the letter of the regulations as regards accommodation was complied with. It is unquestionable, however, that the upper deck accommodation was inadequate, for so large a number of men. The hospital accommodation, moreover, did not provide for the number of beds laid down by the Admiralty transport regulations, and medical transport regulations.<sup>57</sup>

The Commonwealth Royal Commission found similar inadequacies in troop and hospital accommodation.<sup>58</sup> In both cases blame was apportioned to the Admiralty rather than Imperial or Commonwealth military authorities.

The Boer War represented a valuable learning experience for White. Until he arrived in South Africa his military education had largely been theoretical with little opportunity to engage in the more practical aspects of soldiering, such as tactical movement and patrolling. The fact that White did not participate in any actual fighting allowed him to keep his distance from the war and retain his romanticism. In South Africa White was also able to assess, first hand, the relative merits of the imperial military machine and commanders. Although White's background had predisposed him to view them in a favourable light it was evident that colonial units, with their less formal structures, were better able to adapt to the nature of the Boer War than the more formally structured Imperial units.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> CPP, 'Report of the Royal Commission'.

<sup>57</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 9 August 1902.

<sup>58</sup> CPP, 'Report of the Royal Commission', pp. 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> A number of commentators have suggested that Colonial soldiers were more effective against the Boer than Imperial soldiers. See for example Firkins, *The Australians in Nine Wars*, esp. ch 2. Also Johnson, *Volunteers at Heart*, p. 200. To the best of the author's knowledge this generalisation is yet to be adequately tested by more rigorous comparative studies.

White did not talk about the voyage on the *Drayton Grange* and his diaries, as already mentioned, were incomplete but it is clear that the voyage had a painfully sharp effect upon him. He became acutely aware that poor quality planning and preparations had significant ramifications for the men serving under him as his later career would show. White consequently set himself high standards in the quality of his planning and preparation. In later years he was extremely critical of poor quality staff work and was reluctant to commit to operations that he considered had been insufficiently thought out.

In the years following the Boer War White would undergo his professional development as a staff officer. Much of this development was undertaken in England where he was introduced to mainstream British military culture. His colonial beginnings to some extent ensured that he was not entirely subsumed and allowed him to bring his 'outsiders' point of view to bear on military problems.

## Chapter 4

### A Valuable Staff Officer

In order to become qualified for employment on the General Staff, officers must have been educated previously up to a certain common standard of military knowledge, and have become imbued with the requisite uniformity in training and practice. This uniformity in training and thought can only be obtained by passing officers intended for General Staff work through a staff college.

General Sir William Nicholson<sup>1</sup>

[White] has excellent abilities, has had exceptional experience as my ADC, and on many occasions as private Secretary, and possesses many qualities which mark him out for a valuable Staff Officer.

Major General Sir Edward Hutton<sup>2</sup>

At the time White joined the AMF it was administered by a small permanent staff that provided administrative and specialist instructional staff. Opportunities for advancement were scarce, and much of the military training was informal. As noted earlier there were few training schools and consequently formalised training was rare. White's military knowledge has been gained as a result of the efforts of a small group of former Imperial and currently serving officers. White's role in the Boer War had been restricted to patrolling and staff duties and this had produced few opportunities for developing his military knowledge.

In 1904 White was appointed as aide-de-camp (ADC) to Hutton. In many respects this represented a turning point for White. They developed a fondness for each other that went beyond the traditional 'protector-protégé' relationship that was such an important facet of the late Victorian – early Edwardian British Army.<sup>3</sup> Hutton introduced White to the world of Imperial defence policy and British military thought. White's subsequent appointment to

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<sup>1</sup> Chief of the General Staff, General Sir William Nicholson, December 17, 1908, quoted in Hittle, *The Military Staff*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>2</sup> Minute Paper by Major General Sir E Hutton, 7 November 1904, AA, MP84/1, File no. 2002/4/21.

<sup>3</sup> This relationship assumed an almost father/son fondness. In a letter to Hutton in April 1908 White wrote '... were I your son I would not have been more overjoyed to find that every soldier ... is loyal to you and the work you did'. Letter White to Hutton, 26 April 1908, White papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 19.

the Staff College at Camberley, located in rural north-western Surrey, provided White with a more formal military education and introduced White to a military system shaped by tradition, ceremony and hierarchical rigidity.

White's extensive imperial training has resulted in him being labelled an 'Imperialist' and/or a 'Hutton' man by a historiography that views early Australian military development as a contest between 'Imperialists' and 'Australianists'.<sup>4</sup> For historians such as John Mordike and Chris Coulthard-Clark military development between Federation and 1914 is viewed as a constant struggle between Hutton's 'Imperialists' who they believe wanted to organise Australia's military forces to provide an expeditionary force for imperial wars, and 'Australianists' who wished to make Australia militarily self-reliant.<sup>5</sup> This proposition is underpinned by a belief that Australian nationalism was fully formed before 1914 and was totally irreconcilable with Imperial nationalism. In part, this perception is the result of the backward projection of 1980s' attitudes towards nationalism and imperialism, a period when the two concepts were definitely regarded as incompatible. This was not the case between Federation and 1914.<sup>6</sup> Many notable Australians believed it was 'not impossible for Australians nourished by a glorious literature and haunted by old memories, to be in love with two soils'.<sup>7</sup>

This historiography positions the reader to implicitly view White as anti-Australian and to regard his achievements as the product of nepotism and favouritism. This has resulted in White being virtually ignored and hence, important aspects of White's career and his effect on Australian military development have been neglected. Although Geoffrey Serle and Jeffrey Grey are correct in asserting that White, in particular, benefited from his association with Hutton, they ignore the fact that this relationship opened doors and set precedents that

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<sup>4</sup> In more traditional nationalist accounts of Australian military affairs it is suggested that Imperialist 'Hutton' men, such as White, Bridges and to a lesser extent Chauvel, worked against Australian interests as represented by Hoad and Legge. For greater discussion of these issues see Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*; Grey, *A Military History of Australia*; and Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these issues see Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*.

<sup>6</sup> For an account of Australian nationalism and its influences on military development see Bentley, 'Australia's Imperial Force'.

<sup>7</sup> Hancock, *Australia*, p. 51.

not only benefited other Australian officers, such as Thomas Blamey, but also influenced certain aspects of the AIF's development.<sup>8</sup> In order to fully appreciate the influence of White on the development on the AIF it is necessary to examine White's experiences in Britain and how these experiences shaped his thinking about defence organisation and planning.

### **A Hutton Man**

White's return from South Africa allowed him a brief period of leave with his family in Brisbane before returning to Melbourne and an appointment on the Headquarters Staff. This signalled a return to the more mundane routine of peacetime soldiering. Much of his time was occupied by the need to take part in the usual drills, parades and guards of honour. He also gave intermittent lectures and undertook inspections of the various fortifications located at Queenscliffe, Swan Bay, Franklin Island and Nepean.

White had friends and relatives in Melbourne and the surrounding district. His social calendar quickly filled with visits and parties. He frequently visited his friend and tutor from Queensland, Colonel Byron. He was also a regular visitor at the residences of the Governor General, Lord Tennyson, and General Hutton. Another figure high on White's social agenda was Amy Ricardo with whom he enjoyed a continuing close relationship. He frequently described her as his 'dearest of dear little girls'.<sup>9</sup>

The New Year began on a high note for White with the arrival of his parents and he looked forward to being able to take a brief holiday with them. They travelled to Eurambeen to see White's aunt, Maria Lucinda. Usually referred to as 'the Amma', she was now almost seventy-seven, widowed and lived with a son and daughter. She had not seen her brother, John Warren White, and his family since they had left for Queensland and was looking forward to seeing them and most especially the nephew who had only recently returned

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<sup>8</sup> For comments on White see Serle, *John Monash*, p. 169; and Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 69. In 1912 Blamey attended the Staff College at Quetta in India and the General Staff of the AIF was highly regarded. Serle, *John Monash*, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> Diary Entry, 7 August 1902, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 7.



from the Boer War. White was pleased to be at Eurambeen and had a particular fondness for his Aunt Maria whom he described as 'a fine looking old lady'.<sup>10</sup>

During his stay at Eurambeen White was introduced to Maria Lucinda's granddaughter, Ethel Davidson. She was born in Toorak on 14 November 1878 and was the eldest of the nine children born to Clamina Beggs of Eurambeen and Walter Davidson of Alanvale near Stawell, Victoria. She was a strikingly handsome woman standing five feet seven inches tall and in contemporary photographs conveys a certain elegance. White found Ethel Davidson delightful and seemed surprised at the effect that she had upon him. He confided in his diary 'fraid I'd forget little Amy if I stay flirting with Ethel any longer'.<sup>11</sup> White had been secretly engaged to Amy Ricardo for some time so he tried to put these feelings for Ethel Davidson behind him. He failed and continued to see Ethel Davidson.

Their relationship grew and White eventually asked her to marry him. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this was the fact that he was still engaged to Amy Ricardo. White arranged to keep his engagement with Ethel a secret for some months, ostensibly to protect Amy from gossip and provide her time to find another potential suitor. Although the full circumstances are unknown his behaviour would appear to contradict his earlier espoused philosophy of 'never telling a lie' and 'being straightforward'.<sup>12</sup> White and Ethel Davidson were eventually married at a ceremony performed at Christ Church, South Yarra on 14 November 1905.<sup>13</sup>

White's social life was not the only aspect of his life that took an unexpected turn at this time. When he returned to Melbourne in February he went to see Colonel Byron who informed him that General Hutton had requested him for his ADC.<sup>14</sup> Years later in England Hutton confided to Ethel, 'I just picked him on my own ideas of his ability'.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Diary Entry, 1 January 1903, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 8.

<sup>11</sup> Diary Entry, 9 January 1903, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 8.

<sup>12</sup> Diary Entry, 1 January 1895, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 1.

<sup>13</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p 185.

<sup>14</sup> Diary Entry, February 1903, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 8.

<sup>15</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p 167.

White was pleased with the appointment and realised that such a move could prove advantageous to his career.

A gunnery course intervened before he could take up this appointment and in May he travelled to the School of Artillery in Sydney. When he arrived he reported to Colonel Stanley and Major Coxen (his superior on Thursday Island). White noted in his diary,

His reception was more than curt, and Hurst and I have been given a bare room between us. Soldiering, Ugh!<sup>16</sup>

The course was long and demanding and the strain of constant study became evident. The various comments recorded in White's diary are illustrative of his feelings and self doubts: 'Back to the Army again Sergeant, and hating it more than ever', and working 'like a black slave in the hopes of doing well'.<sup>17</sup> It is unlikely that White hated the army and was merely expressing his frustration at the effects of the long and demanding course. In the end his efforts paid off and when the results were announced he finished at the top of the course with a score of 90%.<sup>18</sup> He spent Christmas with friends and relatives and when he returned to Melbourne in 1904 he took up his appointment as ADC to General Hutton and moved into the Hutton home, the Grange.

Hutton had been appointed GOC in 1902 and was responsible for the reorganisation of the Australian Military Forces. He was widely experienced and was regarded as a highly capable administrator. He had previously been Commandant of the New South Wales Military Forces and the Canadian Militia and he had commanded Australian soldiers during the Boer war. Hutton had an abrasive personality and a highly controversial record of ignoring the wishes of his colonial employers and placing imperial objectives before national interests.<sup>19</sup> His tenure was marked by conflict as he unsuccessfully attempted to reconcile Imperial objectives with national interests. According to the *Melbourne Age*

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<sup>16</sup> Diary Entry, 26 May 1903, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 8.

<sup>17</sup> Diary Entries, July to September 1903, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 8.

<sup>18</sup> Diary Entry, December 1903, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 8.

<sup>19</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 69.

Hutton owed his loyalty to the War Office and as a result felt compelled 'only in a very secondary and subordinate sense ... to consult the wishes of those who have engaged him and pay his salary'.<sup>20</sup>

White spent twelve months as Hutton's ADC at a time when White was still young and enthusiastic but relatively inexperienced and impressionable. There is little doubt that the time spent with one of the Empire's most experienced soldiers left an indelible mark on White. White travelled Australia with Hutton and stayed with the State Governors and the Commandants of the various military districts. In addition White accompanied Hutton to various high level meetings with senior defence and government officials. For one of such junior rank it presented White with an unprecedented opportunity to learn about the dynamics of the Army and defence policy formation. During this period White was able to discuss many issues concerning the Army, and Imperial and national defence with Hutton.

In February 1904 the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War created some speculation that Australia would send a military attaché to observe the conflict between two powers that were equipped with modern weapons. The press speculated that Colonel John Hoad, then Deputy Adjutant General (DAG) at Army Headquarters, would be chosen.<sup>21</sup> The Minister of Defence, the Honourable Austin Chapman, selected Hoad without seeking the advice of Hutton, who believed that he should have been consulted. Hoad left for Japan on 30 March 1904 and upon his arrival in Tokyo reported to the Chief British Military Attaché, Lieutenant General Sir William Nicholson.<sup>22</sup>

Hutton had strong views about loyalty and regarded Hoad's acceptance of the appointment as an act of disloyalty and this merely strengthened the low opinion that Hutton had already formed about Hoad's abilities. Hutton argued that Hoad had been a failure as DAG because he had 'neither the sound military knowledge, educational qualifications nor personal characteristics for such a responsible position' and suggested that Hoad's appointment had

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<sup>20</sup> *The Age* (Melbourne), 26 May 1904.

<sup>21</sup> *The Age* (Melbourne), 29 February 1904.

<sup>22</sup> Hoad's departure was reported in *The Age* (Melbourne), 29 March 1904.

been due entirely to the fact that Australia had no other officer suitable for the position.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly enough Nicholson made a very similar assessment of Hoad in Japan when he stated that Hoad was 'an officer of inferior education and small military capacity'. Nicholson went on to suggest that Hoad was an officer who knew 'how to keep in touch with the leaders of political parties in his country'.<sup>24</sup> The implication of both assessments is that Hoad's advance had been a product of political patronage rather than ability.<sup>25</sup>

This conflict between Hutton and his senior staff officer possibly coloured White's own views about Hoad. White had already developed a very close relationship with Hutton, a relationship that lasted more than twenty-one years. He regarded Hutton as 'one of the finest and greatest soldiers I have ever known'.<sup>26</sup> Some years after Hutton returned to England when White was Director of Military Operations (DMO) White wrote:

...it is quite firmly accepted that you are the founder of the Military Spirit in Australia and its patron saint...<sup>27</sup>

Years later when the British and Australian Governments were considering the formation of an Imperial General Staff White wrote to Colonel William Bridges, then Chief of Intelligence, informing him that

The IG [Hoad] is at last doing something for the War Office having now prepared their magnus opus on the Imperial General Staff ... I believe the IG is now stating his proposals, suggestions or whatever he may call them as to the method of forming the Australian Section. Rather hard on him seeing that not yet has he quite grasped what a General Staff means!<sup>28</sup>

White's comment is extraordinary especially given his junior status as a Captain. He does not appear to have discussed the General Staff with Hoad and his assessment of Hoad's

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<sup>23</sup> Hutton quoted in Coulthard-Clarke, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson quoted in Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 157.

<sup>25</sup> For an account of Hoad's career see Perry, 'The Military Life of Major-General Sir John Charles Hoad'.

<sup>26</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne), 16 March 1940.

<sup>27</sup> Letter White to Hutton, 4 March 1913, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 19.

<sup>28</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 15 January 1909, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 3.

understanding of the General Staff model would appear to reflect Hutton's opinions of the man. Yet White's comment may also have reflected his own growth in confidence and knowledge after he successfully completed his training at the Staff College.

During the Boer War Hutton had been impressed by colonial forces and believed that a greater exposure to imperial methods of training would improve the standards of military practice and knowledge in the Dominions. This belief was clearly evident when he nominated White for the Staff College at Camberley. In his recommendation he stated that White 'has excellent abilities, has had exceptional experience as my ADC, and on many occasions as Private Secretary, and possesses many qualities which mark him out for a valuable Staff Officer'.<sup>29</sup>

Towards the end of November Hutton's posting came to an end and it was time for him to return to the British Army. White was saddened by this and wrote:

It was a sad farewell. I rode lead in the team which took the General's carriage to Port Melbourne. The General is taking me to Adelaide ... Glad to be with him ... Arrived in Adelaide, most grieved to say farewell to my General. Impossible to help loving him.<sup>30</sup>

After Hutton left Australia the Federal Government decided to abolish the position of GOC and replace it with a Military Board of Administration. To a large extent this decision was due to the constant conflict between Hutton and Cabinet, which had raised questions about whether control of the Army should rest with civil or military authority. The Military Board consisted of three military officers and two civilians. Significantly, the Military Board was conceived as a committee in which no military member would enjoy supreme authority. At all times this authority rested with the minister, who was also the Board's chairperson.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 'Minute Paper' by Major General Sir E. Hutton, 7 November 1904, AA, MP84/1, file no. 2002/4/21.

<sup>30</sup> Diary Entry, 17 November 1904, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 9.

<sup>31</sup> *CPP*, 1904 Session, Vol. II, 'Defence Forces – Memorandum By The Minister For Defence On the Administration and Control Of', p. 358; *CPP*, 1904 Session, Vol. II, 'Defence Forces of the Commonwealth – Memorandum by a Committee in Regard to the Command and Administration of the Military and Naval Forces; Together with Memorandum Thereon by Senator Hon. A. Dawson, and Major-General Sir E.T.H. Hutton', p. 361.

In the meantime White returned to the routine of Army Headquarters and tried to remain patient while his seniors decided his future. He continued with his studies and in June he sat more military examinations. When the results were published in July he received 80 percent in three subjects and 100 percent for his tactics paper.<sup>32</sup> In due course White was informed that the Military Board had approved Hutton's recommendation and that he was to proceed to the Staff College at Camberley.

### Homeward Bound

When Hutton mentioned the possibility of his going to Camberley White felt honoured that he had been selected to attend the Staff College and was excited by the possibility of going 'Home'.<sup>33</sup> White waited almost twelve months for news of his impending trip 'Home' and when it finally arrived he was in the midst of preparations for his wedding to Ethel Davidson. After returning from their honeymoon they then began preparations for their journey to England.

The Whites boarded P & O's new ship *Marmora* and began their five-week journey to England in late November. The seas became heavy as the ship crossed the Bight and with the constant heavy rolling Ethel soon became sick. Even White, himself, admitted to the fact that he did not feel well.<sup>34</sup> During the journey across the Bight he wrote:

Horrid place the Bight with its never ending swell and the countless Albatrosses ... in search of plunder ... such troubling of the waters ... But the morning brought comfort, dear morning how often you dispel the ghastly phantoms which night conjures up.<sup>35</sup>

Although White does not mention the Drayton Grange one is left to wonder if the phantoms that occupied his dreams are those from his last trip across the Bight when he returned to Australia from South Africa.

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<sup>32</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p.173.

<sup>33</sup> See diary entries November 1905. White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 10.

<sup>34</sup> Diary Entry, November 1905. White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 10.

<sup>35</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p.187.

After leaving Fremantle the pair encountered calm seas and smooth sailing. This was a much happier time and they both looked forward to the rest of the journey. The next stop was in Columbo in Ceylon, regarded as one of the many jewels that decorated the British Imperial crown. Whilst in Ceylon the Whites explored its many sights including Mount Lavinia. During this journey they travelled part of the way in a rickshaw pulled along by a man. White found this practice distasteful and later described it as a 'degrading employment of human beings'.<sup>36</sup> From Colombo the journey took them by way of Aden Suez and Port Said where they celebrated Christmas and New Year. It was here that White had another encounter with his phantoms, this time in the shape of the *Drayton Grange* itself. From this point White's efforts to record and describe his journey ceased. According to White's daughter, Rosemary Derham, this was the first time that White had seen the *Drayton Grange* since his return from South Africa.<sup>37</sup> The sudden pause in his journal implies that events on the *Drayton Grange* had had a profound effect on White.

The *Marmora* berthed in Plymouth on 5 January 1905. The Whites had arrived in England during the winter and it was cold and grey and as they travelled to London by train they surveyed a landscape that was vastly different to one they had only recently left. White was not required to report to the Staff College until 22 January 1906 so this provided them with an opportunity to explore London, visit the Huttons and then look for a suitable home. They eventually located a small house close to the College. It was called *Geraghmeen* and it belonged to a retired Irish General named Strange. This was to be their home for the next two years.<sup>38</sup>

Although White was happy to be 'Home' the same cannot be said for Ethel White. Her father had arrived in Australia as a young child and her mother was born in Australia. They did not call Britain 'Home' and consequently Ethel White did not have the same psychological attachment to England that White did. The grey landscape and the social formalities were vastly different from her native Victoria and she missed Australia. This homesickness, and hence Ethel White's Australianness, was intensified by the confusion

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<sup>36</sup> Diary Entry, December 1905, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549. item 10.

<sup>37</sup> Conversation between Rosemary Derham and author, June 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, pp. 189.

created by her frequent, and unconscious, use of Australian slang which English people had difficulty in understanding.<sup>39</sup>

When warmth returned to the landscape the Whites visited historic Oxford and took long walks. In August the Whites went to Ireland and visited their cousins. They travelled and saw many sites. They attended a polo match, theatre, and the Dublin Horse Show.<sup>40</sup> Horses had always been a part of White's life and his time in Britain was to be no different. Ethel White provides some idea of White's experiences during this period:

Brudenell used to bicycle to the College for lectures, also all round the country, mapping out the district and working out all the military schemes that the training involved ... It was expected of officers at the Staff College that they should ride in the drag-hunt during the Winter months of the hunting seasons. Brudenell had to keep a horse and a part-time groom. The horse was stabled somewhere in the village ... the Australian Government I think allowed him part of the upkeep. It was only a mediocre hunter, but being a good rider, this was soon recognised by his brother officers at the College and he was often lent good horses and also some that their owners, not being good riders, wanted him to try out for them ... He only had one fall during the two seasons, his horse fell but he was not hurt. I was very nervous while he was out and was thankful to see him come home unhurt.<sup>41</sup>

British officers generally placed great faith on a man's riding ability and it was frequently regarded as a test of character. Even White believed that

... he could tell clearly as noonday the determination of a man by watching him at the hunt. There was the man who set his jaw and went for it – who, if he had a good horse always led. Always behind him there would be a man who went where that man went; rode close behind him over the fences; took the jumps where he took them. The front of the field would consist of these leaders, each with a small bunch of followers – both sorts on the best horses. Then a gap. Next came a similar lot of leaders, determined to go on, but on poorer horses. After them was a similar attendance of men hanging on to them – also on second-rate horses. Then another gap. Lastly a third bunch who were not in the hunt for the love of it at all, but because it was the thing to do.<sup>42</sup>

In spite of Ethel White's initial homesickness the period spent at *Geraghmeen* was an immensely happy time for the White and his young wife. On 23 March 1907 White's

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>40</sup> The Whites stayed with Joe and Annie Symes. Annie's mother Adelaide Gibton [nee White] was a sister to Maria Lucinda Beggs [nee White]. Diary Entry, 1906, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 11.

<sup>41</sup> Ethel White's memories quoted in Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, pp. 84-5.



daughter Margaret Clamina Brudenell White was born. She was later christened at the Military Chapel at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. White was later to describe this period as the 'happiest chapter' in his life.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Staff College and British Military Thought**

At this stage it is valuable to digress briefly to examine the place of the Staff College in the British military system. Located in rural north-western Surrey the Staff College at Camberley was an integral part of the British Army's general staff system which had been created in 1906 by then Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane.<sup>44</sup> The college's purpose was to train 'officers not only for staff work but also for the duties of command'.<sup>45</sup> Implicit in this purpose was the goal of creating a British school of military thought that could be disseminated throughout the empire.<sup>46</sup> This had long been a tacit policy of British military authorities but was not realised until 1906.<sup>47</sup>

An interesting aspect to this push to impose a uniform body of knowledge on the colonies was the fact that the British Army had always rejected the notion of a uniform doctrine for itself. A number of factors explain this. The first of these was the professional rivalry between the three main combat arms. Changes in military technology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century altered the traditional delineations between the combat arms thereby increasing tensions and customary rivalries.<sup>48</sup> This rivalry ensured that no coherent combined arms policy or method of war was adopted in the years prior to the 1914 and continental involvement.

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<sup>43</sup> Diary Entry, 19 December 1907, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 12.

<sup>44</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Haldane's military reforms see Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*; and Gooch, *The Plans of War*.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919*, p.18; Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, pp 82-83.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919*, p.18.

<sup>47</sup> There have been a number of studies examining Imperial Defence Policy. The most useful of these are Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*; Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911*. Also offering useful perspectives are Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854 – 1914*; and Gooch, *The Plans of War*.

<sup>48</sup> Travers, 'The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought', p. 533.

A second area of rivalry, and potentially more pervasive in its influence, was the regimental system as it existed in the infantry and cavalry.<sup>49</sup> Although the essence of the British Army's *esprit de corp* was derived from the regimental system it ensured that complete cohesion on an organisational level was non-existent. As one historian suggested:

The word 'army' in our language means nothing more than a loose federation of small elite warrior groups, often extremely jealous of each other, together with some larger groups of lower caste auxiliaries who unite for war ... The structure is tribal; each tribe with its own unique mores, totem and rituals and of course eligibility for membership. Its officers are heads of families, sects and tribes. The group exists for itself. Loyalty to it is total and religious in its intensity.<sup>50</sup>

An officer or soldier joined a regiment, learned its history, customs and traditions. He generally stayed with the regiment for the term of his career. A soldier did not describe himself as an infantryman or cavalryman rather he was a Buff, a Fusilier, a Green Howard or a Hussar.

Reforms introduced by Edward Cardwell, the Secretary of State for War, in 1881 attempted to encourage consolidation in the regimental system. These reforms entailed the introduction of long-term enlistments for private soldiers, the abolition of the purchasing system and its concomitant property qualifications for officers, the 'localisation' or regionalisation of regimental depots and recruiting, and the linking of the Militia and Volunteer battalions (citizen soldiers) to the regiments.<sup>51</sup> Although some regiments had adopted County titles in the later half of the eighteenth century it was not until these reforms had been undertaken that the County regiment really came into its own. From this point on the County regiment became consolidated with several battalions sharing the regimental family's traditions. A key ingredient in the consolidation of the regimental system was the transformation of two centuries of accumulated glory into tribal distinctions: distinctions that became symbolically embodied in the regimental cap badge.

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<sup>49</sup> There are very few studies of the regimental system available. For a brief overview of the system see Keagan, 'Regimental Ideology'; Farwell, *For Queen and Country*.

<sup>50</sup> Bidwell, 'Five Armies', p. 171.

<sup>51</sup> Keagan, 'Regimental Ideology', p. 7.

After the reforms, the regiment, and hence the British Army, became a reflection of British society with class, upbringing, schooling and powerful patrons shaping careers. The regiment and its affiliations were more important than formalised education and advancement was often due to patronage.<sup>52</sup> The regiment embodied a number of aspects that appealed to upper and middle class Victorians. Firstly, most regiments had a reasonably long and glorious genealogy. The twenty-five most senior regiments had been established before James II had been deposed. Secondly, 'localisation' had rooted the regiments into the social fabric of the Counties. This was potentially very gratifying for regimental officers who found their status considerably improved, and for the landed interests who found their own social position consolidated. Thirdly, the position of Colonel-in-Chief was always a member of the royal family. This position helped fuse the regiment into the national fabric. Regiments often took their name from a one-time association with the royal family. Every 'King's', 'Queen's' and 'Prince of Wales's' regiment derives its title from a specific royal who held that title.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the principle of seniority within the regiment ensured that command of the regiments had become virtually elective and entry into the regiment was governed internally. This resulted in the regiment being as effective a self-governing entity as it had been in earlier days.<sup>54</sup>

Although these rivalries prevented the formation of any official coherent doctrine a semi-official one, garnered from Britain's nineteenth century colonial wars, emerged and became embodied in the *Field Service Regulations*.<sup>55</sup> Central to British doctrine was the assumption that offensive action was intrinsically stronger than any defensive posture. The need for the infantry to close with the enemy regardless of cost was emphasised in the training manuals of the day.<sup>56</sup> The *Field Service Regulations* stated:

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<sup>52</sup> Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919*, p.18.

<sup>53</sup> The Green Howards (Princess of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire), for example, derived its subtitle from its association with Alexandra, consort of Edward VII, while that couple were still the Prince and Princess of Wales. The regiment still uses Alexandra's cypher as its badge.

<sup>54</sup> Keagan, 'Regimental Ideology', p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> *Field Service Regulations* (London, HMSO, 1902, 1909 and 1912).

<sup>56</sup> *Infantry Training* (London, HSMO, 1914), p. 134.

*Decisive success in battle can be gained only by a vigorous offensive ... Superior numbers on the battlefield are an undoubted advantage, but skill, better organisation, and training, and above all a firmer determination in all ranks to conquer at any cost, are the chief factors of success.*

*Half hearted measures never attain success in war, and lack of determination is the most fruitful source of defeat.*<sup>57</sup>

Defensive posture was something that ‘must only be assumed in order to await or create a favourable opportunity for *decisive offensive action*’.<sup>58</sup>

Naturally, with its imperative to train officers to take up command and operations staff positions, the Staff College embraced and taught these ideas. In one discussion paper students were given the following statement: ‘Every general engagement should have for its object a decisive victory, in order to bring a campaign to an end in as short a time as possible’.<sup>59</sup> Students then had four days to produce a discussion paper on the issue raised.

**Table 1: Staff College Curriculum, 1903 – 1912**

Subject Area	Junior Division (%)	Senior Division (%)	Overall (%)
G Branch	14.3	15.7	15.0
A and Q Branch	16.7	14.5	15.6
Lines of Communication	4.5	10.2	7.4
Tactical and Strategic Exercises	23.4	23.8	23.6
Military History	28.4	23.8	26.1
Empire and Dominions	6.5	5.2	5.8
Foreign Armies	1.5	1.0	1.2
Other	4.5	5.8	5.1

Sources: Ian M. Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919* (Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 1998), p.23. Staff College Curriculum, Junior Division, 1903, Staff College Museum. Staff College Curriculum, Senior Division, 1907, Staff College Museum.

<sup>57</sup> *Field Service Regulations* (London, HMSO, 1909), p. 107. Emphasis in original.

<sup>58</sup> *Field Service Regulations* (London, HMSO, 1909), p. 108. Emphasis in original.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919*, p. 23.

The areas of study varied over time and with each change of Commandant, but the essential areas included: military history, geography, imperial defence, transport, supply, economic geography, commercial law and medical and ordnance services as they applied to staff and command situations.<sup>60</sup> Although no breakdown of actual weekly hours applied to each of these areas is available it is possible to categorise these subjects in eight broad areas (see table 1). This table illustrates the emphasis given to different subject areas for both junior and senior divisions. Tactical exercises received special attention during the junior year and strategic exercises provided the primary focus during senior year.

The emphasis given to the study of military history is particularly marked and stems from the period when Colonel G. F. R. Henderson was on the instructional staff at the College.<sup>61</sup> Henderson's primary concern was to raise the standard of British officers and ensure they were instinctively capable of 'doing the right thing'.<sup>62</sup> This, Henderson argued, could only be achieved by a thorough and applied study of military history. Henderson's studies had led him to the conclusion that the frontal assault with its reliance on a sheer weight of numbers was obsolete. 'Good infantry', Henderson argued, 'sufficiently covered ... is, if unshaken by artillery and attacked in the front alone, absolutely invincible'.<sup>63</sup> Henderson went on to suggest the 'bayonet had become subordinate to the bullet and that the bayonet assault had lost its importance'.<sup>64</sup>

In contrast to the official wisdom of the day, which looked towards the decisive attack, Henderson argued that mobility was the best approach to overcoming the advantages of defensive and trench warfare. Henderson recommended the sudden seizure of key tactical points, outflanking movements, and marches against the enemy's line of retreat. It was Henderson's belief that such tactics virtually rendered earthworks obsolete.<sup>65</sup> Henderson suggested that infantry training should draw on the experiences of the Boer War and should

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>61</sup> Henderson was at the Staff College from 1892 until 1900 when he was appointed to Lord Roberts' staff as Chief Intelligence Officer. For more detail on Henderson's life see Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, Ch 7.

<sup>62</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p. 218.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 230.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 231.

be based on the light infantry model thereby allowing for greater skirmishing and initiative. This would require a refocussing on 'careful arrangements, a precise objective, great depth and the local assault'.<sup>66</sup>

Henderson believed that officers should be leaders 'capable of carrying out the plans and even anticipating the wishes of superiors rather than docile subordinates who obeyed orders to letter but were devoid of imagination or initiative'.<sup>67</sup> Henderson put forward the model of Sir John Moore's Peninsula army as an example of how officers should behave when left alone.

They almost invariably did the right thing. They had no hesitation in assuming responsibility. They could handle their regiments and companies ... as independent units, and they consistently applied the great principle of mutual support.<sup>68</sup>

During the Boer War Henderson was able to put some of his ideas into practise with great effect. He was appointed to Roberts' staff as Director of Intelligence in January 1900. He applied Stonewall Jackson's dictum 'Always mystify and mislead', by camouflaging British operational plans with newspaper articles designed to fool and mislead the Boers.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, Henderson's health did not hold up and he was sent back to England after a few months. He died in 1902 having wielded an enormous intellectual influence on the British army. He shaped the minds of many who rose to high command in the First World War including Douglas Haig, William Robertson, and Edmund Allenby. His influence extended through the years to include those who had no personal contact with him including Liddell Hart, J. F. C. Fuller and Brudenell White.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 237.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 235.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 237.

<sup>70</sup> Henderson's spectrum of influence is mentioned in Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p. 242; and Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919*, pp. 21. Neither of these works mentions White, yet, Henderson's influence is clear from a number of papers that White wrote in later years. The most useful of these is an unpublished paper, 'The Study of War', that was possibly written in 1911. White suggested that Henderson provided inspiration for any students of war. C. B. B. White, 'The Study of War', unpublished paper, c1911, copy provided by Lady Rosemary Derham.

In his seminal work *The Structure of the Scientific Revolution* Thomas Kuhn introduced the concept of paradigms.<sup>71</sup> According to Kuhn learning and problem-solving continues to progress within an established paradigm or set of ideas. Not only do these exemplars provide models for future learning and problem solving they also represent examples of the organisation's past achievements. Learning and problem solving continue to progress within the parameters set by these exemplars until such time as these sets of beliefs and ideas consistently fail to resolve problems or achieve outcomes. At this point some (generally younger) individuals, with less psychological attachment to these older exemplars, start embracing new paradigms or sets of ideas in order to resolve problems and achieve outcomes.<sup>72</sup> This explains why Henderson's ideas, which conflicted with traditional British thinking, influenced and were embraced by younger officers. By the First World War Henderson's teachings were being incorporated into official British military doctrine and embraced by White and other progressive officers.<sup>73</sup>

It is interesting that Henderson anticipated a Great War in which the leading role would not be a professional soldier but rather a volunteer or citizen soldier.

Our men will not all be regulars. They will come straight from civil life, and to civil life they will return. The habits and prejudices of civil life will have to be considered in the discipline and instruction, and officers will have to recognise that troops without the traditions, instincts, and training of regular soldiers, require a handling different from that which they have been accustomed to employ.<sup>74</sup>

### Passed Staff College

When White began his course in January 1906 entry to the Staff College was generally through a very competitive examination. Entry could also be gained through a recommendation from the Commander-in-Chief, thus allowing some officers to gain entry through the auspices of powerful patrons. This was the avenue through which White gained

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<sup>71</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of the Scientific Revolution*; See also Kuhn, 'Reflections on my Critics'.

<sup>72</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Kuhn, *The Structure of the Scientific Revolution*.

<sup>73</sup> Henderson's unfinished work *Infantry Drill Book* was later released under the title *Combined Training*. In 1905 this became Part I of the *Field Service Regulations*. See Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1914*, vol. 1, p. 9.s

<sup>74</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p. 228.

entry to the College and he was the only officer on the course to gain entry in this manner.<sup>75</sup> White's place on the Staff College course was also unique in that he was the most junior officer on the course. He was the only lieutenant in a course consisting of thirty-nine Army officers and four Royal Navy officers. As already noted, in spite of his service in South Africa White's military experience and training were limited. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that eleven of his fellow Army candidates had previously received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).<sup>76</sup>

White did not appear to let his inexperience bother him and he attempted to learn as much as he could about British military thought. His easy polite demeanour ensured that he made friends easily. Two of his closest friends during his time at the Staff College were John Gellibrand and Duncan Glasfurd.<sup>77</sup> Both of these men were, in later years, to achieve high rank and distinction in the AIF.

The Commandant of the Staff College exerted a significant influence over the students of the College, not only by shaping a student's behaviour by providing a personal example of how one was to behave, but also by determining what material was taught. Whilst White was undergoing his studies he came under the influence of two Commandants who brought with them a professional outlook to military studies: Brigadier General Henry Rawlinson (later Baron and General) and Brigadier General Henry Wilson (later Field Marshal).<sup>78</sup>

Rawlinson arrived at the Staff College in 1904 with a professional outlook, comparative youth, and money. He exuded a confidence and style that 'consciously or unconsciously' was emulated by his students.<sup>79</sup> One of his accomplishments was to reduce the importance and frequency of examinations and place more emphasis on close personal contact with

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<sup>75</sup> This information was supplied by Mr Stephen Connelly, Acting Curator, Staff College Military Museum. This avenue into the Staff College is possibly why some nationalist historians, mentioned earlier in this chapter, regard White as a product of nepotism.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> For more details about Gellibrand and Glasfurd see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vols. 8 and 9.

<sup>78</sup> Prior and Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*; and Jeffery (ed), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson*.

<sup>79</sup> Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 – 1919*, p. 21; Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854 – 1914*, p. 196.



students and an ongoing and continuous assessment of the students' abilities. Under Rawlinson, students completed an examination at the end of the first year. They were required to achieve a minimum mark to progress to the next stage of training. One of the obvious drawbacks to a grading system based on personal assessment is the issue of favouritism or prejudice. Rawlinson seems to have anticipated this problem by insisting on a consensus of opinion by the instructional staff. The obvious advantage of this system lay not only in the fact that it took into account mental abilities but also in allowing for the importance of physical and character attributes.<sup>80</sup>

Rawlinson's tenure also benefited from having a high quality 'Directing Staff'.<sup>81</sup> George Aston (Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Staff College, 1904 - 1907 and later Major General) once commented that 'the staff and students were the most inspiring community I have ever had the good luck to come across. At a full muster at dinner in the mess four VCs and twenty-three DSOs sat down at the table'.<sup>82</sup> Among the instructors who rose later rose to prominence were Hubert Gough (who later commanded the Fifth Army), R. C. B. Haking (who later commanded a Corps), L. E. Kiggell (Commandant of the Staff College 1913 - 1914 and Chief of Staff to Haig in 1917), and Thompson Capper (universally regarded as a brilliant officer and killed commanding a Division at Loos). Later during Henry Wilson's tenure as Commandant, there were J. P. du Cane and G. M. Harper (both achieved the command of a Corps), and W. P. Braithwaite (Commandant of the Staff College, Quetta in 1911 - 1914 and Chief of Staff to Sir Ian Hamilton at the Dardanelles).<sup>83</sup>

In 1907 Henry Wilson succeeded Rawlinson and he brought with him a reputation for challenging convention and encouraging an independence of thought in his subordinates.<sup>84</sup> Wilson was a flamboyant figure who generally impressed everyone he met. An Ulsterman he was tall with a quirky sense of humour and an eccentric manner of dress that often

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<sup>80</sup> Rawlinson's tenure as Commandant of the Staff College is covered briefly in Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854 - 1914*.

<sup>81</sup> Rawlinson had replaced the term 'professor' with all of its civilian trappings and connotations with the term 'Directing Staff'. See Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854 - 1914*, p. 197.

<sup>82</sup> Sir George Aston quoted in *ibid*, p. 195.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914 - 1919*, p. 27.

caused others to underestimate his caustic tongue and sharp intelligence. His friend and biographer, Charles Calwell, suggested that Wilson had ‘that magnetic power of compelling the admiration and affection of others which can best be summed up in the expression “personality”’.<sup>85</sup>

Wilson had long urged the necessity for a ‘School of Thought’ that would ultimately create a sense of uniformity and harmony within the Army as a whole. In his appointment as Commandant Wilson saw an opportunity to develop this ‘School of Thought’ further. Wilson envisaged two closely related principles in his ‘School of Thought’, the first being in the purely professional sense of training officers with a uniform set of methods and a common approach to problems.<sup>86</sup> It was the second aspect of Wilson’s ‘School of Thought’ that was controversial. It not only embodied a close relationship with France against Germany but also the need for conscription.<sup>87</sup>

Like Henderson before him Wilson proved to have a natural flair for teaching. His periodic lectures, however, often reflected his own agenda and invariably included highly topical and contentious issues such as conscription and the inevitability of war with Germany. Wilson exerted an extraordinary influence over his students, many of whom seemed to be in awe of him.<sup>88</sup>

To what extent did Rawlinson, Wilson and the other personalities influence White during his time at Camberley? Although it is impossible to ascertain the exact extent to which White was influenced by these personalities and ideas it is possible to ascertain which ideas and personalities White was the most responsive to. These influences come through in the various comments that he made in his diaries and personal papers.

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<sup>85</sup> Calwell, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, vol. 1, p.67.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson was not alone in attempting to raise the professional standard of officers. A number of initiatives had come out of the Esher Royal Commission into the Boer War. These initiatives were aimed not only at raising the professionalism of the Army but also in preparing for the continental conflict that was coming. They are discussed in more detail in see Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*.

<sup>87</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854 – 1914*, p. 259.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 248.

White's fondness and commitment to the British Empire, for example, was significantly reinforced as a result of his experiences at the Staff College. In a paper entitled 'Observations' White detailed his thoughts about the empire and defence.

The Englishman has to conquer his contempt for anything and everything colonial, and the colonial must crush out his spirit of parochialism ... It is ever to be remembered that by a not unnatural process the ties binding the colonies to the mother country grow weaker with every generation — unless they are artificially strengthened.<sup>89</sup>

White was keen to see these ties strengthened and went on to write:

I would ask you to build upon a firmer rock than this, something which will make room for the growth of an Imperial patriotism, and preserve the loyalty to a common crown which I assert fearlessly does now exist.<sup>90</sup>

For White imperial defence was predicated on the development of an 'Imperial spirit'. Delving into a broader vision of imperial unity White wrote:

What our Empire wants is some elastic system of consolidation which fosters the spirit which well brought up children have for their parents and the family circle. All alliance [sic] is the most inelastic bond and once made would be rarely renewed by Colonies freed from parental influence and yearly becoming aware of their manhood.<sup>91</sup>

In later years White questioned British control of Australian forces but never let his imperial worldview waver. Birdwood observed White believed that Australia was 'a daughter in her mother's house but mistress of her own'.<sup>92</sup> White's imperial views have been used to portray him as an 'Imperialist' officer and thus to position him in opposition

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<sup>89</sup> White, 'Observations', undated lecture presented during his candidature at the Staff College. Original in possession of Lady Derham.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Birdwood, 'General Sir Brudenell White', p. 6.

to 'Australianist' officers, such as Hoad and Legge. These 'Australianist' officers are commonly regarded as more nationalistic and hence more Australian.<sup>93</sup>

During the two year course White studied a broad spectrum of military history, strategy and tactics. The topics covered the process of moving military supplies by use of the railway system, landing an expeditionary force on a beach (drawing upon the lessons of the Russo-Japanese War), strategic value of terrain (using the Belgian frontier as a case study), the employment of a British Expeditionary Force in France, imperial strategy, and various theories for the employment of artillery, cavalry and infantry. These later topics were developed by exercises requiring the development of various schemes and plans, as well as staff rides and tactical exercises without troops.<sup>94</sup>

While at the Staff College White gave consideration to the 'question of command'. White believed that initiative was essential for all officers, both regimental and those in high command, because the imperatives of war frequently required 'independent action'.<sup>95</sup> In White's conceptualisation of initiative and independent action we can see reflected Henderson's emphasis on 'doing the right thing'. But White also regarded initiative as being implicitly tied to the intellectual processes of war.

In a lecture entitled 'Outposts', White theorised that planning for war is achieved through the application of a three stage intellectual process: 'The Thinking Process', 'The Selective Process' and the 'Executive Process'.<sup>96</sup> White's articulation of the 'Thinking Process' is particularly interesting in that he argues that traditional planning for war was prescribed by rigid conventionalism. Like Henderson, he suggests that differing circumstances called for imagination and initiative.

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<sup>93</sup> For an example of this 'Imperialist'/'Australianist' debate see Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*.

<sup>94</sup> Staff College Curriculum, Junior Division, 1903, Staff College Museum. Staff College Curriculum, Senior Division, 1907, Staff College Museum.

<sup>95</sup> White, 'The Study of War', undated manuscript, possibly written in 1911. Copy kindly supplied by Lady Rosemary Derham.

<sup>96</sup> White, 'Outposts', undated manuscript, presented to his class at the Staff College. Copy kindly supplied by Lady Rosemary Derham.

It is the thinking process that we are prone to dispense with. It is always so much easier to follow some rigid system than to think out modifications of principles suitable to varying circumstances. But if we clearly understand principles the thinking process is not quite so irksome. It is not pretended, however, that to think how properly to apply a principle is as simple as the adoption of expedients or the administration of palliatives. Alas! These latter are — not only in soldiering but in the demands made in our daily life upon the exercise of judgment — strangely seductive. And to succumb to them is — to hand hostages to the shadow of Shadowy Fortune. As therefore we have, to be successful, got to think is it not as well to practise the habit? Only in doing so let us remember Kipling's warning:

‘If you can dream — and not make dreams your master,  
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim.’

Those lines are very apt. The soldier must dream, he must have imagination, and he must think, but, as Kipling indicates, they must all be controlled.<sup>97</sup>

White embraced another facet of Henderson's thinking, that of deceiving the enemy. At this point in time the concept of deception was not widely embraced within British military circles because it was anathema to Victorian notions of fair play. While White had been inculcated with these same values he was, as a colonial and outsider, able to perceive the problem from a new perspective. In the ‘Outposts’ lecture he wrote:

... while it is true that the simpler operations of war are, the more chance they have of success, still the opportunity to surprise and confuse an enemy should never be lost.<sup>98</sup>

White's concluding remarks are also a matter of interest. White here is expounding French military thought and utilises a quotation translated from a French Staff Lecture. It may be that Wilson, who was an acknowledged Francophile, had influenced him. White wrote:

Finally, we must neglect no precautions against surprise, for if a defeat may be suffered without loss of honour, a surprise may not!

... for immunity from attack we must rely on the excellence of our arrangements and on our own vigilance, never on the assumed inaction and indolence of the enemy.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

White's commentary on initiative and deception provides an illustration of the changing paradigm that is evident in military thinking. As Kuhn suggests paradigm shifts are hardly sudden changes in thought but rather gradual changes in views and ideas which then become the dominant paradigm. White's views were contrary to prevailing thoughts and suggest the formation of an embryonic paradigm shift.<sup>100</sup>

The quality of White's work showed substantial improvement during the two years that he spent at the Staff College. In this time he absorbed a considerable body of military knowledge and his meticulous and studious nature virtually ensured that he passed near the top of the course. The commandant, Major General Wilson, was so impressed with White that he wrote in his final report:

This officer started the course here with a lack of soldiering experience as compared with his companions. He is modest and unassuming, but possesses considerable ability and power of application. The results have been eminently satisfactory and he promises to be a valuable Staff Officer. His work now reaches a uniformly high standard. He can express himself well and clearly on paper. His opinion carries weight with the other students, and he deserves great credit for passing out so high. Popular and good horseman. He will do well either in the field or in an office. I recommend him for an appointment which will lead to employment on the General Staff.<sup>101</sup>

Although White was saddened at leaving England and the many friendships that he had made during his stay he was extremely pleased with his efforts. White was justly proud of passing the Staff College course, and he was the first Australian to do so. On 19 December 1907 White wrote in his diary:

Farewell dinner — Alas — the happiest chapter in my life is closed. Such a jolly dinner. The Commandant asked me if I would like to be employed at 'Home'. I am now a full blown PSC.<sup>102</sup>

The Whites left England by train and ferry to Paris and after some brief sight seeing continued to Marseilles by train. They boarded the *Ophir* for the return voyage to Australia. In Fremantle White's brother Dudley, who was at that time stationed in Perth, and his wife,

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<sup>100</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of the Scientific Revolution*.

<sup>101</sup> 'Report on Lieutenant CBB White, 21 December 1907', by H. Wilson, Staff College, NAA, MP84, file 2002/4/32.

<sup>102</sup> Diary Entry, 19 December 1907, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 12.

Carlie, met them. After a brief stop they continued their journey and arrived in Melbourne on 19 February 1908.<sup>103</sup>

White's military knowledge and expertise had increased dramatically and the letters psc (Passed Staff College) behind his name became a sign of inclusion. White had now completed his rites of passage and had become an insider. This, along with the patronage of Hutton, would open doors for White, and thereby provided him with a career progression that was outside the normal experience of Australian officers. Upon his return to Australia White would put his considerable experience and to work reorganising the Australian Military Forces and preparing it for the coming European war.

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<sup>103</sup> Diary Entries, December 1907, January, February 1908, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, items 12 and 13.

## Chapter 5

### Apprentice Policy Maker

A good General Staff should accomplish a great deal for Australia ...

C.B.B. White<sup>1</sup>

The completion of the Staff College course had, for White, been the completion of a lengthy organisational socialisation process. His time on Thursday Island had begun his rites of passage, the first phase of which served to separate him from his former identity and begin the transformation to his new identity, that of an officer, a gentleman and most especially a soldier. The South African War was his rite of transition where he was embracing his military identity and role. White's rite of inclusion was his period as ADC to Hutton. Not only did it signify his acceptance but was also the start of a patron/protégé relationship that would change the course of his military career. The course at Camberley was, in White's case at least, a form of enhancement rite in which the organisational values were reinforced and recognition was given to White's achievements by placing the letters psc (Passed Staff College) after his name.<sup>2</sup>

White's socialisation had been an eclectic blend of old world and new world. Like his parents he regarded England as his home and embraced everything that meant. He accepted that Australia's place was within the Empire and Australia's relationship with the Mother country was predicated on this belief. On the other hand he also embraced a certain self-reliance and initiative that was often seen as lacking in the old world. At least this is what the 'Coming Man' thesis espoused. In the years following Camberley he would continue to build on this mixture of imperial and colonial values. He would develop as a staff officer

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<sup>1</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 29 January 1909, White Papers, AWM, PR 85/83, item 3.

<sup>2</sup> Enhancement rites help to reinforce organisational culture and renew an individual's commitment to the organisation. The most common form of enhancement ritual is the recognition and reward of good performance. See Trice and Beyer, 'Studying Organisational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials'.



spending much of his time organising citizens' armies in both Britain and Australia. White's level of experience and knowledge placed him in a key position in the evolution of Australia's Military Forces and the formation and execution of defence policy.

### **Territorial Reforms**

On 13 March 1908 White reported to Colonel William Throsby Bridges, the Chief of Intelligence. Bridges appointed White Director of Military Operations and his principle assistant. White described his work in rather plain terms:

Busy all day at the office, but work of the most satisfactory kind. Bridges nice and helpful.<sup>3</sup>

Less than two months later the War Office requested that White be sent to London and appointed to the Imperial General Staff at Grade 3 level.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the request was made at a high level and was probably initiated by Wilson. This would explain why he had sounded White out about employment at 'Home'.<sup>5</sup>

Bridges supported this appointment and expressed some concern at the delay in confirming White's appointment by the then Minister of Defence, Thomas Ewing. In a letter to Hutton, Bridges attributed the delay to Hoad, who was then Inspector General.<sup>6</sup> There had been a long-standing rivalry between Bridges and Hoad who vied with each other for key positions in the Australian military between 1901 and 1910.<sup>7</sup>

While White waited a decision on his future he accompanied Bridges on various tours of Australian defence establishments. After one such camp White noted that there was still widespread support for Hutton and the work he had begun after Federation. In a letter to Hutton White commented:

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<sup>3</sup> Diary Entry, 13 March 1908, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 13.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum, 1 May 1908, NAA, MP 84/1, file 1894/6/104.

<sup>5</sup> Diary Entry, 19 December 1907, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 12.

<sup>6</sup> Letter Bridges to Hutton, 8 June 1908, White Papers, AWM, PR 85/83, item 19.

<sup>7</sup> For an interesting though largely biased account of the rivalry between Bridges and Hoad see Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*.

... I have just returned from a camp in South Australia and were I your own son I would not have been more overjoyed to find that every soldier there — it is safe to say everyone — is loyal to you and the work you did. There were many quite affectionate inquiries for you and it was no uncommon thing to hear men saying “the sun went down when you left Happy Valley Camp and the sun has gone done altogether since he left Australia”.<sup>8</sup>

White also assured Hutton that Bridges was continuing to pursue Hutton’s original policies through the auspices of the Military Board and his position as First Military Member.<sup>9</sup>

White’s appointment was finally confirmed and on 15 September 1908 he and his family boarded the P & O steamship *India* for the journey to England. After an uneventful journey they arrived at Tilbury Docks in the Thames on 24 October 1908. Soon after their arrival White began his work at Whitehall.<sup>10</sup>

At the time of White’s appointment to the General Staff as a General Staff Officer Grade Three, the Secretary of State for War, was Richard Burdon Haldane (later Viscount Haldane of Cloan). As war secretary (1905–12) he effected widespread and drastic army reforms, creating a British expeditionary force, an imperial general staff, an officers training corps, and the Territorial Army.<sup>11</sup>

It is worthwhile to briefly digress at this point and explore the reforms initiated by Haldane because they would influence White in many ways.<sup>12</sup> The Territorial Force provided a very different model to that of the British Regular Army.

Haldane’s reforms were based on the premise that Great Britain’s primary responsibility was to create an expeditionary force for operations in continental Europe. Haldane

<sup>8</sup> Letter White to Hutton, 26 April 1908, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 19.

<sup>9</sup> Letter White to Hutton, 26 April 1908, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ethel White’s *Memories of September 1908*, quoted in Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Haldane, *An Autobiography*; Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*.

<sup>12</sup> White’s reports on his activities do not include details of his specific tasks. Rather he provides details of the reforms being initiated by Haldane. His diaries mention numerous dinners and functions that he attended with Haldane so it is suggestive that White was well positioned to evaluate the development of the Territorial Force as a model citizen army. For White’s activities in the United Kingdom see NAA, MP 84/1, file 1894/6/104.

believed that a necessary component of this expeditionary force was the organisation of an auxiliary force to back up the regular army. This auxiliary force would not only be responsible for home defence but would also provide a means by which future expansion of the regular army could be achieved.<sup>13</sup>

Britain has had a long history of reliance on amateur, part-time soldiers to supplement the standing regular full-time forces for defence of the realm. These forces were often assembled as needed for defence against invasion or for maintaining domestic order. Haldane was concerned that no attempt had been made to organise and coordinate these auxiliary forces and integrate them into a broader defence plan. The auxiliary forces then consisted of the Militia, the Yeomanry and the Volunteers.

The oldest of the auxiliary forces was the Militia which first appeared in the statute books in 1558, but traced something of a legislative continuity back to the Anglo-Saxon *fyrð* as constituted by King Alfred in the 9th century. The Militia have always been a "territorial" force (not to be confused with the "Territorial Force"), answering to the county High Sheriff and later the Lord Lieutenant. Officers' qualifications included the provision that they be local landowners, a qualification that made the Militia popular with the landed gentry and the House of Lords.

In 1881 Militia battalions were redesignated as the 3rd (and sometimes 4th) Battalion of regular infantry regiments, but without changing their Militia status. This brought the Militia and Volunteer battalions under the umbrella of the regimental family and in case of emergencies gave the commander of the regimental depot a trained reserve.<sup>14</sup> The Militia 'came out for training' once a year and for the remainder of the year failed to have any corporate existence. Nonetheless the Militia proved to be a valuable recruiting ground for the regular battalions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army in the Early Years', p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> Keegan, 'Regimental Ideology'.

<sup>15</sup> Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army in the Early Years', p. 55.

The second form of auxiliary force was the Yeomanry. Many Yeomanry regiments were more than a century old. A French invasion scare in 1794 led the government to pass a bill inviting the county Lord Lieutenants to raise troops of volunteer cavalry composed of gentlemen and yeomanry. The latter were tenant farmers and freeholders. By 1798 every county had raised several such troops, and one (the Castlemartin Yeomanry Cavalry, later the Pembrokehire Yeomanry) had actually earned a unique battle honour for repelling the last invasion of Great Britain — at Fishguard on the Welsh coast on 22 February 1797. This was also the only battle honour ever awarded to the British Army for an action in Britain.

The Yeomanry was trained as cavalry, with lance and sabre. The lesson of the South African War had increased the reputation of mounted forces and additional units had been formed in London and other larger urban centres. It was an auxiliary force that had great potential value, but needed to be organised to act as part of larger units.<sup>16</sup>

The third auxiliary force was the Volunteers, which included some corps that boasted a continuous history of over a century. Many units had been disbanded at the conclusion of the Napoleonic War but the revolutions of 1848 in continental Europe, and the emergence of the French Second Republic and Second Empire fuelled British mistrust of France (despite the Anglo/French alliance against Russia) and gave rise to a renewed volunteer movement. The middle class formed 'Rifle Volunteer Corps' (as well as some artillery and engineer units) in most towns throughout the country. The government grudgingly recognised these, and in 1860-63 organised them into administrative battalions. In 1881 the Volunteers, like the Militia, were redesignated as the 4th battalion of the local Regular regiments.

The Volunteers were a social and drill hall organisation. The spirit of the Edwardian Volunteer was expressed in 'sham fights', staged public performances that were conducted on such public spaces as Hampstead Heath and Wimbledon Common. Neither the Militia nor Volunteers were adequately trained for home defence, nor was either obliged to serve overseas in an emergency. Having said this it needs to be recognised that many Volunteer

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

officers viewed the profession of arms very seriously and made significant attempts to learn the lessons that were emerging from the South African and Russo-Japanese Wars.<sup>17</sup>

Quite clearly Haldane faced a huge task in order to form this mass of voluntary exuberance into an organised force. When the Territorial Force came into existence on 1 April 1908 it had a strength of 302,199 officers and other ranks.<sup>18</sup> Much of this force was infantry and cavalry and in order to create a more balanced force Haldane was prepared to reduce these elements and increase the compliments of artillery, engineers and service corps.

Haldane organised the Territorial Force into fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen cavalry brigades. These were distributed on a regional basis with the Lord Lieutenants providing administrative control through the local County Territorial Associations. These County Associations dated back to the Cromwellian era and would, so Haldane believed, foster a sense of historical continuity. The associations provided men, uniforms and general maintenance of the Territorial units under their direction. Military training of these units was to remain under the control of the War Office. Each Territorial Division was to be commanded by a Major General with a regular army staff to assist. Service in the Territorial Force was for a four-year period with statutory drills and a fifteen-day summer camp.<sup>19</sup>

When White arrived at the War Office in October 1908 he was assigned to the Directorate of Military Operations. Staff officers within the Directorate were busy organising the Territorial Force, which had been in existence for only a few short months, into regionally based divisional formations. On his first day White began helping with this task and gained considerable experience in the planning and organisation of divisional forces as well as

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<sup>17</sup> Bond, 'The Territorial Army in Peace and War', pp. 157-159. Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army in the Early Years', p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed examination of the Territorial Force see Bond, 'The Territorial Army in Peace and War'; Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army in the Early Years'; Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*; Beckett, 'The Territorial Force'

knowledge of citizen forces.<sup>20</sup> White's reports on this reorganisation are written in the matter of fact style expected of military reports. However, the level of detail suggests that White, a former citizen soldier, was rather impressed by the overall concept of the Territorial Force as a model citizen's army.<sup>21</sup>

A number of elements stand out in these reports as being of particular interest to White and these elements would resurface when he planned the organisation of the AIF in later years. First, the Territorial Force was linked to the regimental system of the Regular Army. As noted earlier, the Territorial battalions were redesignated the 3rd or 4th battalion of the local County regiments. This provided local community support for the Territorial battalions by bringing it under the auspices of the regimental family. Many members of these local communities had long attachments to the regiments through generations of familial membership.<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, the Territorial Force was predominantly middle class in origin and membership. This ensured that class distinctions were much less visible than in the more rigid and hierarchical Regular Army. There was less formality between officers and other ranks and even less reluctance to promote officers from the ranks. This concept was anathema to the Regular Army and only a small number of senior officers supported this policy. Principle among them was Major General J.S. Ewart, the Director of Military Operations, who on 15 July 1909 wrote: 'I would regard men promoted from the ranks as my first reserve to complete units on mobilisation'.<sup>23</sup>

Along with the organisation of the Territorial Force White had to undertake the usual round of military duties. He visited various military establishments and participated in various staff rides (these were tactical exercises without troops used for training staff officers).

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<sup>20</sup> White wrote a number of reports on the reorganisation of the Territorial Force. NAA, MP 84/1, file 1894/6/104.

<sup>21</sup> Captain CBB White, Reports on the reorganisation of the Territorial Forces, NAA, MP 84/1, file 1894/6/104.

<sup>22</sup> Captain CBB White, Reports on the reorganisation of the Territorial Forces, NAA, MP 84/1, file 1894/6/104. For greater discussion on the regimental system see Keagan, 'Regimental Ideology'.

<sup>23</sup> Major General J. S. Ewart quoted in Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*, p.142.

White lectured across England and Ireland and also became a member of the Naval and Military Club in London.<sup>24</sup> It was here that he met many influential friends such as Viscount Haldane, Sir John French, Sir Ian Hamilton and Colonel Dobell (a Canadian) who later became General Sir Charles Dobell during the First World War.

One officer who deserves some mention was his immediate superior at the War Office, Major General J.S. Ewart, the Director of Military Operations between 1906 and 1910.<sup>25</sup> Ewart was also Military Secretary to the Committee for Imperial Defence and chaired a sub-committee that examined the defence of Egypt and in particular a possible military and naval seizure of the Gallipoli Peninsula as a strategic defensive measure.<sup>26</sup> Ewart's reports were rather sceptical about the feasibility of a military landing on Gallipoli. Interestingly enough White's later reluctance for the landing at Gallipoli seems to reflect Ewart's scepticism.

Ewart also supported the concept of the general staff and its expansion to the Dominions. Ewart had been Haldane's personal choice for Director of Military Operations and gave Haldane invaluable assistance and support within the War Office.<sup>27</sup> Although based in London White became an indirect participant in the debate over the establishment of a General Staff that was being conducted in Australia.

### **The Formation of the Australian Section of the General Staff**

At the Colonial Conference in April 1907 Haldane informed the assembled Colonial and Dominion leaders that it was the Home Government's intention to establish an Imperial General Staff. This would be a purely advisory body which would facilitate the interchange of General Staff officers between the United Kingdom and the Dominions. Its main purpose

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<sup>24</sup> Diary entries for 1909, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 14.

<sup>25</sup> Gooch, *The Plans of War*, pp. 109, 118.

<sup>26</sup> 'The Possibility of a Joint Naval and Military Attack Upon the Dardanelles, I: Memorandum by the General Staff', 19 December 1906. Public Record Office (PRO), Cab. 4/2/92B. 'Standing Sub-Committee of CID: Report Regarding Landing Places in the Near East (Secret Series No. 1), 11 July 1910, PRO, Cab. 17/71.

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed account see Gooch, *The Plans of War*.

was to encourage 'uniformity in military thought, organisation and weaponry'.<sup>28</sup> 'Our great object', Haldane stated,

must be to make the General Staff an imperial school of military thought, all members of which are imbued with the same traditions, accustomed to look at strategical problems from the same point of view, and acquainted with the principles and theories generally accepted at headquarters.<sup>29</sup>

Vital to the formation of the Imperial General Staff was an agreement from the colonial and Dominion leaders to establish local sections of the General Staff, each with a 'chief at the head' and under the direction of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.<sup>30</sup> Deakin, the Australian Prime Minister, anticipated 'nothing but great advantage' from such an association.<sup>31</sup> However, Deakin did continue to pursue the principle of local control, a principle that had previously shaped Australian attitudes to imperial military policy.<sup>32</sup>

Deakin demanded that any appointment of any Australian to the Imperial General Staff, or an Imperial officer to the Australian General Staff, had to be approved by the Australian government. Additionally, the Australian government reserved the right to terminate any such appointment, as circumstances demanded. Deakin announced that all non-routine communications would be made *via* the Minister for Defence.<sup>33</sup> Deakin made it clear that an in-principle agreement to the concept of an Imperial General Staff was not a tacit or explicit agreement to place Australian military forces at the disposal of the Imperial Government:

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<sup>28</sup> Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*, p.127.

<sup>29</sup> Haldane, Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907, quoted in Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*, p.127.

<sup>30</sup> CPP, 1909 Session, Vol. II, No 33, 'Defence: Imperial General Staff – Correspondence Relating to Proposed Formation; including Major General Hoad's Proposal with Regard to Australian Section, Etc'. 'The Imperial General Staff', W. G. Nicholson, December 1908, Part I – General principles Affecting National Defence, pp. 429-30.

<sup>31</sup> CPP, 1907-8, Vol. III, 'Colonial Conference, 1907. Minutes of Proceedings', p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> The protection of local control of colonial military forces had been an issue for colonial and Dominion leaders since the 1880's. These leaders, whilst supporting the Mother country were anxious that relinquishing local control would see them drawn into the 'vortex of militarism' that seemed to characterise so much of nineteenth century European politics and diplomacy. See Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*, pp. 153-55; Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911*, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 140.



The Commonwealth Government desires to state specifically that its assent to the general principles mentioned above is not to be considered as binding it to raise or equip any force or designate any existing troops for employment outside the Commonwealth or territories under the control of the Commonwealth.<sup>34</sup>

On 3 August 1908 it was announced that the Inspector General, Major General Hoad, was to travel to England to confer with the War Office. The *Argus* stated:

The object of the visit is to arrange with the Imperial authorities for the exchange of Australian officers with British officers on the British General Staff. This was suggested by the Secretary of State for War, Mr Haldane, at the Imperial Conference in 1907, but no definite scheme was proposed on that occasion for giving practical effect to the suggestion.

Major General Hoad is to evolve such a scheme while he is in England...

It is one of the ideals of the Minister of Defence (Sir T.T. Ewing) that there shall be created in Australia, as soon as possible, a General Staff composed partly of Permanent officers and partly of Citizen soldiers...

It is to arrange for the exchange of these Australian officers with officers of the British General Staff for the gradual creation of a General Staff in Australia that Major General Hoad goes to England.<sup>35</sup>

Hoad left for England on 13 August 1908 on board RMS *Omrah*.<sup>36</sup> He arrived in London on 16 September 1908 and began a busy official and social programme.<sup>37</sup> However, not everyone was happy with Hoad's visit to England. Writing to Hutton, Bridges observed that it was 'hard to conceive of a worse selection for the job'.<sup>38</sup> Bridges went on to suggest that if the War office recommended Hoad for a knighthood it would make Hoad more powerful than before.<sup>39</sup> It was clear that Bridges regarded Hoad as his main rival for any future position as Chief of the General Staff and he knew he had an ally in England. After his arrival in England a month after Hoad, White kept Bridges informed of Hoad's activities.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *The Argus*, 3 August 1908.

<sup>36</sup> *The Argus*, 14 August 1908.

<sup>37</sup> *The Herald*, 17 September 1908.

<sup>38</sup> Letter Bridges to Hutton, 29 September 1908, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>39</sup> Letter Bridges to Hutton, 29 September 1908, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

Hoad was in England until February 1909, during which time he had talks with almost every senior officer at the War Office. He also attended the Staff Conference in January 1909, during the course of which a draft paper on his own proposals for the creation of an Australian section of the Imperial General Staff was ‘fully discussed and considered at a special Conference’.<sup>40</sup> Hoad’s proposal was in general accordance with the principles laid down in the War Office proposal. Hoad recognized that Australian forces ‘were maintained and organized primarily with a view to safeguarding Australia from any reasonably probable form of attack’.<sup>41</sup> But Hoad went on to suggest that an objective of military organisation in Australia was to combine with the other forces of the empire for ‘efficient co-operation in the event of more extensive undertakings being necessary’.<sup>42</sup> This was not only a contradiction of the guidelines laid down by Deakin at the Imperial Conference in 1907, it also represented a significant turnaround for Hoad. Hoad was an ardent nationalist and member of the Australian Natives Association. His rapid rise to senior ranks during the course of the Deakin Government had largely been due to his nationalist sentiments.<sup>43</sup>

White was surprised at the attention that Hoad received and told Bridges that he believed the British authorities had ‘erred in overdoing their part – there was no need to make so much fuss of him’.<sup>44</sup> In White’s opinion much of the attention being given to Hoad was due to his persistent pushing and opportunism.<sup>45</sup>

He was sceptical about Hoad’s apparent new found sense of imperial co-operation. ‘These good folk here’, wrote White, ‘think they have converted him from anti-educational, anti-imperial and republican sentiments’.<sup>46</sup> White told Bridges, ‘They smile at me when I say that the assumed air of conversion will only last until he crosses the 5 fathom line’.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Hoad to Secretary, Department of Defence, 22 April 1909, NAA, MP 84, series 1, file 1894/6/104.

<sup>41</sup> *CPP*, 1909 Session, Vol II, No 33, ‘Major-General Hoad’s Proposals with Regard to Australian Section, Etc’, February 1909, pp. 439–40.

<sup>42</sup> *CPP*, 1909 Session, Vol II, No 33, ‘Major-General Hoad’s Proposals with Regard to Australian Section, Etc’, February 1909, pp. 439–40.

<sup>43</sup> For more detail see Perry, ‘The Military Life of Major General Sir John Charles Hoad’, *Victorian Historical Magazine*; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*.

<sup>44</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 19 February 1909, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>45</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 19 February 1909, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>46</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 19 February 1909, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>47</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 19 February 1909, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

He was scornful of Hoad's knowledge and abilities.

The IG [Hoad] is at last doing something for the War Office who have now prepared their magnus opus on the Imperial General Staff ... I believe the IG is now stating his proposals, suggestions or whatever he may call them as to the method of forming the Australian Section. Rather hard on him seeing that not yet has he quite grasped what a General Staff means!<sup>48</sup>

And he wondered what the possible appointment of Hoad as the first Chief of General Staff (CGS) would mean for Bridges.

... I have not the least doubt in my mind that the IG means to be CGS. I am wondering what then is to be your fate? I cannot imagine you as a Director of such a CGS; nor can I see how you are to be got out of the way. I do not think we can expect much assistance from the people here.<sup>49</sup>

It would appear, however, that the War Office had more confidence in Hoad than did White. 'They have erred however with their eyes open', White wrote to Bridges, 'and I have been quite persistent in urging the danger of lending support to any of H\_\_\_'s [sic] projects. They are however so pitifully afraid of doing anything to retard the progress of the Imperial Genl. Staff that they will expose their souls to any risk!'<sup>50</sup>

White's letters and comments are interesting. They certainly reflect loyalty to Bridges. But it was unusual for a junior officer to be so openly critical of a senior officer. It certainly went against all of the normative rules that were encapsulated in his socialisation process. Normally the organisation would have moved to sanction White for this type of deviant behaviour. The fact that White was not cautioned for his disloyal behaviour is possibly testament to the level of acceptance that he had gained. He had passed Staff College and was now moving in high military circles. As already noted, he regularly socialised with men such as Haldane, Hutton, Nicholson, Haig, and Wilson. White was then, very much an

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<sup>48</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 15 January 1909, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 3.

<sup>49</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 15 January 1909, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 3.

<sup>50</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 4 March 1908, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82. The date on this letter is clearly wrong. It should be 4 March 1909.

insider as opposed to Hoad who, regardless of his rank, was a colonial. And as noted in chapter 4, Nicholson, had described Hoad as an 'officer of inferior education and small military capacity'.<sup>51</sup> White's comments then may be reflective of a certain professional arrogance given his training and new found social status.

Social status had always been a significant, though tacit, issue within the White family. His daughter Rosemary Derham suggested that her father's dislike of Hoad and, in later years, Legge, was due to both men's personal capacities for self advertisement and blatant opportunism.<sup>52</sup> This was regarded with distaste within the White family circle and any suggestion that one should publicly promote oneself was seen as being crass.

Hoad may have felt that elevation to Chief of the General Staff was within his grasp but a change of government radically changed the picture. The Deakin Government fell and was replaced by Fisher's Labor Government. This signified a change in attitude towards Bridges. Ewing, the former Minister for Defence, had found Bridges to be 'an impossible man' and observed that Bridges never gave 'advice suitable to the political situation'.<sup>53</sup> He adamantly resisted any notion that Bridges should be appointed CGS. The new Minister, Senator George Pearce, held a very different view. He was eager to establish the General Staff as soon as possible. And he liked Bridges. With this intention firmly in mind Pearce named Bridges CGS on 19 December 1908 with the appointment to become effective on 1 January 1909.<sup>54</sup> Bridges' selection was a popular one with both the Military Board and the press.<sup>55</sup> The Melbourne *Punch* described Bridges as 'a veritable Napoleon, a towering intellect surrounded by pygmies'.<sup>56</sup> White was similarly pleased with the news and commented that Hoad seemed a little dismayed at the news. He wrote:

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<sup>51</sup> Nicholson quoted in Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 157.

<sup>52</sup> Interview Author and Rosemary Derham, 26 June 1996.

<sup>53</sup> Ewing quoted in Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 63.

<sup>54</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Military Order, 414 / 1908.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes of Military Board Meeting, 24 December 1907, Military Board Papers of Historical Interest, NAA, A2657/1, Volume 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Punch* (Melbourne), 3 June 1909.

I was glad to hear that you have been made CGS – this is the best Australian news I have had for some time. It has caused a little consternation here as Hoad seemed quite certain, apparently, that if there looked to be a General Staff, he would be Chief.<sup>57</sup>

The Australian General Staff was established in January 1909.<sup>58</sup> The creation of the General Staff in effect made the CGS the primary military adviser to the government. This placed Pearce in a predicament because the position was currently occupied by Bridges, who as a Colonel was junior to Hoad, and who by virtue of seniority should have been appointed. Pearce believed he had an acceptable solution. The government had announced that an Imperial Conference was being convened in London in July 1909. Shortly after Pearce announced that Bridges was to attend the conference and then stay on in London as the Australian representative to the Central Section of the Imperial General Staff. Bridges relinquished the CGS position on 25 May 1909 and Hoad assumed the position the following day.<sup>59</sup>

### Imperial Objectives

The Imperial Conference of 1909 was primarily convened to discuss the expansion of German naval power and the possibility of war in Europe. This latter issue was a particular concern for General Sir William Nicholson, the British Chief of the General Staff (CGS), who believed that Britain's best hope lay in encouraging the dominions to establish common organisations and procedures. Nicholson was aware that in the past any suggestions of integrating military units aroused nationalist suspicion, and as a consequence these previous imperial plans had foundered on the rock of Dominion autonomy.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Letter White to Bridges, 20 August 1909, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 3.

<sup>58</sup> *CPP*, 1909 Session, Vol. II, 'Defence: Imperial General Staff --- Correspondence Relating to Proposed Formation; Including Major-General Hoad's Proposal with Regard to Australian Section, Etc.'; Until 1963 the Chief of the General Staff was also titled the Chief of the Commonwealth Section of the Imperial General Staff.

<sup>59</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia, Military Order*, 209/1909 and 324/1909. *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 30, 29 May 1909, p. 1164.

<sup>60</sup> Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 217.

Nicholson therefore proposed the introduction of standard military organisations based on the British pattern. This proposal included a commitment to the continuing development of the Imperial General Staff. Haldane supported Nicholson's views and reiterated the importance of organising the Empire's military forces along broadly uniform lines. Haldane also re-emphasised that the full control of the local Chiefs of the General Staff would rest with their respective governments. With the question of local autonomy resolved the delegates duly approved the proposal, and by Army Order 314, Nicholson adopted the title Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS).<sup>61</sup>

The later part of 1909 was quiet for White. His wife Ethyl was expecting another child and he continued the mundane pattern of peacetime soldiering. His days were taken up with socialising, attending manoeuvres, staff rides, conferences and training. He had become involved with the local Boy Scout troop at Beaconsfield and undertook most of the instruction. White was surprised at the differences in fitness and skill between English and Australian children. He believed the Australian environment had had a very positive effect on Australian children making them more resilient and independent.<sup>62</sup>

In January 1910 White attended the annual Staff College conference of General Staff officers. This was perhaps the most important conference of the period with the question of firepower and its importance in offensive doctrine forming a key discussion point. The Director of Staff Duties, Brigadier General Kiggell, observed that the lessons of the South African War suggested that firepower was the decisive factor on the battlefield. 'But this idea is erroneous', declared Kiggell, 'and was proved to be so in the late war in Manchuria [1904 – 1905]. Everyone admits that. Victory is now won actually by the bayonet, or by the fear of it'.<sup>63</sup> At the same conference Nicholson pointed out that formal doctrine now no longer stated 'the decision is obtained by superiority of fire', but instead 'a superiority of

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<sup>61</sup> Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*, p. 132; Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 142.

<sup>62</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 199.

<sup>63</sup> This does not mean that firepower was ignored. Rather it signalled a shift in emphasis within military thought. The training manuals produced by the War office continued to emphasise fire and movement as prerequisites for the final assault. Brigadier General Kiggell discussing a paper by Major McMahon, 'The Object of Fire in Attack and Defence' in *Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, 17-20 January 1910*, Staff College Library, Camberley, p. 27.

fire makes the decision possible'.<sup>64</sup> This indicated a change in thinking at the highest levels of the British Army; a shift away from the concept of firepower as the central factor in modern war and a return to traditional principles.<sup>65</sup>

It is difficult to say with any degree of surety to what degree White was influenced by, or accepted, these changing principles. Writing many years later, and with the experiences of the First World War behind him, he believed that any result in battle was due not to the technologies of firepower that many espoused, but rather to the good infantry that Henderson had championed. White wrote:

... I venture to say that this war proves as conclusively, even more so, as past wars that decisive victory is only attained by the rifleman and the bayonet. Mechanical aids are of great help in that they conserve manpower. But they are only assistants and they cannot, by themselves, attain a decision. As many Australians are aware on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918 and subsequent days tanks played an important part. But great demands were made upon artillery for their support and for the decisions reached, the credit rests with the infantryman.

All those mechanical devices which we did so much to develop are dependent for any result upon the closest possible co-operation with arms – particularly with artillery and infantry. I beg of you in your future organization and training, therefore, not to allow the machine gun, or the tank or even the aeroplane to imagine itself a thing apart.<sup>66</sup>

Another speaker at this conference was Bridges who presented a lecture on military education and the instruction of militia officers. Bridges was extremely critical of the system of military education and detailed what he perceived as the 'crimes the War Office has committed against Australia'. Bridges told Pearce 'it was time someone did'.<sup>67</sup> Bridges informed his audience that militia officers were:

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<sup>64</sup> Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, 17-20 January 1910, Staff College Library, Camberley, p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion on Firepower in British Offensive Doctrine see, Travers, 'The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought', p. 531; Travers, 'Technology, Tactics, and Morale'; Graham, 'Sans Doctrine'.

<sup>66</sup> Typescript 'Some Deductions from the Great War', nd, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 66.

<sup>67</sup> Letter Bridges to Pearce, 20 April 1910, Pearce Papers, AWM, 3DRL2222.

... famished for the want of knowledge, and, while it would not be true to say that when they ask for the bread of knowledge they are given a stone, yet it is true to say that they are doled out a slice of the driest and stalest and most unpalatable loaf.<sup>68</sup>

Bridges went on to suggest the British training manuals were useless for Australian requirements. 'It is not what they say', Bridges observed, 'but what they do not contain that they fail to meet our wants [sic]'.<sup>69</sup> Bridges pointed out that training manuals were becoming 'more abstract with each edition', and he asserted that there was nothing to be gained by postulating theoretical concepts unless accompanied by examples demonstrating practical applications. 'It is no more use', Bridges wrote, 'for the citizen soldier to learn and remember [a principle] unless he knows how to apply it than it is to learn the characters on a Babylonian brick'.<sup>70</sup> Bridges' comments surprised British military leaders who quickly found out that Bridges was not as pliable as Hoad had been. In his study of British Commonwealth defence organisation, historian Richard Preston wrote:

Hoad and Bridges were rivals with different views and different political contacts, but both looked at military matters with Australian rather than British eyes. The War Office found Australian soldiers somewhat less hard to get along with than Canadian politicians; but it began to learn rather painfully that dominion soldiers who seemed to be imperialists invariably became colonial nationalists when colonial interests were involved.<sup>71</sup>

Bridges' tenure as Australian representative to the Central Section of the Imperial General Staff was short. The Governments had decided to establish a Royal Australian Military College and Joseph Cook, then Minister for Defence, decided to appoint Bridges as its founding Commandant. Bridges immediately visited a number of military colleges including Woolwich, Sandhurst, West Point and Kingston. Then in May 1910, before leaving for Australia, Bridges spoke to Lord Kitchener who had recently returned from an inspection tour of Australia.<sup>72</sup> The Australian government did not at this time offer to send a replacement for Bridges and left the Australian representative's position on the

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<sup>68</sup> Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, 17-20 January 1910, Staff College Library, Camberley, p. 54.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense'*, p. 86.

<sup>72</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 15.



Imperial General Staff vacant for two years. But one young officer saw a career opportunity in the vacant position and sought permission to apply for the job

In the later half of 1910 White wrote to the Assistant Director of Military Operations and asked permission to apply to the Australian Department of Defence for consideration for the position. He wrote:

I have the honour to ask your permission to submit my name to the Commonwealth Defence Department for consideration in the selection, which I understand is contemplated, of an officer as a representative on the Central Section of the Imperial General Staff.

... Two (2) [sic] years of the term of my appointment as a general staff officer, 3rd grade, in this directorate remain unexpired and it is for this reason that, with your concurrence, my application to represent the Commonwealth section would be made.<sup>73</sup>

White was unsuccessful. The Australian government finally filled the vacancy on 11 May 1912 when it appointed Lieutenant Colonel J. G. Legge to be Dominion representative in London.<sup>74</sup> This delay had been based on a general dissatisfaction within the Australian government with the War Office's restrictions on the Australian representative's status and duties.<sup>75</sup>

In June 1911 many Colonial and Dominion leaders attended the Coronation of King George V. The Home government used this opportunity to call for an Imperial Conference. The Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher and the Minister for Defence, Senator George Pearce, represented Australia. White served as military secretary to Pearce for the duration of the conference.

At this conference Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey gave them a secret briefing and made it clear that war with Germany was inevitable and would probably occur in 1915

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<sup>73</sup> Letter, Captain CBB White to Assistant Director of Military Operations, 5 October 1910, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 26.

<sup>74</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No 36, 11 May 1912, p. 982.

<sup>75</sup> Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 159; Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense'*, p. 409; Verney, 'The Army High Command', p. 88.

when German preparations were complete.<sup>76</sup> During the conference Nicholson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, convened two meetings attended by the Ministers of Defence of the Dominions. At these meetings the question of military co-operation was raised. Pearce was receptive to the problems faced by the Imperial General Staff but explained that any future Australian commitment would be constrained by the *Defence Act*, which precluded any form of compulsion to serve abroad. Pearce was confident that in the event of a crisis, sufficient volunteers would be available to form an expeditionary force. Pearce went on to suggest

As that is so it seemed to us that our local General Staff ought to know what is in the minds of the Imperial General Staff as regards what use such forces should be put to so that they could be employed in their various Dominions in arranging schemes for mobilisation or transportation of the troops, and so that they would be guided in the preparation of such a scheme by the general idea that the Imperial Staff had as to the use to which such troops could be put.<sup>77</sup>

Pearce then went on to call for 'the preparation of schemes of mobilisation by the local sections of the Imperial General Staff'.<sup>78</sup>

In the past Dominion governments had carefully avoided any agreement to commit to an expeditionary force and Pearce was now offering the Imperial government just such a proposal of a platter. Nicholson pressed Pearce to ensure that there were no ambiguities in the agreement now proposed. He observed that Australian military forces were organised for local defence and asked if it was not correct that Pearce was committing them to an expeditionary role. Pearce confirmed this and then suggested it would be appropriate for the Australian General Staff to provide the War Office with completed drafts of mobilisation plans.<sup>79</sup>

Nicholson, aware of nationalist sensibilities in the Dominions suggested that information regarding the agreement just reached and any subsequent defence plans be suppressed and

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<sup>76</sup> Pearce, Carpenter to Cabinet, p. 81.

<sup>77</sup> Operations of Defence (Military) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Day, 17 June 1911, quoted in Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 239.

<sup>78</sup> Operations of Defence (Military) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Day, 17 June 1911, quoted in *ibid*, p. 240.

<sup>79</sup> Operations of Defence (Military) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Day, 17 June 1911, quoted in *ibid*, p. 241.

kept secret. Nicholson stated, 'I think it is much better we should do this quietly without any paper on the subject because I am sure in some of the Dominions it might be better not to say anything about preparations'.<sup>80</sup> Consequently no report of these discussions was ever published in the proceedings of the conference.

In Australia the government was introducing the Universal Training Scheme and with such a major reorganisation of the Australian Military Forces it was necessary to have quality staff officers. This resulted in White being recalled to Australia in August 1911, a full year before his appointment was due to expire. In the last few weeks before his departure he lunched on several occasions with Lord Haldane, Sir John French and several times with Sir Ian Hamilton, with whom he had extensive discussions.<sup>81</sup>

On Friday 23 December 1911 the Whites left England on board RMS *Orsova* and after an uneventful journey arrived in Melbourne on 29 January 1912.<sup>82</sup> Upon arrival White took a brief period of leave before starting his new appointment. He had been promoted to Major and was appointed Director of Military Operations.

In November 1912 Major-General Alexander Godley, who had recently taken over as Chief of the New Zealand Section of the Imperial General Staff visited Australia. A conference was organised to discuss the question of military co-operation. Both countries were concerned about the deteriorating situation in Europe and with increasing security concerns in the Pacific given the expansion of Japanese interests in the region.

Pearce opened the conference and then asked the two senior officers to suggest ways of getting over the statutory limitations imposed by the *Defence Act* which gave the government 'no power to employ the respective forces overseas unless they voluntarily agreed to serve'. Pearce appreciated the highly controversial nature of the issue and pointed

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<sup>80</sup> Operations of Defence (Military) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Day, 17 June 1911, quoted in *ibid*, p. 241.

<sup>81</sup> Diary entries, December 1911, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 18.

<sup>82</sup> Diary entries, December 1911 and January 1912, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, items 18 and 19.

out that their suggestions should in no way 'do violence to the feeling of the people which had originated the restrictive clauses'.<sup>83</sup>

Both Godley and the Australian chief, Gordon, agreed that the formation 'of an Australian unit was desirable to avoid the despatch of fragmented organisations'.<sup>84</sup> The conference recommended that the General Staffs of Australia and New Zealand begin detailed planning for the organisation of a composite division of 18,000 men. Australia would supply two thirds of this composite force. The plan would also include an alternative mounted force of four brigades, three of which would be Australian.<sup>85</sup>

In Australia the planning and organisation for this force fell upon the shoulders of White, then DMO and conference secretary. Gordon believed that White's knowledge of British military practices made him eminently suitable for the task of translating the strategic policy initiatives of the Commonwealth Government into function operational plans.<sup>86</sup> Consequently Pearce ordered White to draw up plans and to keep the notes and details of the proposed expeditionary force strictly to himself.<sup>87</sup>

In August 1913 the Australian General Staff reviewed copies of secret plans that had been produced under the title 'General Scheme of Defence'.<sup>88</sup> This comprehensive document detailed the various steps and procedures necessary should the Australian government make the decision to commit Australian forces to a war. It included detailed information on internal transport arrangements, the location of telegraphic stations, climate and

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<sup>83</sup> Proceedings of the Conference between Major General A. J. Godley, CB, Commanding New Zealand Military Forces, and, Brigadier General J. M. Gordon, CB, Chief of the General Staff, C. M. Forces, 18 November 1912, NAA, MP84, file 1856/1/33.

<sup>84</sup> Minute, Chief of the Commonwealth Section, Imperial General Staff to the Secretary, Department of Defence, 4 October 1912, NAA, MP84/1, file 1856/1/33. Proceedings of the Conference between Major General A. J. Godley, CB, Commanding New Zealand Military Forces, and, Brigadier General J. M. Gordon, CB, Chief of the General Staff, C. M. Forces, 18 November 1912, NAA, MP84, file 1856/1/33.

<sup>85</sup> Proceedings of the Conference between Major General A. J. Godley, CB, Commanding New Zealand Military Forces, and, Brigadier General J. M. Gordon, CB, Chief of the General Staff, C. M. Forces, 18 November 1912, NAA, MP84, file 1856/1/33.

<sup>86</sup> Minute for Chief of the Commonwealth Section, Imperial General Staff to the Secretary for Defence, 4 October 1912, NAA, MP84/1, file 1856/1/33.

<sup>87</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 90; Johnson, 'Australia, New Zealand and Imperial Defence (Military) 1902-1914'; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>88</sup> 'General Scheme of Defence 1913', AWM, AWM 113, MH1-11.

demography, as well as detailed military plans covering organisations, dispositions and staff responsibilities. According to this plan Australia required a military force of no less than 100,000 men. A portion of this force would maintain public confidence and national credibility by providing a visible presence at naval bases and harbours. 'The remainder', the paper continued, 'must be left free to form a field army capable of acting as a mobile expeditionary force'.<sup>89</sup> The staff believed the term 'Expeditionary Force' could be used instead of 'Field Army'; because the defence of Australia might necessarily mean overseas service and they believed that any existing statutory restrictions would therefore be lifted, thereby allowing Australian Military Forces to serve overseas. In the meantime further consideration would be given to the question of a 'special expeditionary force for employment in an Imperial undertaking'.<sup>90</sup> White's plans for this 'special expeditionary force' were not tabled. They remained locked in his desk drawer until it was time to put them into action.

With this work completed White began to look for a new challenge. Some of the officers who had been originally attached to the Royal Military College, Duntroon, had completed their terms and he applied for the position of Director of Military Art at Duntroon where he would supervise the content and presentation of military subjects.<sup>91</sup> Gordon had no hesitation in recommending White for this position and informed the Commandant that White was ideally suited to the position.<sup>92</sup> Circumstance, however, prevented White taking this appointment. On 26 July 1914 it was time for Gordon to retire and return to London. White became acting CGS until Colonel Legge could be recalled from London. Before Legge returned to Australia war broke out in Europe and White now found himself organising the 'special expeditionary force'.

In many ways White's experiences at the War Office in England provided the ideal educational and preparation for the task that was to come, the creation and development of

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<sup>89</sup> Chapter I, 2. Strategic Considerations, p. 5, 'General Scheme of Defence 1913', AWM, AWM 113, MH1-11.

<sup>90</sup> Chapter II, Organisation, II – War, p. 21, 'General Scheme of Defence 1913', AWM, AWM 113, MH1-11.

<sup>91</sup> Letter White to CGS, 16 June 1914, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 26.

<sup>92</sup> Letter Brigadier General J.M. Gordon, CGS to the Commandant, Royal Military College, 22 June 1914, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 26.

the AIF. During his time in England he was introduced to a specific model of a citizen's army and the mechanics for organising such an army. He developed his knowledge of the staff system and its inner machinations and became the most knowledgeable and professional of Australia's staff officers. His premature recall in 1911 was no doubt in response to the growing need for his skills in the Australian military establishment. Gordon certainly had no hesitation in appointing him to the DMO role and was certain that White's knowledge and skills would advance the capability of the Australian Military Forces to respond to the coming conflict.

## Chapter 6

### The AIF and the Social Organisation of War

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>1</sup>

I wish to place on record my very great appreciation of the excellent services rendered by Lieut-Colonel White during the stages immediately preceding the outbreak of War. In the absence of the Chief of the General Staff, I called this officer to Sydney to advise me and found his clear judgement and his intimate knowledge of the several steps, then due to be taken, of the greatest possible assistance.

Edward Millen<sup>2</sup>

At 9:00am (Australian Eastern Standard Time) on 5 August 1914 Australia found itself in a state of war with Germany.<sup>3</sup> Although a sizeable military force existed within Australia the Defence Act forbade the government from dispatching its forces outside the nation's territory. With this constraint in mind the Australian government responded by raising a 20,000-man expeditionary force, comprising an infantry division and a light horse brigade, for service overseas. The Australian Imperial Force, or AIF as it quickly became known, sailed from Western Australia on 1 November 1914. This feat in social organisation laid down the foundations for an organisational culture that was to endure far beyond the life span of the original AIF.

Edgar Schein argued that leaders created organisational cultures when they created groups and organisations.<sup>4</sup> Leaders, especially founding leaders, establish the social system necessary to achieve the leader's vision of what the organisation should look like and how

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

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum by Minister for Defence, Edward Millen, 8 September 1914, quoted in Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> The British Declaration of War was made at 2300 hours Zulu (Greenwich Meantime) on 4 August 1914.

<sup>4</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 1.

it should accomplish its specific goals. Organisational culture then begins with the initial vision or blueprint. As Peters and Austin commented:

You have got to know where you are going, to be able to state it clearly and concisely – and you have got to care about it passionately. That all adds up to vision, the concise statement/picture of where the [organisation] and its people are heading and why they should be proud of it.<sup>5</sup>

The leader then provides the momentum that gets the organisation moving by creating the tangible structures and processes that will enable the organisation to achieve its desired goals. The leader also recruits the core people who will manage the organisation. Often these people will share the same values and beliefs as the leader creating the initial network of shared ideologies that will constitute the organisation's core organisational culture.

Cultural transmission in a young organisation, in its early developmental stages, stems not from written sources and policy manuals but rather from the example provided by the founding leader. If what the leader proposes works and continues to work, it gradually becomes a shared assumption, an accepted way of doing things and becomes embedded in the cultural forms that are the concrete manifestations of the organisation's culture.

In most conventional historical accounts Major General William Throsby Bridges is portrayed as the hero of the AIF and Australian nationalism. In creating the AIF Bridges suggested that the Australian contribution take the form of a division so that Australians could fight as a unified national force rather than as smaller units that would be subsumed into the British order of battle.<sup>6</sup> In his book *Australia: A Social and Political History*, historian Gordon Greenwood wrote:

Bridges' significance lies not only in the fact that he was the original commander of the AIF and in charge of the Australian forces at Gallipoli ... but even more in the contribution he made to a sense of national development by preserving the identity of the Australian forces overseas.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Peters and Austin, *A Passion for Excellence*, p.284.

<sup>6</sup> Scott, *Australia During the War*, pp. 203-6.

<sup>7</sup> Greenwood, *Australia*, p. 264.



In these accounts traditional functionalist notions of leadership are reflected. Bridges was appointed to raise and command the AIF. Hence, leadership is a position; it is formal and centralised.

The role of White in these accounts is secondary and supportive. Basically, as the chief of staff, White is an assistant to a commander and as such has no formal authority. The role of a staff officer is as 'both a filter and an originator of ideas'.<sup>8</sup> Historian John Millar makes this supporting role quite clear when he comments on White's abilities. Millar believes that White receives more credit than his position as Chief of Staff deserves:

White performed tasks expected from any competent chief of staff who in turn would expect his chief to append his seal of approval, or not, as the case may be ... Evidence points to the fact that White was neither more nor less than a competent staff officer who carried out his duties with care and good judgement.<sup>9</sup>

Millar is writing from an internalist viewpoint that acknowledges and accepts the hierarchical nature of military command and hence the functionalist nature of leadership. Millar's statement is problematic in a number of regards. First, he does not produce nor cite any of the evidence that he alludes to in his statement. In the absence of such evidence how can White's competence or lack thereof, be judged? Secondly, Millar ignores a growing body of leadership literature, discussed in chapter 1, which regards leadership as an informal, ideational and therefore creative activity.<sup>10</sup>

Viewed from this perspective leaders create, change, or integrate the cultures of organisations. In the words of Schein, 'the unique and essential function of leadership is the manipulation of culture'.<sup>11</sup> Leaders are skilled at constructing, performing and embellishing the myths, stories, songs, symbols and other cultural forms that convey a culture's meaning. These types of leaders are able to communicate high expectations and

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<sup>8</sup> Ashworth, 'The Staff Officer', p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> Bryman, 'Leadership in Organisations', pp. 276-292.

<sup>11</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 317.

new cultural ideologies and values. They are persuasive facilitators and motivators thus creating the impression of success and competence.<sup>12</sup>

Bean's biographical sketch *Two Men I Knew* portrays Bridges as a 'slow but deep thinker' with a personality that was introverted and with no consideration for the feelings of others. His usual response was a monosyllabic grunt. 'He was ruthless as to the feelings of others', Bean wrote, 'He seemed to make no concessions to humanity'.<sup>13</sup> Bean went on to observe that Bridges 'was not a popular leader'.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Les Carlyon in *Gallipoli* has suggested that Bridges had the personality of 'a hermit with a headache'.<sup>15</sup> This is hardly the personality of a man who could exhibit the characteristics of cultural leadership described above.

In the previous chapters it was demonstrated that White's personality was almost the total opposite of Bridges'. White's success was almost always due to his personality and strength of character. White was able to quickly grasp a problem, whether organisational or tactical, and formulate solutions. As Bean observed

... the number of times during the war in which White acquiesced in a decision which he believed to be wrong was infinitesimal: he almost invariably swung his superiors to his view.<sup>16</sup>

White then not only provided the ideational drive in the organisation of the AIF he also provided the type of leadership through which organisational cultures are created and shaped. The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate that White's leadership gave substance to the Australian Imperial Force's organisational culture by providing the ideas that shaped its structural development.

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<sup>12</sup> Trice and Beyer, 'Cultural leadership in organisations', p. 153. Trice and Beyer have extended Weber's conception of charisma and analysed organisational cultures in order to tabulate the processes of innovation and maintenance.

<sup>13</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>15</sup> Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 74.

### The Only Scheme Available

White's war began on 30 July 1914 with a message from the Commander of the Australian Naval Squadron, Rear Admiral Sir George Patey, who had just decoded a communiqué from the Imperial Government warning of the imminence of war. This message, a pre-arranged signal agreed to by the Australian Government at the 1907 Imperial Conference, advised the government to begin preliminary mobilisation. The message had also been sent to the Minister for Defence, Senator Edward Millen, but had been incorrectly decoded to read 'Adoption precautionary stage'. As a consequence, Millen believed it was an answer to an inquiry and disregarded it. He was oblivious to its importance and the fact the message should have read:

See preface defence scheme. Adopt precautionary stage. Names of powers will be communicated later if necessary.<sup>17</sup>

For Australia this news could not have come at a more inopportune time. Joseph Cook's Liberal Government faced difficulties in passing its Bills. In the lower House his Government held a tenuous majority of one while the Senate was controlled by Andrew Fisher's Labor Party. With parliament deadlocked the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, only recently arrived from England, decided to end the stalemate by dissolving both houses of parliament and sending the nation to a federal election. The members had immediately departed to their various electorates and began campaigning. When the warning arrived from England only Millen was in the seat of power.<sup>18</sup>

At this point in time a number of changes in Australia's military leadership were being effected and this left the government without the immediate advice of Australia's key military leaders. Bridges who had recently been appointed Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces was on a tour of inspection in Queensland and was not expected to return until 27 August. In view of the worsening crisis Millen cabled Bridges on 2

<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed examination of Australia's response to the initial warnings see Scott, *Australia During the War*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-11.

August and ordered him to return to Melbourne.<sup>19</sup> Brigadier-General Joseph Maria Gordon, the Chief of the General Staff, had recently completed his appointment and returned to England. His replacement, Colonel J.G. Legge, was still at sea returning from England, where he was recalled from his appointment as Australian representative to the Imperial General Staff. The permanent head of the Department of Defence, Commander Samuel Pethebridge, was on leave in South Africa when war was declared and the chief clerk, Thomas Trumble, was temporarily filling his position.<sup>20</sup>

It was under these circumstances that White, then Director of Military Operations and acting Chief of the General Staff, found himself responsible for advising the government and implementing Australia's preliminary military mobilisation. The Australian government was, according to Bean, fortunate because they had the advice of the only man in the country with an intimate knowledge of any defence plans. As White told Bean many years later, 'If I had died suddenly there would have been no scheme at all'.<sup>21</sup>

Although Australia's fleet had been put on alert due to the orders that filtered through the Royal Navy's China station with which the Australian Navy served, no other action had been taken. On 1 August White met with Millen and urged him to authorise the preliminary mobilisation that had been recommended in the communiqué from London on 30 July. Millen seemed overawed by the turn of events and was reluctant to act without conferring with the Prime Minister. This meeting left White feeling frustrated and he decided to talk to the Attorney General, Sir William Irvine, in the hope that he could enlist his aid. White indicated that Australia was probably the only part of the Empire where preliminary mobilisation had not yet been adopted. On 2 August, on Irvine's advice, Millen agreed to sanction precautions for the defence of Australia and to rely on Cook to confirm his action later.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> Report upon the Department of Defence from the First of July, 1914, until the Thirtieth of June, 1917, Part 1, Government Printing Office, Melbourne, 1917, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 91-2.

The Federal Executive Council assembled in Melbourne on 3 August to discuss the current crisis and what aid should be given to Britain.<sup>23</sup> The Prime Minister, Joseph Cook, asked if any contingency plans existed for sending Australian troops overseas. White explained that a cooperative study undertaken with New Zealand had proposed a composite Australian and New Zealand infantry division. Under this proposal Australia was to supply two thirds of the force, which was approximately 12,000 men. New Zealand would supply the remainder of the force. White ventured to suggest that a contingent of this size could be ready for embarkation in six weeks.<sup>24</sup>

Cook asked why Australia's contribution had been limited to 12,000 men. After some consideration White advised that when compared with Australia's contribution to the recent South African War, Australia's resources could easily maintain a commitment of 12,000 men.<sup>25</sup> There had been reports, albeit false, that Canada had offered Britain 30,000 men. Cook was eager to ensure that Australia made a comparable offer. Cook thought that an appropriate contribution would therefore be 20,000 men.<sup>26</sup>

The Federal Council asked White whether or not it was feasible for Australia to raise a divisional formation of 20,000 men, and what time frame was required in order to have the division ready for embarkation. White responded by pointing out that his study had been restricted to 12,000 men. At that point in time Australia had not attempted to organise a divisional formation, but White believed the task could be accomplished in approximately six weeks.<sup>27</sup>

White was asked to draft a telegram to the British Government and this was sent immediately without any changes. It stated:

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<sup>23</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1914.

<sup>24</sup> 'Origin of the AIF', Answer by Brudenell White to C.E.W. Bean, 1 October 1919, Bean Papers, Australian War Memorial (AWM) 3DRL6673, item 153; Copy also on file National Archives of Australia (NAA), A6006/1, file 1914/8/23.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Scott, *Australia During the War*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> 'Origin of the AIF', Answer by Brudenell White to C.E.W. Bean, 1 October 1919, Bean Papers, Australian War Memorial (AWM) 3DRL6673, item 153; Copy also on file National Archives of Australia (NAA), A6006/1, file 1914/8/23.

In the event of war the Government (of Australia) [sic] is prepared to place the vessels of the Australian Navy under the control of the British Admiralty when desired. It is further prepared to despatch an expeditionary force of 20,000 men of any suggested composition to any destination desired by the Home Government, the Force to be at the complete disposal of the Home Government. The cost of despatch and maintenance will be borne by this (ie the Australian) [sic] Government.<sup>28</sup>

During a press conference held after this meeting, Millen stated that the Australian contingent would not be drawn from the Australian Military Forces. He pointed out that the Defence Act specifically stated 'members of the defence forces ... shall not be required, unless they voluntarily agree to do so, to serve beyond the limits of the Commonwealth, and those of any territory under the authority of the Commonwealth'.<sup>29</sup>

In the absence of Bridges and Legge it fell to White to work on the organisational plans. His diaries indicate that he worked day and night during the raising of the force.<sup>30</sup> Bridges arrived in Melbourne on 5 August 1914 and at 1:00pm held his first meeting with Millen. Bridges advised Millen to appoint a General Officer Commanding (GOC) to command the force and recommended Major-General Sir Edward Hutton for the position. Millen listened but did not commit himself to a decision. Instead he asked Bridges to acquaint himself with the draft plans that White had formulated. Bridges met with Millen again the following day and during the discussions again proposed that Hutton be appointed as GOC. Millen vetoed the proposal to appoint Hutton and instead gave Bridges a memorandum requesting that Bridges organise the Australian expeditionary force.<sup>31</sup>

One of the first steps that Bridges took was to appoint White as his Chief of Staff and together they worked night and day organising the raising of the expeditionary force. They met the Defence Minister almost daily and responded to the cables that arrived from the

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<sup>28</sup> The wording of this telegram differs slightly from that reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1914. The wording used in this thesis is that contained in Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 28-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Diary Entries, August – October 1914, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 22.

<sup>31</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 28, 32; See also Verney, 'The Army High Command', p. 233; Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 117.

British Government. The British Government cabled its acceptance of the Australian offer on 6 August and requested that the contingent be 'despatched as soon as possible'.<sup>32</sup> This communiqué did not, however, provide an indication of how the Australian contingent was to be organised. In the initial offer to the War Office White had implicitly recommended that Australia organise its contingent as a divisional formation. White now cabled the War Office and asked if it wished the Australian contingent to be organised as a division or if they preferred some other composition.<sup>33</sup>

The War Office's reply arrived on 7 August 1914 and its content left no doubt about how the British Staff perceived the Dominion forces:

The Army Council suggest that a suitable composition of the expeditionary force would be two infantry brigades, one light horse brigade, and one field artillery brigade.<sup>34</sup>

The implication of this cable is that the British Army Staff had viewed Australia's offer with their traditional reticence when it came to Colonial and Citizen Forces. The suggested composition is very similar to White's original plan for the structure of the 12,000 Australian contribution to the joint Australian and New Zealand force. It is indicative that British military leaders would dismantle the fledgling Australian force and ensure it was absorbed into the larger British Army. If this proposal had been accepted it is highly likely that any embryonic Australian military identity would be lost.

According to the traditional accounts Bridges wished to prevent this dismemberment of the Australian force and wanted to preserve its national identity. As a consequence, Bridges took a firm stand and drafted, for the Minister, a reply to the Army Council's proposal:

Referring to your telegram dated 7th August, fully expected 20,000 to go, and on that basis have begun organising division on Home regular army establishment, with 3 brigades of 4 gun batteries, but without howitzer brigade and heavy battery. Also light horse brigade on Australian

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<sup>32</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

establishments, 2,226 personnel and 2,315 horses. Do you concur or still wish your proposal adopted? Anticipating embarking four to six weeks. Early answer requested.<sup>35</sup>

The following day the British Government cabled their acceptance of Australia's suggested composition.

Bean, and others, have interpreted this singular act as a defining moment in the development of Australian nationalism. In the *Official History*, Bean recorded that:

The stand thus taken by the far sighted sardonic soldier-statesman was the first and greatest step towards settling the character ... of a national Australian army ... In the stand which he had made General Bridges was actuated by pure Australian nationalism.<sup>36</sup>

A closer examination of these events casts some doubts on these traditional accounts and suggests that Bridges' significance in this respect may have been overstated.

During his early meetings with Millen, Bridges was insistent that Major General Edward Hutton, an imperial officer, be appointed to command the expeditionary force. This recommendation is hardly consistent with the actions of a man motivated by, and singularly interested, in Australian nationalism. In fairness to Bridges it is possible that as Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces he expected to command the Home army and was merely recommending a suitable officer to command the expeditionary force. The question thus raised is why did Bridges not recommend a suitable Australian officer?

Another issue that casts some doubt on Bridges' nationalistic impulses concerns the question of his own commitment to the proposed force structure. In his first meeting with Millen Bridges was told to acquaint himself with White's plan. Cabinet had already made the decision to organise the AIF as a divisional formation and White had been instructed to undertake the further planning necessary for this objective. Although it is clear that Bridges

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<sup>35</sup> Scott, *Australia During the War*, p. 204.

<sup>36</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 31



did not agree with the proposed force structure it is unlikely that Bridges would have disregarded these instructions. When offering the command of the light horse brigade to Colonel Chauvel, who was at that time in London, Bridges wrote: 'It was not quite my idea of what we should send but I naturally accepted the command'.<sup>37</sup>

Bridges' comment would suggest that he invariably viewed the expeditionary force in the traditional context of Australian involvement in imperial wars. The only alternative to a divisional formation was to organise smaller brigade sized formations that could be integrated into the British army. In view of the constraints placed on him by Cabinet Bridges had little option but to press the British War Office to accept the proposed force structure without any significant changes.

With agreement reached with the British War Office Bridges and White were, on 8 August, able to present Millen with a detailed plan. The revised plan proposed the formation of an Australian infantry division and a light horse brigade.<sup>38</sup> The division was the smallest formation to contain units of all arms (infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineers) and to maintain any semblance of national identity. It was the largest formation mentioned on the Australian establishment but, as already noted, Australian military authorities had never before organised or commanded such a large body of troops.<sup>39</sup> Under the 1914 establishment a division consisted of 18,027 men while a light horse brigade (including support units) had 1,967, a total of 19,994 men in all, and close to the figure laid down by Cook at the first Cabinet meeting.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Letter Bridges to Chauvel, 20 August 1914, quoted in Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> "Mobilisation", AWM25, 495/1, p. 33.

<sup>39</sup> Under the 'Universal Training Scheme' 'proposed by Kitchener the largest established formation in the Australian Military Forces was the brigade. See 'Defence of Australia, Memorandum by Field Marshall Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum', *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 2, 1910. 'Report of the Minister for Defence on the Progress of Universal Training', *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 2, 1912. 'Memorandum on the Organisation of the New Citizen Forces', 11 July 1911, National Archives of Australia (NAA), B1535, File 929/19/566, Part 10. In 1913 the CGS, Brigadier General Joseph Maria Gordon suggested that a divisional organisation might be adopted in future but believed that at present any higher formation than a brigade was impractical. See 'Ultimate Organisation of the Commonwealth Military Forces'; paper presented to the meeting of the Military Board, 1 July 1914, NAA, A2653/1, item 1914.

<sup>40</sup> GS AIF, "Table showing allotment and distribution of troops", 23 September 1914, AWM25 839/15.

White realised that in order to operate effectively along side British formations it would be necessary to match as closely as possible the current British tables of establishment.<sup>41</sup> For this to occur it was imperative that the Australian force be structured according to British organisational patterns. This necessitated ensuring that any embryonic force was administered and led by men who understood or had an affinity for the British military structure and operational practices. The Light Horse was a traditional Australian military structure but had no direct British organisational equivalent. This meant that it could only play a subordinate role in the new Australian organisation.

The formation of an Infantry Division represented a major departure from traditional Australian contingents but provided the best option for an organisation that would have to fight with and support the British Army in a modern industrial war. White's vision then was for an infantry division organised along British patterns and a light horse brigade organised according to the Australian tables of establishment. With the key structure established White, and Bridges, were then able to plan and organise the concomitant manpower requirements.

### **Coterie of the Australian Club**

White's vision of the embryonic AIF contained two facets of what Edgar Schein later labelled 'embedding mechanisms'.<sup>42</sup> The first mechanism was the physical structure of the AIF and its reliance on the British military model with minor variations to accommodate colonial values and methods. As Schein observes leaders, especially founding leaders, have strong theories about how to organise for maximum effectiveness. The initial design of the organisation, and subsequent reorganisations, provided more than enough opportunities to embed their deeply held assumptions about the task, the means to achieve it, and the kinds

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<sup>41</sup> This was different to the Canadians who pursued their own structures. These structures often conflicted the British patterns (Canadian formations were frequently significantly larger) presenting various problems in terms of overall tactical planning and logistics. For a more detailed discussion of the Canadian experiences see Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*; Morton, 'The Canadian Military Experience in the First World War, 1914-18'; Morton, 'Exerting Control'.

<sup>42</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 224.

of people and relationships necessary to fulfil their vision.<sup>43</sup> The second mechanism contained in White's vision was the selection and recruitment of organisational members who fitted specific criteria. According to Schein, 'one of the most subtle yet most potent ways in which culture gets embedded and perpetuated is the initial selection of new members'.<sup>44</sup>

White, and Bridges, began the process of building the AIF with the selection of the commanders and staff officers who would fill the key positions in the fledgling force. They gathered around them men with impeccable imperial connections. All ten senior commanders and administrators, had, like Bridges and White, been educated at elite public schools in Britain, or at the top grammar and private schools in Australia. They had thus been inculcated with the beliefs and social values of that section of society most likely to support the Empire, the middle-class. Five of these men had passed the Staff College course at Camberley in England, or at Quetta in India, while the remainder had at some stage of their military careers been attached to the British army. Bean argues this staff was the 'most brilliant that any Australian general had at his disposal during the war'.<sup>45</sup> Certainly, the men selected were all highly capable officers and this is best illustrated by the fact that at the cessation of hostilities in 1918 eleven members of the original staff were themselves generals.

Before general recruiting began on 10 August White and Bridges selected the brigadiers and staff officers who would then organise the recruits into the various sub-units of the division. Altogether there were five Brigadiers (three infantry, one light horse and one artillery) and in addition to White, five main staff officers (two 'general' and three 'administrative' staff officers) and these men became the AIF's main administrators.

To command the 1st Brigade, being raised in New South Wales, White and Bridges appointed Lieutenant Colonel H.N. MacLaurin. MacLaurin was a 35 year old barrister and son of Sir Henry Normand MacLaurin, a highly respected Sydney medical practitioner and

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 235.

<sup>45</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 64.

former Chancellor of the University of Sydney.<sup>46</sup> Colonel J.W. M'Cay was chosen to command the 2nd Brigade that was to be raised in Victoria. M'Cay was a barrister and former Minister of Defence in the Reid Government of 1904 and 1905. M'Cay was a keen militiaman and had taken over from Bridges as Director of Intelligence.<sup>47</sup> The only professional soldier amongst the newly appointed Brigadiers was Lieutenant Colonel E.G. Sinclair-Maclagan who commanded the 3rd Brigade, which comprised soldiers from the remaining states. Sinclair-Maclagan was a serving officer of the British army and was on loan when hostilities broke out. He had developed a close friendship with Bridges whilst serving at the Royal Military College as Director of Drill.<sup>48</sup>

White and Bridges appointed Colonel H.G. Chauvel to command the 1st Light Horse Brigade. Chauvel was an officer of the Australian Permanent Staff and was currently in England as Australian representative to the Imperial General Staff. He was telegraphed with instructions to join the AIF once the force arrived overseas.<sup>49</sup> The remaining Brigadier was Colonel J.J.T. Hobbs who was to assume command of the Artillery Brigade. Hobbs was an architect from Perth and an enthusiastic militiaman. He had recently returned from England, where in 1902, 1906 and 1913, he had undertaken study in the science of modern field artillery. Interestingly, these studies had mostly been undertaken at Hobbs' own expense.<sup>50</sup>

In his role as chief of staff White was not only the senior staff officer for the division but was also the principle operations officer. He selected Major D.J. Glasfurd as the second operations officer. Glasfurd was an officer in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and had served at the Staff College at Camberley with White.<sup>51</sup> The third officer appointed to the operations staff was Major T.A. Blamey. Blamey had been a schoolmaster before joining the Australian Permanent Staff. He had recently completed the Staff College course at Quetta in India and at the outbreak of hostilities was in England where he was attached to

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<sup>46</sup> Brief biographical details can be found in *ibid*, p. 50.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> A.J. Hill, 'Chauvel, Sir Henry George', in Coulthard-Clark (ed.), *The Diggers*, pp. 106-113.

<sup>50</sup> A.J. Hill, 'Hobbs, Sir Joseph John Talbot', in *ibid*, pp. 180-3.

<sup>51</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 75.

the Headquarters of the Wessex Territorial Division. Like Chauvel, Blamey was telegraphed to join the AIF once it was overseas.<sup>52</sup>

The next senior staff officer to White was the Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General, Colonel V.C.M. Sellheim. Sellheim was, like White, a former member of the Queensland Military Forces and at the outbreak of hostilities the Adjutant General of the Australian Forces. Sellheim was to supervise both 'A' and 'Q' staffs (which looked after personnel and supplies) and was assisted by Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Patterson. Patterson primarily looked after the Quartermaster General staff and broke down soon after the landing at Gallipoli and was replaced by Major C.H. Foott. When war broke out Foott had just completed the Staff College course in England and was attached to Southern Command.<sup>53</sup>

To assist Sellheim with the Adjutant General duties White chose his personal friend from his Camberley days, John Gellibrand. Gellibrand had served in the British Army but had resigned his commission and returned to Tasmania to grow apples. Although Bridges expressed some doubts White persuaded him to appoint Gellibrand to the staff. Gellibrand was appointed to the AIF staff with the rank of major.<sup>54</sup>

Bridges also appointed a 'military secretary' a position that was vague within the context of the divisional framework being established. For this appointment Bridges chose Honorary Captain T. Griffiths who was Secretary of the Military Board. Bridges knew Griffiths' abilities and wanted him on his staff, hence the rather ambiguous position created for him.<sup>55</sup> The remaining staff positions were given to British Army officers then serving various roles with the AMF.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 8, p. 537.

<sup>54</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 79-81.

<sup>55</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 9, p. 123; Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 79.

In selecting these men White and Bridges, largely without any reference to Legge or Army Headquarters, literally ‘picked the eyes’ out of Australia’s military establishment.<sup>56</sup> They selected the cream of Australia’s small permanent staff, including heads of departments, and their most gifted and almost indispensable juniors. In addition they selected British regular officers who were on loan to the AMF or who were in Australia on exchange duties (See Figure 1).

The close and personal manner in which these selections and appointments were made provided a model for further recruitment of people into other commanding roles within the AIF. The criteria were largely unwritten and gave preference to White’s own social class, the middle/upper class. It was underpinned by the traditional middle/upper class assumption that only the middle/upper classes were sufficiently prepared to provide the necessary leadership qualities.<sup>57</sup> The implications of this preferential selection system are clearly demonstrated by any examination of the social background of the sixty-eight general officers of the AIF. Twenty-four were professional soldiers and fourteen came from professional occupations such as doctors, lawyers and engineers. A further eight general officers had commercial or business backgrounds and seven had pastoral backgrounds. The educational background of these sixty-eight general officers indicates an even more distinctive level of preferment. Almost all of these men attended high school and thirty percent of them attended the handful of top private schools. Four of these men had attended military colleges and eleven of them had attended university.<sup>58</sup> Five of these eleven men had attained Masters Degrees and one, Brigadier General George Long, had a Lambeth Doctor of Divinity. It is clear then that the social structure of the higher levels of military management closely conformed to White’s social class and ensured a substantial degree of cultural homogeneity at this organisational level.

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<sup>56</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 49, 64.

<sup>57</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the middle/upper classes and leadership see Barnett, ‘The Education of Military Elites’; Encel, ‘The Study of Militarism in Australia’.

<sup>58</sup> There has been no significant study of the social origins of AIF officers. This analysis is drawn from the author’s analysis of *AIF Staff, Regimental and Gradation Lists of Officers*; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; and Bean’s biographical notes in the *Official History*.

**Figure 1: Administrative Structure of the AIF, October 1914**

<b>Divisional Headquarters:</b>		
GOC	Maj-General W. T. Bridges	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
GSO1	Lt. -Col. C. B. B. White	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
GSO2	Maj. D. J. Glasfurd	British Army
GSO3	Maj. T. A. Blamey	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
AA & QMG	Col. V. C. M. Sellheim	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
DAA&QMG	Lt. Col. Patterson	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
DA & QMG	Major C. H. Foott	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
DAAG	Maj. J. Gellibrand	British Army (Retired)
ADC	Capt. W. J. Foster	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
Military Secretary	Capt. T. Griffiths	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
<b>Divisional Troops:</b>		
ADOS	Maj. J. G. Austin	British Army
CRE	Maj. G. C. E. Elliot	British Army
CRA	Col. J. J. T. Hobbs	Australian Military Forces (Militia)
Divisional Train (Transport)	Capt. J.-T. Marsh	British Army
DMS	Surgeon-General W. D. C. Williams	Australian Military Forces (Militia)
ADMS	Lt. -Col. N. R. Howse VC	Australian Military Forces (Militia)
Divisional Medical Officer	Col. C. S. Ryan	Australian Military Forces (Militia)
<b>1st Infantry Brigade:</b>		
Brigadier	Lt. -Col. H. N. McLaurin	Australian Military Forces (Militia)
Brigade-Major	Capt. F.D. Irvine	British Army
Staff-Captain	Lt. D. M. King	British Army
<b>2nd Infantry Brigade:</b>		
Brigadier	Col. J. W. M'Cay	Australian Military Forces (Militia)
Brigade-Major	Maj. W. E. H. Cass	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
Staff-Captain	Capt. H. J. F. Wallis	British Army
<b>3rd Infantry Brigade:</b>		
Brigadier	Lt. -Col. E. G. Sinclair-MacLagan	British Army
Brigade-Major	Maj. C. H. Brand	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
Staff-Captain	Capt A. M. Ross	British Army
<b>1st Australian Light Horse Brigade:</b>		
Brigadier	Col. H. G. Chauvel	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
Brigade-Major	Capt E. M. Williams	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)
Staff-Captain	Lt. W. P. Farr	Australian Military Forces (Permanent)

Sources: Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 49-51, 69-80.

*Australian Imperial Force Gradation and Regimental Lists*, 1914.

*Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1976- 1993).

The men that White, and Bridges, had chosen to fill the higher ranks then chose the men they wanted in the ranks of the middle management. In this way the emphasis on educated middle/upper class professions filtered down the social hierarchy thereby maintaining the homogeneity of cultural values and beliefs. Taking the 1st Division as an example MacLaurin chose Colonel C.M. Macnaughton as his second in command. Macnaughton was, like MacLaurin, a barrister and served with MacLaurin in the New South Wales Scottish Rifles. To command the 1st Battalion they chose another close legal colleague Lieutenant Colonel L. Dobbin.<sup>59</sup> The manner in which commanders and their immediate subordinates were chosen quickly led to allegations that officers in the AIF were being selected by a 'coterie'.<sup>60</sup> This allegation suggests that even at this early stage in the development of the Australian Imperial Force the preference for social elites in the officer ranks was apparent.

Although no significant research has been undertaken on the social origins of the officers of the AIF as a group, a recent study by historian Dale Blair highlights the extent to which the above mentioned preferences shaped the selection of officers at the battalion level.<sup>61</sup> At this level however it reinforced the more explicit criteria that White had circulated to regional recruiting officers.

Using the 1st Battalion as a case study Blair highlights the definite bias in the occupational background of the battalion's officers. More than half (53.1 percent) of the 1st Battalion's officers were recruited from the professional and clerical categories. The three labour intensive categories, 'tradesmen', 'labourer' and 'industrial / manufacturing' accounted for only 15.6 of officers in the 1st Battalion.<sup>62</sup>

An examination of the 10th Battalion from South Australia indicates a very similar trend in the selection of officers. In this case 52.0 per cent of the battalion's officers were drawn

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<sup>59</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, p. 57.

<sup>60</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 23-4.



from the professional and clerical occupational categories.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, none of the 10th Battalion officers listed in the sample was drawn from the three labour intensive categories.<sup>64</sup> This is a marked contrast to the battalion as a whole. The unit's 'Embarkation Nominal Rolls' indicate that 54.2 per cent of the battalion's volunteers came from the labour intensive categories and 14.4 per cent came from the professional and clerical fields.<sup>65</sup>

One of the explicit criteria established by White, and Bridges, was the requirement to have previous military service.<sup>66</sup> Hence, officers, and non-commissioned officers, were recruited from the Australian Permanent Forces or from the Australian Military Forces. Only twenty-four of the officers of the 1st Australian Division had never previously served in the military.<sup>67</sup> Four hundred and sixty officers were recruited from the old Australian militia units and the newly raised units of the compulsory training scheme. In addition eighty-four officers were professional soldiers who were serving in the Australian permanent forces or in the British army and were currently on exchange with the Australian Military Forces. A further fifty-seven officers were retired from various Australian, British and colonial military forces.<sup>68</sup> The proportion of officers who had seen active service in the Boer War or in other wars was approximately seventeen of the one hundred and four officers in the division. This figure was much higher for the senior officers, including as it did Bridges himself, six of his eleven colonels, twenty-two of his fifty-two lieutenant colonels and thirty-two of his one hundred majors.<sup>69</sup>

A further source of bias, albeit unconscious and taken-for-granted, in the selection of officers was religion, a social institution that frequently reflects common notions of

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<sup>63</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Embarkation Lists, AWM 8.

<sup>64</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Embarkation Lists, AWM 8.

<sup>65</sup> These figures are taken from an undergraduate research project undertaken by the author. This project examined the social backgrounds of 887 men listed in the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Embarkation rolls, AWM 8. The unpublished results of this project are in the possession of the author.

<sup>66</sup> For more detail see *War Establishments of the Australian Military Forces 1912*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1912; GS AIF, "Table showing allotment and distribution of troops", 23 September 1914, AWM25 839/15.

<sup>67</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 54.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* The figure for professional soldiers includes 23 graduates from the Military College at Duntroon.

<sup>69</sup> AIF Staff, *Regimental and Gradation Lists of Officers*, 6th December 1914.

privilege and repression. Belonging to any religious group that is regarded as socially unacceptable to mainstream society can severally restrict social mobility and advancement. Members of the Catholic Church are a good example. Throughout Australian history Catholics have been the subjects of victimisation and distrust. The progression of the war did not alleviate this, rather it magnified the feelings of distrust and resulted in Catholics being identified as disloyal.<sup>70</sup> This was in spite of the fact that many Catholics loyally volunteered to serve in the AIF.

Catholics comprised 19.26 percent of the AIF and this is proportionate to the distribution of Catholics in the wider society where they comprised 22.30 percent of Australian society.<sup>71</sup> According to Blair the distribution of Catholics in the 1st Battalion was 17.80 percent.<sup>72</sup> Although low compared with the distribution of the wider society it does suggest a significant recruitment base. The South Australian 10th Battalion was more consistent with the wider society. Catholics comprised 13.98 percent of the battalion and this compares favourably with the 14.9 percent of Catholics in South Australian society.<sup>73</sup>

The relationship between religion and social status becomes clear when we examine the backgrounds of officers in the 1st and 10th Battalions. Only one of the 1st Battalion's officers had listed Catholic as his religion.<sup>74</sup> In the 10th Battalion the differences were even more marked with a total absence of Catholic representation in the ranks of the officer class.<sup>75</sup> At a senior level only two of the sixty-eight AIF generals had Catholic affiliations.<sup>76</sup> None of the officers who formed the original administrative and command structure (as listed in figure 1) had any Catholic affiliations.

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<sup>70</sup> For a fuller discussion of sectarianism in Australian society see McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War*; McKernan, *Australian People and the Great War*; O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia*.

<sup>71</sup> See the comparison in Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 280.

<sup>72</sup> Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>73</sup> These figures are based on a comparison of the *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. 1, 3rd April 1911 and 10th Battalion Embarkation Lists, AWM 8.

<sup>74</sup> Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>75</sup> 10th Battalion Embarkation Lists, AWM 8.

<sup>76</sup> No major study has been done on the social origins of the AIF generals. However, an examination of the *AIF, Regimental and Staff Lists* and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, indicates a predisposition to promote men from Protestant backgrounds.

Being Catholic was clearly detrimental to any career path that involved commissioned rank. Listing Church of England was however, especially advantageous to one's career aspirations. In the 1st Battalion alone 78.12 percent of officers listed their religion as Church of England.<sup>77</sup> A similar situation occurred in the 10th Battalion with 61 percent of officers listing Church of England as their religion.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly this was not merely confined to Australia. According to Sol Encel, in the period 1898 and 1940, 91 percent of all generals in the United States Army were Protestant.<sup>79</sup>

In the *Official History*, Bean has emphasised the explicit selection criteria of physical stature and experience. Juxtaposing these elements against a stereotypical rural background has enabled Bean to portray the AIF as an egalitarian force unlike any other, and certainly unlike its British counterpart. Bean argued that the lack of social preferment in the selection of Australian officers was in marked contrast to the selection of British officers. Bean wrote: '[a]nyone watching an Australian battalion on parade felt that in this year's corporals he saw the next year's sergeants and the following year's subalterns'.<sup>80</sup> In his most famous analysis of the AIF General Monash supported Bean's commentary and applauded the fact that the Australian Army was substantially different to the British Army. Monash wrote:

... there was no officer caste, no social distinction in the whole force. In not a few instances, men of humble origin and belonging to the artisan class rose, during the war, from privates to the command of battalions.<sup>81</sup>

Yet even Monash's description of the officer selection process in the Third Division showed that the process was not as egalitarian as he assumed and is much closer to the truth. 'The officers', Monash wrote, '(the great majority of whom I have promoted from the

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<sup>77</sup> Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>78</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Embarkation Lists, AWM 8

<sup>79</sup> Encel, 'The Study of Militarism in Australia', p.14.

<sup>80</sup> Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p. 537.

<sup>81</sup> Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, p. 300.

ranks) represent the cream of our professional and educated classes, young engineers, architects, medicals, accountants, pastoralists, public-school boys, and so on'.<sup>82</sup>

It is perhaps hardly surprising that the organisational culture from the upper to the lower management level was shaped by prevailing social norms. Officers were predominantly Anglo-Irish, educated at a private school or university, and/or from the professional classes of society. What is surprising is how strong this pattern was in an army that boasted of its egalitarianism to the world. Contrary to popular belief there was little to distinguish the Australian and British officers and indeed the Australian 'officer-type' embodied many of the characteristics of the stereotypical British officer.<sup>83</sup> It would be unreasonable to assume these trends are replicated in all Australian battalions. They do however provide food for thought and suggest possible future areas of research.

### **Constructing Australia's Imperial Force**

Although the selection of the majority of officers was conducted on a personal basis that was shaped by conventional social, the selection of the ordinary ranks who made up the majority of the AIF was undertaken according to explicit recruiting criteria. These criteria became embedded in the AIF's organisational culture and shaped the early impressions of the Australian soldier.

In 1914 there were two problems with the Australian Military Forces that affected the recruitment of any expeditionary force. First, the forces were not a professional army rather: it was an army composed of compulsory trainees trained strictly for home defence. Since 1911 Australia had had a compulsory training scheme that obliged young boys aged between 12 and 18 years to undertake training in cadet units. Then as young men aged between 18 and 25 years they were required to serve in the militia for 16 whole days per

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<sup>82</sup> Monash quoted in Cutlack (ed.), *War Letters of General Monash*, p. 233.

<sup>83</sup> For more detail on the social origins of British Army officers see, Razzell, 'Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army'; Otley, 'The Social Origins of British Army Officers'; Otley, 'The Educational Background of British Army Officers'.

year, including 8 days in an annual camp.<sup>84</sup> By 1914 the majority of militia were under twenty-one years of age and consequently were not eligible to serve in the expeditionary force without parental consent.<sup>85</sup> This restriction was not removed until 6 May 1918 when the standards for recruits were changed.<sup>86</sup>

Second, the Defence Act (1903) stipulated that serving members of Australia's Military Forces could not serve overseas unless they volunteered to do so.<sup>87</sup> White, and Bridges, hoped that large numbers of militia soldiers would volunteer and in order to fulfil the requirements of the Defence Act they defined recruits as 'persons who voluntarily agree to serve beyond the limits of the Commonwealth' so that militia trainees would be eligible to serve in the expeditionary force.<sup>88</sup>

It was expected that the militia would form at least half of the expeditionary force, which would have required about 1 in 5 militiamen to volunteer. However, Bridges and White were to be disappointed and had to settle for considerably less: something more like 1 in 10 (see Table 2).<sup>89</sup>

**Table 2: Prior Military Experience of the 1st Division  
Other ranks – 1914.**

Experience	Number	Per Cent
Militia Trainee (19-20 year Olds)	2263	15.4
Older Militia	1555	10.6
Former Militia	2460	16.7
Former British Regulars	1308	8.9
Former British Territorials	1009	6.9
No Previous Service	6098	41.5
Total	14693	100.0

Source: Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 60

<sup>84</sup> Legge, "Australia and the Universal Training Law", p. 456. For a more detailed study of the compulsory training scheme see Barrett, *Falling In*.

<sup>85</sup> Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services*, vol. 1, p. 15.

<sup>86</sup> Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> CPD, Vol. XV, 5 August 1903, pp. 3124-6. See also Military Board Minute Book, 1907-08, Meeting of 1 October 1908, , NAA, A2653, item 6, p. 362.

<sup>88</sup> Commonwealth of Australia Military Orders, No. 465 of 1914.

<sup>89</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 60.

Some units, however, volunteered almost to the man especially the artillery units. The 8th Field Artillery Battery provides a good example of this. Hobbs had appointed his classmate from the University of Sydney Diploma of Military Science course, Major A. J. Bessell-Browne, to command it. At the time Bessell-Browne commanded the Perth based 37th Field Artillery battery. Bessell-Browne paraded the battery and called for volunteers at which point the entire parade stepped forward. The youngest of the trainees were rejected and their places filled by older trained men. Otherwise the battery went as it stood.<sup>90</sup>

Recruiting for the expeditionary force began on 10 August 1914 and from the beginning the recruiting authorities deliberately set unnaturally high standards. Recruits had to stand 5 feet 6 inches or higher in bare feet, have a chest measurement of at least 34 inches, and be aged between nineteen and thirty-five years.<sup>91</sup> These standards were such that throughout the war the survivors of the '1914 men' could easily be discerned from those who enlisted in later years.<sup>92</sup> When the recruiting offices opened they were inundated with applicants. Many were to be disappointed and walked away from the recruiting offices dejected and in tears. In the first rush of enthusiasm as many as 3000 volunteers were rejected for medical reasons. These figures reached 33 percent of volunteers by June 1915, and they were mostly turned away on the grounds of physical deficiency.<sup>93</sup>

Although health and physical stature were considered the most important factors in the selection of 'ordinary ranks' other imperatives were to determine the selection of 'non-commissioned officers'. Bridges and White realised that if the new battalions were to be transformed from volunteers into competent soldiers then the quality of training and junior

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>91</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 August 1914, *Argus*, 11-14 August 1914, *CPD*, 16 December 1914, vol 76, p. 1970, Butler, *Australian Army Medical Services*, Vol 1, p. 21n.

<sup>92</sup> Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services*, vol. 1, p. 20. See also Gough, 'The First Australian Imperial Force', p. 42.

leadership were key elements. They gave instructions that all regimental sergeant majors (universally known as the RSM) and senior sergeants were to be recruited from the non-commissioned ranks of Australia's permanent forces. Bean observed that a good RSM was the disciplinary backbone of the newly raised British battalions, and yet, presumably because it had implications for his notions of egalitarianism, down played the importance and influence of the RSM in Australian battalions.<sup>94</sup> The RSM was however, just as important in the Australian military infrastructure as it was in the British, or any other military organisation.<sup>95</sup>

With recruitment for the AIF progressing well, White and Bridges turned their attention to the physical structure of the AIF. The AIF was going to fight and serve along side the British army and this would involve AIF and British units periodically replacing each other in the firing line. This necessitated a degree of standardisation in order to avoid administrative and logistical problems that could have potentially tragic repercussions. When White devised the plan to raise the AIF he followed the tables of organisation followed by the British Army.<sup>96</sup>

The most numerous component of the AIF were the infantry battalions of the 1st Australian Division. The 1st Division, and subsequent divisions, were organised according to British tables of organisation that detailed the composition of the unit, how many men it had, and how many and what kind of tools, vehicles and weapons it had. Organising in this manner resulted in a number of administrative and logistical benefits. For each type of unit it was possible to calculate how much food it would need, how many trucks were required to transport it, and how much accommodation was required to house it. One unit could be

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<sup>94</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 56-7.

<sup>95</sup> Although this is a little studied aspect of military culture Dale Blair briefly examines the backgrounds of senior non-commissioned officers in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. He also cites an unpublished paper delivered to the Australian Historical Association by John Connor. See Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, pp. 29-30, 198, n39.

<sup>96</sup> War Establishments of the Australian Military Forces 1912, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1912; GS AIF, "Table showing allotment and distribution of troops", 23 September 1914, AWM25 839/15.

replaced by another of the same type in the sound knowledge that it had the same number of men and the same equipment.<sup>97</sup>

A further facet of the British military system that was transposed to the Australian military landscape was the concept of the Regimental System. White, and Bridges, wanted to weld the battalions to the social fabric of communities through localised recruiting and association with militia battalions. It was hoped that such a system would improve the *esprit de corps* of the fledgling force.

Consequently, instructions were given to the Commandants of each military district to establish battalions on a territorial basis. In accordance with this instruction each AIF unit was allotted a set of training areas. In the 7th Infantry Battalion, for example, each company was formed from a battalion of the militia (see Table 3).

**Table 3: 7th Battalion formation (1914)**

Company	Militia Battalion	Training Area
A	59th	Brunswick, Coburg
B	60th	North Carlton and Parkville
C	57th	North-Eastern Victoria and the Goulbourn Valley
D	58th	Essendon and Moonee Ponds
E	65th	Footscray, Spotswood and Bacchus Marsh
F	66th	Castlemaine and Kyneton
G	68th	Bendigo
H	-	Murray Valley, Echuca, Inglewood and Charleton

Source: Dean, Arthur and Gutteridge, Eric W., *The Seventh Battalion, A.I.F.: Resume of the activities of the Seventh Battalion in the Great War, 1914-1918* (W. & K. Purbrick, Melbourne, 1933), p. 7

In the example of the 7th Infantry Battalion it seemed to work with almost every company having a parent militia battalion and an associated community.<sup>98</sup> However, not all units

<sup>97</sup> For more detail on the tables of organisation used in the AIF see *War Establishments of the Australian Military Forces 1912*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1912; GS AIF, "Table showing allotment and distribution of troops", 23 September 1914, AWM25 839/15.



were able to achieve this level of success. In the 1st Infantry Battalion for example, three companies did not have a militia battalion associated with their recruiting area. In these companies men were assembled into two lines and company officers 'picked so many men out'.<sup>99</sup>

Initially there was no attempt to integrate members from across Australia into each and every unit. Rather the raising of units progressed along territorial lines with most units — battalions, regiments, or batteries — being raised in individual states (see Figure 2). Only later in the war when the number of recruits dwindled were battalions forced to integrate members from outside their normal recruiting areas. By this stage, however, the territorial identification was deeply embedded and the practice had little effect on the identity of the battalions.

The second and numerically next largest arm in the division was the artillery. In 1911 the Royal Australian Artillery had been divided into the Royal Australian Field Artillery, which manned mobile guns in support of field formations, and the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery, which manned coastal defences. This followed the British Army's example, which had split its artillery in 1899.<sup>100</sup> The split was unfortunate because the nature of the war ahead, which used siege warfare tactics, would be more suited to the training of the Garrison Artillery who, for the moment at least, was occupied defending ports.

The artillery organisation of the Australian Division differed from its British counterpart in a number of respects. The first difference was with the Field Artillery organisation. Each British field battery comprised 6 quick firing 18 pounder guns. Although current British military theory favoured having four guns per battery instead of the current establishment of six guns the change had not yet been implemented. It was argued that the quick-firing 18 pounders had greater fire power and negated the necessity of having six guns.

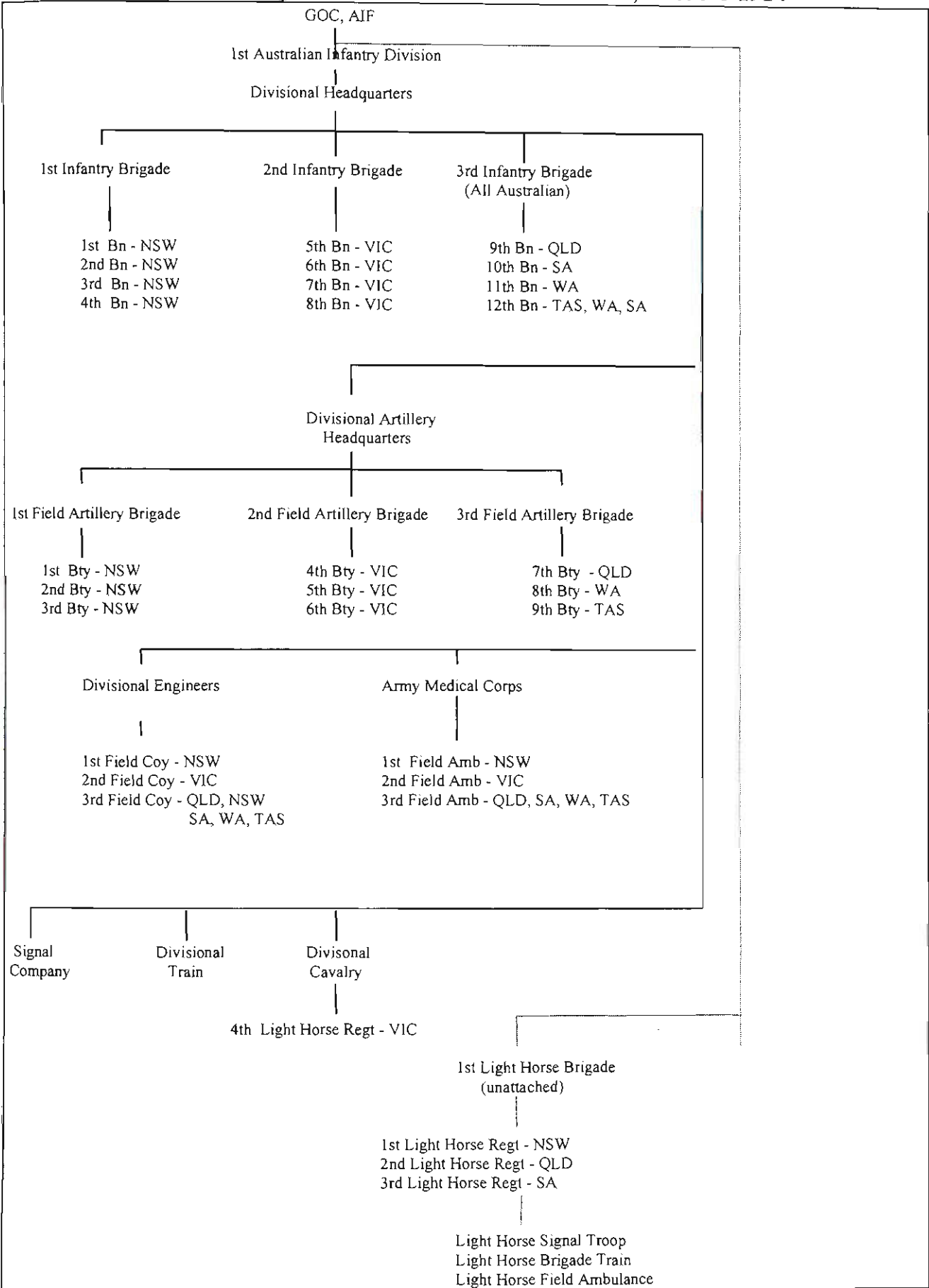
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<sup>98</sup> Dean, and Gutteridge, *The Seventh Battalion, A.I.F.*, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> Bidwell and Graham, *Firepower*, p. 153.

Figure 2: Organisational Structure of the AIF, October 1914



Sources: Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 37-40

Australia had received its first 18 pounders in 1906 and by 1914 it had 116 guns and the 1st Division would take almost half of these.<sup>101</sup> With this in mind White, and Bridges, decided to organise the Australian Field Artillery according to the latest theories with each battery having four guns and three batteries together with an ammunition column comprising a brigade. The division had three field artillery brigades and a small artillery headquarters to control them plus other artillery that might be attached to the division for a particular mission. The artillery commander was graded a colonel, the same as the infantry brigade commanders. Like them, he was assigned a brigade major as a chief of staff.

The prewar tables of organisation also provided for a battery each of howitzers and heavy guns for each division.<sup>102</sup> The only howitzers available in Australia were a battery of five obsolete 5-inch howitzers. Upon hearing that Bridges had decided against taking the howitzers Major Charles Rosenthal, commander of the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade and former commander of the only battery of howitzers in Australia, made representations to Bridges. Bridges stated the decision was made on the grounds that the ammunition would probably not be available. Rosenthal countered by pointing out that plenty of ammunition was available in Australia along with experienced gunners. In the end Rosenthal's representations went unheeded and the howitzers were left behind.<sup>103</sup> This was a pity because, as it turned out, howitzers would have been useful in the hilly country of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

British heavy batteries were equipped with relatively modern 60-pound guns. The only comparable field piece that Australia could muster was a single battery of four obsolete 4.7-inch guns. Consequently, it was decided not to provide a heavy battery with the divisional organisation. This left the Australian Division significantly under gunned when compared with its British counterpart, which had nine batteries of 6 guns, three of 6 howitzers and a

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<sup>101</sup> Gower, *Guns of the Regiment*, pp. 47-80, 160, 216-217.

<sup>102</sup> GS AIF, "Table showing allotment and distribution of troops", 23 September 1914, AWM25 839/15.

<sup>103</sup> Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, Vol. 2, p. 295

heavy battery of four 60 pounders, a total of 76 barrels as compared to 36 for the Australian Divisional Artillery.<sup>104</sup>

The shortage of guns was not the only issue that constrained the organisation of the divisional artillery. Bridges also faced problems with the supply of ammunition. The 18-pounder field gun took two types of ammunition, neither of which were produced in Australia. At the beginning of hostilities there were only sufficient stocks of 18 pounder ammunition to send 40,000 rounds with the expeditionary force.<sup>105</sup> This was considerably lower than the 1,500 rounds per gun recommended by the British Army Council.<sup>106</sup>

This was to plague the military organisation of the AIF for the duration of the war. In December 1915 when the Australian government offered another division to the British war effort it did so with the proviso that Britain supply the division's artillery requirements.<sup>107</sup> The high teeth to tail ratio of troops indicated a lack of emphasis on supporting forces. This emphasis meant that the AIF was never designed, nor was it able, to fight on its own. In reality the AIF was always dependent on its relationship with the British Army for its operational viability.

The third combat arm in the division, and possibly the most prestigious, was the Light Horse. Light Horse regiments had earned a considerable reputation during the South African War. The Light Horse was uniquely Australian and had no equivalent in the British army. The Light Horse filled an intermediate position in that they were neither cavalry, who ordinarily fought on horseback, nor mounted infantry, who were infantry that would ride to battle on horseback, dismount and fight on foot. The Light Horse would fight on foot like infantry, but while mounted could also carry out many of the traditional roles of the cavalry, such as patrolling, scouting and raiding. The Australian Military Forces placed great stock on mobility and the confidence that it had in the Light Horse was reflected in

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<sup>104</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 57-8.

<sup>105</sup> Cable, DOD to Secretary War Office, 20 August 1914, AWM25 495/1.

<sup>106</sup> Cable, Secretary of State for Colonies to DOD, 9 August 1914, AWM25 495/1.

<sup>107</sup> 'Minutes of Special Meeting of the Military Board', 22 August 1915, and 'Minutes of Special Meeting of the Military Board', 13 December 1915, NAA, A2653/1, item 1915; and 'Third Military District Commandant to District HQ', 17 August 1915, NAA, B539, item 264/1/28.

the fact that in 1914 there were 23 Light Horse regiments established throughout rural Australia.<sup>108</sup>

The 1st Light Horse Brigade, consisting of three Light Horse regiments, was attached to the division but was not part of the divisional organisation. It is an interesting point that in spite of a prewar emphasis on mobility the Australian General Staff did not consider the possibility of constructing a Light Horse division (one built around light horse regiments rather than infantry battalions).

Within the British military establishment there is one more arm that stands beside the three traditional *armes de mêlée* — cavalry, infantry and artillery. That arm is the field engineers, or ‘sappers’ as they are known within the British military. In 1914 sappers were generally organised into an engineer field company. The prewar tables of organisation called for a division to have two field companies. As with the light horse, White and Bridges decided to increase the established strength to three companies. This provided each brigade with the services of a field company. Although no explanation is provided in the primary documents it is possible to speculate that both White and Bridges were aware of the latest military theories in Europe. In the case of engineers it was thought that a more appropriate ratio of sappers to infantrymen was 6:100 or more.<sup>109</sup>

The organisation of the AIF exemplifies the complex interaction of Australian and Imperial values and beliefs. While certain Australian aspirations were recognised in the pattern of recruiting, the organisational structure and the firm stance taken on administrative control, the AIF’s *raison d’être* was entirely imperial. Consequently, it had been organised upon an imperial model with the specific intention of making integration into the imperial military system problem free, and the man behind it was White.

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<sup>108</sup> Jones, *The Australian Light Horse*, p. 18.

<sup>109</sup> Bloch, *Is War Now Impossible?*.

### The Final Preparations

Once the organisational and administrative structure of the AIF had been defined it only remained for the government to appoint a commander. One historian has suggested that Bridges was not the automatic choice for the position of commander.<sup>110</sup> Coulthard-Clark points out that Bridges' role as Inspector-General was to take command of Australia's home forces since there was no specific contingency for a commander of Australian troops serving overseas.<sup>111</sup>

Yet, the Defence Act of 1903 did allow for the provision of an expeditionary force being raised on a voluntary basis, and the amending Defence Act of 1904 made provision for the command structure being continued in any period of hostilities, and envisaged that the Inspector-General would become Commander-in-Chief.<sup>112</sup> There was no clause in these acts that disqualified the Inspector General from taking executive command of the AIF.

It is likely that the government was looking at the bigger picture. With the Australian forces being sent to Europe, and the expectation that they would quickly be utilised in combat, it was highly likely that any commander would have to deal with British military leaders and this would necessitate the formulation of policy. Bridges, who had originally been instructed to raise the AIF, was an obvious choice in this regard. He had been a member of the Australian Military Board, Australian representative to the Imperial General Staff and lately Inspector General. Considering these factors it was not really surprising that on 15

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<sup>110</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 121; Coulthard-Clark, 'Bridges' in Horner (ed), *Commanders*, p. 15.

<sup>111</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 121; Coulthard-Clark, 'Bridges' in Horner (ed), *Commanders*, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> 'Defence Forces --- Memorandum By The Minister For Defence On the Administration and Control Of', *CPP*, Vol. 2, 1904. 'Defence Forces of the Commonwealth --- Memorandum by a Committee in Regard to the Command and Administration of the Military and Naval Forces; Together with Memorandum Thereon by Senator Hon. A. Dawson, and Major-General Sir E.T.H. Hutton'. *CPP*, Vol. 2, 1904.

August 1914 the government appointed Bridges to command the AIF and promoted him to the rank of Major General.<sup>113</sup>

The Australian Government recognised that tactical and strategic decision-making was the domain of the Imperial Government and as such was prepared to totally relinquish control of this area of decision-making. The appointment of an Australian officer to command the AIF allowed for the retention of administrative control. In order to further preserve this administrative independence, Millen instructed White to prepare draft regulations to provide an autonomous administrative structure and a direct channel of communication with the Australian Government. White duly drafted the necessary powers for the position of General Officer Commanding the AIF that was instituted by an Order in Council on 17 September 1914. By this Order the GOC AIF, was empowered:

... to change, vary, or group units, provided that the authorised 'establishment' of officers and men was not exceeded; to transfer, remove, or detail for any duty officers or men, and, subject to confirmation of the Australian Government, promote or appoint officers; to allot reinforcements and if required, employ civilians.<sup>114</sup>

These powers remained substantially unchanged until the AIF was finally demobilised in 1920.

In order to transport 20,343 men and 7,477 horses to the European conflict required considerable administrative planning and effort.<sup>115</sup> In order to achieve this feat twenty-eight vessels totalling 237, 885 tons were converted and prepared.<sup>116</sup> Once the contingent was embarked the first convey rendezvoused at Albany in Western Australia. It was met by ten transports carrying the New Zealand contingent and was to be shadowed by the British cruiser *Minotaur*, and the Australian warships *Australia* and *Sydney*, and the Japanese

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<sup>113</sup> Bridges appointment was reported in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1914. However, the official appointment dates from the Gazettal notice on 15 August 1914. See *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 58, 15 August 1914, p. 1511.

<sup>114</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 74, 19 September 1914, p. 2227.

<sup>115</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1914; *Official Year Book*, No. 8, 1915, p. 956.

<sup>116</sup> Scott, *Australia During the War*, pp. 221-224.

cruiser *Ibuki*.<sup>117</sup> Once the entire convoy was assembled the first contingent left Albany on 1 November.

Before the AIF left Mudros Bay for Gallipoli, Bridges wrote a letter to White's wife and acknowledged the huge debt he owed her husband. Bridges wrote:

Before leaving I must write to tell you that no one could have given me more help and assistance than your husband has given. He has been more than my right hand and has covered innumerable difficulties. I am indeed very grateful to him.<sup>118</sup>

It is quite clear that White was of considerable influence in shaping the first contingent. The AIF did not simply spring up when Bridges stamped his foot. Its rapid creation was the culmination of years of hard work. Although it was able to take advantage of the advances in military organisation that had occurred as a result of the Universal Training Scheme it was White's leadership, especially in the areas of planning and organisation that really provided the foundation stones on which the AIF was built.

The AIF's organisation and tactics were modern, conventional, and quite similar to that of the British Army. White realised that standardisation was a necessary factor if the AIF was to fight along side British forces. The main departure in the organisation of the AIF was the lack of availability and emphasis given to the supporting elements of the AIF.

The contingencies of war would ensure that the AIF continued to grow both in size and complexity. This would require White to design administrative machinery that would manage an organisation more complex than had previously developed in Australia. The AIF's organisational culture would also continue to develop. Although it never lost its Imperial orientation the war did lead to a more Australian outlook.

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<sup>117</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp. 97-8.

<sup>118</sup> Letter W.T. Bridges to Mrs White, 21 March 1915, White Papers, AWM, PR85/83, item 26.



## Chapter 7

### **Ambiguity, Abrogation and ANZAC**

In chapter one it was argued that an organisation's culture develops not only through the actions of key founders/leaders but also as a result of changes in the external environment of the organisation. These external changes need to be integrated into the organisation's internal practices and procedures.<sup>1</sup> The organisation's cultural beliefs, values and norms determine its responses to these external problems. According to Ann Swidler, 'a culture has an enduring effect on those who hold it, not by shaping the ends they pursue, but by providing the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action'.<sup>2</sup>

But the external environment can also shape and determine the beliefs and values of the organisation and shape this integration. New patterns of social interaction, values and beliefs can create high levels of uncertainty that impact on the organisation's 'mission and strategy', 'group boundaries', 'power and status', and other factors. These are critical functions in the organisation, which are needed to insure the organisation's survival and thus, problems that the organisational members must address in the organisation's development.

Even before the first contingent left Australia's shore's new infantry and light horse brigades, as well as medical units were being raised. This produced a level of internal uncertainty. Given the divisional structure of the first contingent it raised questions about how the new contingents were to be employed and/ or administered. Were they to be used as reinforcements? Would they form the core of a new division? Did they come under the administrative and operational domain of Bridges?

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<sup>1</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, pp. 52, 70, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Swidler, 'Culture in action', p. 284.

Similar uncertainties were created by the AIF's arrival overseas. The organisation was placed in a coalition relationship with Imperial and other dominion and colonial troops. The Australians were forced to redetermine group boundaries and status. Although the Australians had, at this stage, a limited sovereignty they were regarded as junior partners by Imperial officers. There was some uncertainty and confusion about the extent of authority that Imperial officers had over Australian troops. Consequently, new power dynamics began to emerge.

Eventually the fledgling Australian force would face its greatest environmental uncertainty, the landing at Gallipoli. Some ways of doing things would be discarded and new ways implemented as the AIF's culture began to develop. In this development the force would evolve a unique *esprit de corps* and community identity of its own.

In the months that followed the AIF's arrival in Egypt White's role in the decision-making tends to be subordinate. Many changes are imposed not only by the actions of the Australian authorities but also by the Imperial officers under whose control the Australians placed. In these circumstances White, as Chief of Staff, merely implemented the necessary changes. On other issues, such as administration and training, White was able to exert some influence and maintain a guiding hand on the development of the AIF.

### **An Uncertain Base**

In his book *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, Max Weber argued that organisations require an administrative apparatus consistent with the organisation's mission and values. This is essential if the organisation's mission and values are to be routinised and the organisation's goals are to be effectively realised. If an organisation lacks a consistent administrative structure the social impulse that underpins the mission and values will rapidly break up and its efforts will be dispersed in all directions, or it will fade away for the lack of consistent effort.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*. For some case studies on administrative action and cultural leadership see Trice and Beyer, 'Cultural Leadership in Organisations'.

Some sense of the magnitude of the administrative structure necessary to keep an army in the field can be gained from the writings of Brigadier General John Charteris, a senior staff officer at the British General headquarters in 1917. At this time the British Army totalled 1,893,000 men and

Nearly every one of the ramifications of civil law and life has its counterpart in the administration departments. Food supply, road and rail transport, law and order, engineering, medical work, the Church, education, postal service, even agriculture, and for a population bigger than any single unit of control (except London) in England. Can you imagine what it is to feed, administer, move about, and look after the medical and spiritual requirements of a million men, even when they are not engaged in fighting and not in a foreign country? Add to that the purely military side of the concern. That we have to concentrate great accumulations of this mass of humanity quickly into some particular restricted area, have to deal with enormous casualties, and have to keep a constant flow of men back and forward for hours.<sup>4</sup>

Charteris went on to comment that regular soldiers controlled this administrative effort and that it ran with 'extraordinary smoothness'.<sup>5</sup>

Although the AIF never approached the magnitude of the British Army it was growing rapidly. By the end of March 1915 almost 50,000 Australians had undertaken the voyage to Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter fresh reinforcements (including nurses and medical units), ordnance, horses for remounts and various other war materials arrived weekly. By the end of 1915, 116,986 Australians had made the journey to Egypt.<sup>7</sup> It quickly became self-evident that the small Divisional staff would not be able to service the burgeoning needs of the AIF indefinitely.

Although Bridges had chosen to generally ignore the issue, White was aware that an administrative apparatus was necessary for the long-term efficiency of the Division generally, and the AIF specifically. In the original proposal presented to Cabinet of 8 August 1914 White had proposed the formation of an Intermediate Base in England. This

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<sup>4</sup> Brigadier General John Charteris quoted in Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. viii.

<sup>5</sup> Brigadier General John Charteris quoted in *ibid*, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Official Year Book*, No 8, 1915, pp. 956-7.

<sup>7</sup> Col. V.C.M. Sellheim Despatch No 9, 24 January 1916, NAA, Series B539, File AIF 112/6/27.

base was to be managed by the High Commissioner, Sir George Reid. The unexpected diversion to Egypt now required that an alternative be established in Cairo.

White therefore pressed Bridges for the formation of an 'Australian Intermediate Base Depot' in Egypt. This base would look after all of the administrative problems of the force as a whole and fulfil the Government's original brief on local administrative control.<sup>8</sup> White's scheme proposed that the base be organised into five departments: Finance, Records and Correspondence, Ordnance, Personnel and Remounts. White also outlined the proposed functions of each department and the base as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

Once convinced of the necessity of such a base Bridges sought Maxwell's approval to have it established. He also gained approval from Maxwell for it to be attached to Maxwell's own headquarters. To organise and command the intermediate base Bridges chose his chief administrative staff officer, Colonel V.C.M. Sellheim.<sup>10</sup> To assist him with the task of establishing the base Sellheim was given a clerk and a personal batman, giving the depot a total staff of three.

As Schein and others have suggested, the way a leader allocates resources is indicative of a leader's priorities and values.<sup>11</sup> These become embraced in the organisation's own key values. Clearly, Bridges' allocation of staff and resources was totally inadequate. By comparison a brigade headquarters had a staff of twenty-five to support slightly more than 4,000 troops. A division consisted of 18,000 troops and included a headquarters staff of eighty-nine.<sup>12</sup> Bridges expected Sellheim and a clerk to administer for the complex needs of more than 50,000 men with the aid of a clerk and a batman. This casts a considerable doubt over Bean's assertion that Bridges was a capable administrator. No capable administrator would treat such an important facet of his organisation in such a dismal fashion.

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<sup>8</sup> Despatch No. 6, Bridges to Pearce, 19 December 1914, AWM 27, file 302/1.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Colonel Sellheim (Commanding AIF Intermediate Base, Cairo) to DA & QMG, ANZAC, 19 January 1915, AWM 25, file 721/1.

<sup>10</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 2, p. 393.

<sup>11</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, p. 242. See also Pfeffer, 'Management as symbolic action'; Ott, *The Organisational Culture Perspective*.

<sup>12</sup> GS AIF, "Table showing allotment and distribution of troops", 23 September 1914, AWM25 839/15.

Not only is this indicative of the extremely low priority that Bridges gave to administrative matters it also casts some doubts on Bridges' capabilities. Rather than being the 'Great Soldier' and capable administrator described by Bean his performance and behaviour in Egypt, and latter at Gallipoli, suggest that he was out of his depth.

White's position in this issue is unknown. He does not mention the base in his diary and his original proposal for its organization does not appear to have survived. His previous organisational proposals had demonstrated considerable attention to detail and it is unlikely that his proposal for the establishment and functioning of the intermediate base would have been different. White's proposal would therefore have considered the resources appropriate to the expected mission of the base.

Combined with the poor allocation of resources was the appointment of Sellheim. Sellheim had been White's choice for the head of the Adjutants and Quartermasters Staff. However, Sellheim and Bridges had quarrelled on a number of issues since arriving in Egypt and Bridges had established a habit of transferring officers with whom he had personal difficulties. Bridges did not hesitate to transfer Sellheim. Sellheim for his part seemed to be quite cognisant of this and yet managed to gain a promise from Bridges that Sellheim would be given the first available brigade command.<sup>13</sup>

Once the base was established Bridges refused to deal with Sellheim except through Maxwell or Birdwood. Bridges referred all of Sellheim's queries to Maxwell's and/or Birdwood's headquarters. Bridges eventually took this abdication of his administrative responsibilities one step further and secured from Birdwood an order to 'assume command of the 1st Australian Division'.<sup>14</sup> He then ceased to issue AIF orders, and changed their title to 'Notifications' or 'Instructions', which were then signed by Sellheim.<sup>15</sup> He referred all promotions within the AIF through Birdwood and thus relinquished one of his most

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<sup>13</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 393n.

<sup>14</sup> With this order administrative control of the AIF was passed to Imperial authorities. Bean, *Official History*, vol. 2, p. 394.

<sup>15</sup> Bridges, Memorandum, 21 January 1915, AWM 25, file 721/1.

important powers.<sup>16</sup> This created a level of uncertainty within the organisation because administrative responsibilities had been transferred to an external agency.

In recent years a number of organisational scholars have observed that the creation and attribution of meanings by leaders is an important part of the cultural creation and maintenance processes within organisations.<sup>17</sup> The observed criteria by which leaders allocate resources, rewards, punishments, or even excommunicate organisational members sends important signals to other organisational members thereby establishing group priorities and setting the ground work for new values norms and working procedures.<sup>18</sup> In the case of the administrative base Bridges' behaviour and implicit messages undermined the work that Sellheim had to undertake providing a constant source of ambiguity and tension. Keith Murdoch levelled one of the more serious complaints about Sellheim in a letter to Pearce: '[Sellheim] has messed up everything he has touched and just clings to his job here'.<sup>19</sup> Murdoch's letter gave no indication of the mammoth task for which Sellheim had been given responsibility.

Bridges had taken the first important step towards administrative self-government but had missed the opportunity to give it the pride of place in the organisation. Consequently, it was not until late 1915 that steps were taken to take a fuller advantage of the opportunities presented by the concept of self-government.

### **ANZAC: A Coalition of Interests**

When the AIF left Australia it had been intended to accommodate the Australians in the Salisbury Plain training area. As the convoy sailed across the Indian Ocean it was decided, for both pragmatic and strategic reasons, to disembark the Australians in Egypt.

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<sup>16</sup> Birdwood later acknowledged that the control of promotions placed him in a very important position. Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*, p. 283.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Selznick, *Leadership and Administration*; Smircich and Morgan, 'Leadership: The Management of Meaning'.

<sup>18</sup> Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*.

<sup>19</sup> Murdoch to Pearce, 13 September 1915, Pearce Papers, AWM 2DRL 970, bundle 7, item 48.

By 1914 the camps at Salisbury Plain had become severely over crowded and the weather was causing significant discomfort for the Canadians already camped there. In the 123 days that the Canadians spent training in England it rained on eighty-nine, causing training to be disrupted or cancelled.<sup>20</sup> While the AIF convoy was crossing the Indian Ocean, Colonel H. G. Chauvel, the Australian representative at the War Office, and the High Commissioner in London, Sir George Reid, arranged with the British Secretary of State for War, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, for its diversion to Egypt.<sup>21</sup> Egypt had advantages over England as a training area. The milder climate permitted training to be carried out all day and every day, and wintering in tents in Egypt was a much more pleasant prospect.

The strategic situation in Egypt had been changed by Turkey's entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers on 29 October 1914. Britain reciprocated by declaring war on the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire on 2 November 1914. Though nominally still part of the Ottoman Empire, the British had occupied Egypt since 1882. British military authorities anticipated a Turkish attempt to invade Egypt. This move would threaten British interests in the Middle East, as well as the Suez Canal. It would also cut the British lifeline to the network of imperial interests in Asia and the Pacific. Consequently, the AIF were deployed around Cairo in case there was trouble.<sup>22</sup>

Once in Egypt the AIF soon became part of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) under the command of the British General, Lieutenant General Sir W. R. Birdwood. This placed the fledgling Australian force in a coalition partnership with British and New Zealand units. This would create some problems for the Australian leaders since the disparate partnership created embodied differing views and attitudes that created uncertainties due to the cultural differences of the three groups.

Imperial officers held the rather arrogant view that Australia and New Zealand were Dominions and hence junior partners. From this perspective any Colonial or Dominion force was under the command of the local Imperial commander. This was especially the

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<sup>20</sup> Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 1, p.111.

<sup>22</sup> Brugger, *Australians and Egypt 1914-1919*, pp. 16-29.

view of General Sir John Maxwell, Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in Egypt. Although the Australian Government recognised that tactical and strategic decision-making were the domain of the Imperial Government, and as such were prepared to totally relinquish control of this area of decision-making, they also wished to retain some measure of control over their military forces.

They had clearly shown this before the AIF left Australia. Unlike the Canadian Government, which had opted to appoint an Imperial officer to command its force, the Australian Government had appointed an Australian officer to command the AIF. Bridges was given far-reaching powers to determine policy, administrative and organisational structure, a clear indication that local control was paramount in protecting the national interests of the AIF.

On 18 November 1914, Birdwood had received a telegram from Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War:

I should very much like to obtain your services. I think Egypt would be the first step where I propose to land and train Australian and New Zealand contingents which you could look after. Let me know if there would be any chance of getting you by formal application.<sup>23</sup>

Birdwood was to have the status of Corp commander and the temporary rank of Lieutenant General. Birdwood's appointment to command both Australian and New Zealand contingents now placed the contingents in a rather vague position in terms of command. The respective Governments had appointed commanders to superintend the interests of the respective contingents. These commanders now found themselves in subordinate roles. This raised the rather hazy questions of precedence. Did Imperial interests take precedence or National interests? To what extent were they in a position to question or challenge the authority of the Imperial authority under which they now found themselves?

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<sup>23</sup> Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*, p. 238.



It was with 'pride and pleasure' that Birdwood took up his new command.<sup>24</sup> Birdwood and his staff embarked for Egypt on the P & O liner, *SS Persia* in Bombay on 12 December 1914 and landed at Suez on 21 December.<sup>25</sup> Birdwood was born in India at Kirkee, Poona, on 13 September 1865. He was the son of Herbert Birdwood, then Under Secretary to the Government of Bombay. Birdwood was educated at Clifton College, Bristol in England.<sup>26</sup> This was the *alma mater* of both Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and Charles Bean, Australia's Official Historian of World War One. Birdwood had spent the majority of his soldiering days in the Indian Army. During the South African War he served on Kitchener's staff and so began a relationship that lasted many years. He was to describe Kitchener as 'the greatest influence on my life'.<sup>27</sup>

Historian John Millar suggests that Birdwood's colonial background had proven to be more of a hindrance to his career than an asset.<sup>28</sup> This may account for the close affinity that seemed to characterise his relationship with Australians. It may also explain the ambivalence of many senior British Officers towards Birdwood. General Hamilton, commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, which included ANZAC, provides an example of the type of attitudes that seemed to characterise so many British appraisals of Birdwood. Writing to Winston Churchill Hamilton wrote:

You asked me yesterday what sort of fellow was Birdwood. I replied a very charming fellow, which was true. But I feel I ought to have given you more insight to guide you in your dealings with a man I have known well for many years.

Birdwood has had a brilliant staff career ... He is tactful and quick but not strong. He was Military Secretary to Lord Kitchener both in South Africa and in India.

His weak point for a big war command is that with all his brilliant service he has never commanded anything in war; that he has never commanded anything in peace except, for less than two years, a brigade.

His strong point for your business [the Gallipoli operations] is that he will not quarrel with anyone, not at any price.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239.

<sup>25</sup> Diary Entries, 12 & 21 December 1914, AIF Administration Staff War Diary, AWM 4, File 1/28/1.

<sup>26</sup> Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*, p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Underlined text in original. Letter Hamilton to Churchill, 2 March 1915, quoted in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol 3, p. 607.

The Australian assessment of Birdwood was a little more positive and they seemed to be impressed by his abilities. Recording his first impressions of Birdwood, John Monash told his wife that:

He is quite a small, thin man, nothing striking or soldierly about him, speaks with a stammer and has a rather nervy, unquiet manner, but there is no mistaking his perfectly wonderful grasp of the whole business of soldiering. He seems perfect in every detail of technical knowledge, and always goes straight to the root of every matter. He talks a good deal, but every word he says is worth listening to, and his knowledge of the inside working of every department from the shoeing of a horse, the treatment of the sick, the repair of a broken wagon, the ranging of a battery, or the drill of a platoon, is simply astonishing. I have been around with him for hours and heard him talking to privates, buglers, drivers, gunners, colonels, signallers and generals and everytime he has left the man with a better knowledge of his business than he had before. He appeals to me most thoroughly, and I think the Australasian Army Corps is most fortunate that Kitchener chose Birdwood as their Corps Commander.<sup>30</sup>

Nine years later and with the experiences of war behind him Monash was still full of praise for Birdwood. In an address in 1926 Monash lauded Birdwood's qualities as a leader of men and praised his ability to deal with subordinates:

He habitually left the details of his military operations to a highly qualified staff, whose devoted services he knew so well how to mobilize. But he was a master of the art of inspiring men to persevere, to show fortitude under privations and suffering, and to render willing service under the most distressful conditions. The tenacious hold of the Gallipoli positions by Australians and New Zealanders is a historic tribute to his personal influence over his men.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps the best person to assess Birdwood was White. White served as Birdwood's Chief of Staff from September 1915 until the end of the war. In April 1916, White wrote to his wife that his 'little General' was

... always bright and happy, always decisive, never oppressed by 'great thoughts' and always full of energy. I am sure he loves each day. Without any fear of responsibility and with a sort of fatalism that what he does will go well his mind never seems distressed with vague imaginings. Physically fit

<sup>30</sup> Letter Monash to wife, 13 February 1915, Monash Papers, NLA, MS1884, file 4/127/938.

<sup>31</sup> Sir John Monash, 'Leadership in War', an address to the Beefsteak Club, Melbourne, 20 March 1926, Monash Papers, NLA, MS1884, File 4/209/1487.

and active always in spite of eating very little he ever seems well and clear minded, and he has the excellent habit of doing things at once. Where I ponder and want time to think he gets a short hand [sic] writer and dictates the thing off his mind for better or worse! Not that I am painting him as a heaven born genius. He has nothing like the brains of Bridges but he has a great many qualities and they all conduce to a peaceful frame of mind still leaving him efficient. And he has a beautiful clear and honest nature – without any warps.<sup>32</sup>

It would appear then that Birdwood exhibited qualities that Australians, in particular, admired and respected. It is also clear that Australians regarded Birdwood as a leader rather than a mere commander. Leadership is generally regarded as the ability to motivate and mobilise others to unite and work to achieve a common goal. The comments of both White and Monash attest to Birdwood's abilities in this regard. Leadership can be exercised as a result of a formal position held within an organisation or it can be an informal process that stems from group interaction. A commander is by contrast a formal position of authority and does not necessarily exercise leadership.<sup>33</sup> Indeed the Gallipoli campaign stands as testament to commanders exercising poor leadership.

Birdwood's first task upon arrival in Cairo was to organise the Australian and New Zealand contingents into a single army corps.<sup>34</sup> On Christmas Day 1914 Birdwood informed Kitchener that he was extremely pleased with his new command. Birdwood felt that he was 'the very luckiest fellow in the whole world at getting such a chance and such a command and you know how grateful I am to you...'.<sup>35</sup> Birdwood's command was exactly what he liked, 'not tied up with any regulations or red tape and capable of anything'.<sup>36</sup>

The Corps headquarters was a British unit consisting of only 10 officers and 10 other ranks that Birdwood had formed in India and brought with him. The principle staff consisted of Brigadier General H.B. Walker (BGGS); Colonel R.A. Carruthers (DA & QMG); Lieutenant Colonel A. Skeen (GSO1); Major W.B. Leslie (AA & QMG); Major M.

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<sup>32</sup> Letter White to wife, 18 April 1916, White Papers in possession of Lady Derham, Melbourne.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion on leadership see Trice, 'Cultural Leadership in Organisations'; and Grint, *The Arts of Leadership*.

<sup>34</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 117.

<sup>35</sup> Birdwood to Kitchener, 25 December 1914, quoted in Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Hancock (DAA & QMG); Captain C.M. Wagstaff (GSO2). Birdwood also chose Captain B.W. Onslow as his aide-de-camp and Colonel Joly de Lotbiniere as Commander Royal Engineers.<sup>37</sup> The headquarters was incomplete, and Birdwood particularly felt the lack of an artillery officer, noting that '[b]oth Australian and New Zealand artillery are very backward indeed and need all the help they can get'.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, this request remained outstanding until 5 February 1915, when Colonel C. Cunliffe Owen was appointed.<sup>39</sup>

A corps normally consists of two or more divisions and while the 1st Australian Division provided one homogenous divisional formation, the rest of the corps' troops were in unattached brigades. Birdwood therefore proposed to form a separate New Zealand and Australian Division, by uniting Chauvel's 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade, Monash's 4th Infantry Brigade that was soon to arrive in Egypt, and the New Zealand Infantry Brigade. This second division would then be placed under the command of Major-General Alexander Godley who had brought the New Zealand contingent from New Zealand. This formation was intended as a temporary arrangement pending the creation of full strength infantry and mounted divisions.<sup>40</sup>

When presented with Birdwood's proposed formation of New Zealand and Australian Division, Bridges offered no protestation at the fragmentation of Australian forces that was necessary. Indeed, in a memorandum Bridges stated:

I believe it to be the wish of the Australian Government that future units, reinforcements, supplies and material should be disposed in the manner best suited to meet Imperial requirements.<sup>41</sup>

This action is contrary to the supposedly 'far sighted' stand that Bridges had taken in August when the War Office had implied a similar fragmentation of Australian units.<sup>42</sup> It

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<sup>37</sup> Telegram, GOC Cairo to GOC Aden dated 12 December 1914, AWM4, File 1/28/13, Microfilm Roll 783.

<sup>38</sup> Telegram, GOC ANZAC to War Office dated 12 December 1914, AWM4, File 1/28/13, Microfilm Roll 783.

<sup>39</sup> Telegram, GOC Cairo to War Office dated 5 February 1915, AWM4, File 1/28/13, Microfilm Roll 783.

<sup>40</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, pp.117-118.

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum, 24 December 1914, AWM 25, file 302/45.

<sup>42</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 31

suggests that Bridges was not as far sighted as Bean claimed, nor was he motivated by an agenda to see an independent Australian military identity. Indeed, Bridges missed an opportunity to firmly secure Australian sovereignty and national military identity by insisting that Australian formations *not* be dispersed.

### **Ambitions and Ambiguities**

Fragmenting the Australian Brigades within the New Zealand and Australian Division, which was commanded by Major-General Alexander Godley who had brought the New Zealand contingent from New Zealand, created conflicting and fuzzy group boundaries and statuses. The fuzzy group boundaries and ambiguous chain of command and decision-making were compounded by the actions of Bridges, who had discovered the roles of GOC AIF and GOC Division were not entirely compatible. One role would result in him staying in Egypt as administrative commander; the other role was the more prestigious role of fighting commander of the Australian Division.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly the incompatibility of these two roles would resurface later in the war and this is discussed in a later chapter. Bridges personal ambition was to perform the later role and his pursuit of this ambition created ambiguous organisational boundaries.

The two commanders who were immediately affected by the fragmentation of the AIF were Chauvel and Monash. Chauvel, who commanded the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade, had been in London when the first interchange of telegrams occurred. He was aware of the Australian Government emphasis on local control and he carried one of these telegrams with him for the entire war. It read:

Australia placed her troops unreservedly at the disposal of the War Office, for employment in any theatre of war; to be under the tactical and disciplinary command of any general appointed by the War Office but Australia reserved the right to administer, pay, clothe, equip and feed her own troops.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 135.

<sup>44</sup> Telegraph Pearce to Secretary of State for War, 4 August 1914, Heyes Papers, AWM 45, box 23, bundle 31.

Chauvel was quick to produce this cable whenever he felt that British imperial officers were encroaching on what he perceived as an Australian area of responsibility. On one occasion the British Chaplain-General of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force complained to General Allenby that he was being hindered in providing for the spiritual welfare of the troops because Chauvel refused to allow him to transfer and/or appoint Australian chaplains. Chauvel produced this cable and pointed out that the spiritual welfare of Australian troops was his responsibility not the Chaplain General's.<sup>45</sup>

Monash, as commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade, believed he had an independent command and attempted to question Bridges' authority as GOC AIF. The 4th Brigade had been raised by the Military Board whereas Bridges had been authorised by an Order-in-Council to 'raise, organise, equip and command' the first force without reference to the Military Board.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, in no sense whatsoever did Monash see himself as under Bridges' command:

I was indeed frequently told by Legge, Dodds and other members of the Board that I must take no notice of the orders of the GOC Division, or his decisions, and that my only source of authority was the Board through its Military Orders.<sup>47</sup>

Monash concluded: 'the GOC of the Division to which Imperial Authority has allotted us should be the only source of inspiration, authority and control in every department'.<sup>48</sup> It is interesting that Monash referred to Bridges as GOC Division and completely ignored the fact that he had also been gazetted with the dual function of GOC AIF in order to command all Australian forces overseas.<sup>49</sup> Monash's, and indeed Legge's, attitude towards Bridges is hard to understand. It is difficult to see how Monash hoped to remain separate from Bridges' authority for long. Ironically, Monash was to remain more or less separate from

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<sup>45</sup> Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p.45.

<sup>46</sup> Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander*, p.51.

<sup>47</sup> Letter Monash to Lt Col E.W.C. Chaytor, AQMG NZ&A Division), 30 March 1915, Monash Papers, NLA, MS1884, file 4/127/938.

<sup>48</sup> Letter Monash to Lt Col E.W.C. Chaytor, AQMG NZ&A Division), 30 March 1915, Monash Papers, NLA, MS1884, file 4/127/938.

<sup>49</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 74, 19 September 1914, p. 2227.

the mainstream structure of the AIF until late 1917. In this sense Monash's command represented a fringe subculture within the AIF and within ANZAC.

In both cases these commanders formed subcultural social networks within the social fabric of the AIF. Chauvel went on to form the Desert Mounted Corps and the exploits of the Light Horse at battles such as Romani and Beersheba became part of the mythology and legends of the AIF. Monash later went to England and formed and trained the 3rd Division. This Division missed the proving ground provided by the Somme campaign but went on to be part of the victory of Messines. Although the victory was planned by the British General Herbert Plummer it laid the foundations for Monash's later reputation, a reputation that would see him become an organisational hero. This indicates that future study of the 3rd Australian Division would possibly shed some light on the emergence, development and interconnections of subcultures and countercultures within the AIF but is beyond the province of this thesis.

Certainly Bridges was infuriated by Monash's challenge to his authority. In his despatches to Pearce Bridges wrote: 'I must express regret that such instructions were given for I believe them to be wrong'.<sup>50</sup> In some respects Bridges was his own worst enemy and many problems arose because of his attempts to divest himself of the many functions of GOC AIF creating, in the short term at least, a source of organisational confusion.

Almost immediately upon arriving in Cairo, Bridges sought to wed the administrative responsibilities for the Australian contingent to British Army Headquarters under General Maxwell. However, it soon became obvious that this would not happen because of the limited resources available. In addition Bridges ignored the question of medical requirements for the Australian contingent believing that these might be best served by attaching Australian military hospitals to British military hospitals, therefore placing Australian medical arrangements firmly under the wings of the British administration.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bridges to Pearce, despatch no. 10, 6 April 1915, NAA, B539, file no. 112/4/897.

<sup>51</sup> This was to have tragic implications for the wounded men at Gallipoli. See Butler, *Official History (Medical)*, vol. 1; for a more recent specialised study see Tyquin, *Gallipoli: The Medical War*.

In the first few months after arrival in Egypt, Bridges' antipathy towards administration touched on the welfare of the men under his command. Until the Australian contingent arrived in Egypt, Maxwell was unaware that the Australians had not brought tents. Since there were not sufficient tents in Egypt to accommodate the Australians it meant that they had to sleep out under the stars until tents arrived from London. Within a week they had suffered a rainstorm during the night and then sand storms during the day. The Australians had to wait several weeks for proper dining and recreational facilities to be built.<sup>52</sup> There was widespread dissatisfaction with the camp and its facilities.<sup>53</sup> Monash wrote: 'Everything is dirty, squalid, smelly and repugnant to any refined sense ... no theatres, no opera, no gaiety ... Only a sullen, scowling French and Egyptian tradesman population' and the climate was 'horrible'.<sup>54</sup> It is little wonder that Australians generally referred to Egypt as the 'land of sin, sand, shit and syphilis', and set about the task of creating their own amusements.<sup>55</sup> Venereal disease was prevalent but of more concern to the Australian authorities was an outbreak of flu that spread through the camp.<sup>56</sup>

This lack of adequate facilities was to create significant problems for the British and Australian authorities in terms of command and control. Military offences increased dramatically with absence without leave, insubordination, drunkenness, assaults on natives and military police, robbery and venereal disease (which was a military offence) all being recorded during December 1914. On one occasion the 2nd battalion had to cancel a battalion parade because it could not muster enough men to conduct the parade in accordance with regulations.<sup>57</sup> Maxwell wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Oswald Fitzgerald, Kitchener's personal military secretary, 'the Australians have been rather naughty but they

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<sup>52</sup> For more details on the Mena camp and its facilities see Bridges Despatches No 5, 7 Dec 1914; No 6, 19 December 1914, NAA, Series B539, File AIF 112/6/143. No 7, 8 January 1915, NAA, Series B539, File AIF 112/2/341. No 8, 27 February 1915, Series B539, File AIF 116/2/43.

<sup>53</sup> Bean Diary, 2 Dec 1914, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 1.

<sup>54</sup> Monash letter, 10 February 1915, quoted in Cutlack (ed.), *War Letters of General Monash*, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 36.

<sup>56</sup> White was taken to hospital for four days on New Years day. White's diary mentions that Glasfurd and Griffiths had already been taken to hospital as a result of the flu. Diary Entries, December 1914, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 22.

<sup>57</sup> Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 37.



are settling down again — they have far too much money. The officers have very little control over their men, and NCOs none, but they will improve in time'.<sup>58</sup>

Such was the level of indiscipline in the Australian contingent that Birdwood asked Bridges to appeal to their national pride. Bridges was embarrassed by this rebuke and introduced stern measures including sending offenders back to Australia. Gradually as the facilities at Mena improved so too did the behaviour of the men. Writing to the Governor General, Munro-Ferguson, Bridges was positive the 'trouble will now shortly cease, now the men's huts are nearing completion and since cinemas are being erected in camp'.<sup>59</sup>

These problems clearly illustrate Bridges' lack of practical command experience. He was not able to adequately perform in the dual role that had been entrusted to him and illustrates a basic weakness in the original organisation of the AIF. Combining the dual role of administrative commander of the organisation as a whole as well as the field commander of a component of the organisation created a conflict of interest. Bridges' own personal agenda became the main constraint on the early organisation of the AIF and the development of its organisational culture. Consequently, Bridges neither exercised the type of leadership that creates and maintains cultures within organisations nor did he appreciate the importance of an adequate administrative structure, to secure not only the welfare of the men under his command but also to the overall development of a unified 'national' military force.

### **Sand, sand and more sand**

Bridges' role in the training of the AIF, and in particular his own division appears to have been equally tentative. The training syllabus had been worked out by White and initiated in Australia while the units were being formed in the various military districts. At this stage training was elementary and concentrated on such fundamental infantry skills as field fortifications, musketry, formations under fire and night operations. The officers and NCOs

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<sup>58</sup> Maxwell quoted in Robertson, *Anzac and Empire*, p. 40.

<sup>59</sup> Letter Bridges to Munro-Ferguson, 3 January 1915, Viscount Novar Papers, NLA, MS 696, file 3535-6.

were given further individual instruction on map reading and staff duties. Demonstrating each specific skill and then repeating it with the troops provided the format for basic company and battalion training.<sup>60</sup>

Once the division arrived at Mena the training started in earnest. Although generally rudimentary it was primarily aimed at toughening the soldiers up and fostering an *esprit de corps* rather than forging disciplined combat units. Much of the drill consisted of 'rushing up hills with fixed bayonets with ... full packs on'.<sup>61</sup> After the disciplinary problems experienced in Cairo these exercises also served the function of dampening the natural exuberance of the Australian soldiers. They left the camp in the early hours of the morning and returned late in the evening or early next morning. White accompanied these exercises whenever his staff duties allowed the time.

Out tonight at a night attack by 3rd Infantry Brigade. Bed at 3.30 am after tramping 12 miles in the sand.<sup>62</sup>

An unnamed newspaper reported on at least one of these training exercises and points to White's careful assessment of the training.

The 3rd Battalion had been taken out from Mena Camp for night manoeuvres. The programme, briefly, was to march to a certain place, dig in, and be ready to hold up the enemy who were advancing on us.

We had dug our trench in accordance with our platoon commander's plans and specifications, and when the Divisional Staff came along our 'brains' must butt in and single out Colonel White ... to air his knowledge on.

Looking at us and the trenches with undue satisfaction, 2nd Loot (sic) remarked — 'Good job that, sir'.

'Yes' said Colonel White, looking critically at the job. 'Splendid job — splendid, but let me see, facing the wrong direction entirely is it not?'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Copy of White's syllabus 'Instructions for Teaching in Districts of Quotas for the Expeditionary Forces', 14 August 1914, is in the Monash Papers, AWM 3DRL 2316.

<sup>61</sup> Diary Entry, 2 February 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL 6549, item 23.

<sup>62</sup> Diary Entry, 7 February 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL 6549, item 23.

<sup>63</sup> Undated newspaper clipping, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

In the New Year the battalions were reorganised to bring them into line with the British battalions that had been organised according to more modern thinking. Their size was unchanged but now there were four platoons per company and only four companies per battalion instead of eight.<sup>64</sup> It was generally believed that the platoon provided a better tactical unit than the company but for now the tactics remained battalion based. Training became more serious however the gruelling route marches continued to be the order of the day.

These early training exercises had limitations and there were concerns about the standard of proficiency being reached. White himself mentions in his diary that training was not always successful.

Div exercise today not quite a success. Feeling depressed as a result. Out all night. Very cold. Bean walked out with rugs for us which was very good and gallant of him.<sup>65</sup>

Even Birdwood was concerned by the level of training and informed Kitchener that the men were backward in training and had not been drilled in '... bayonet fighting, no digging, very little musketry ...'.<sup>66</sup>

Bridges concentrated on small unit tactics, with battalion and brigade exercises. Whilst the 1st Division never did get around to a full-scale division exercise the same cannot be said of Godley's New Zealand and Australian Division where division exercises began immediately.

In chapter 1 it was pointed out that uncertainty, confusion, and even contradiction, are inherent characteristics of organisational cultures. These uncertainties develop as a result of the multiplicity of cultures that are endemic to all organisations. This is especially evident in the AIF and its development in Egypt. The AIF now found itself an integral component

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<sup>64</sup> War Diary of GS 1st Division, dated 29 December 1914, AWM4 1/42/1 Microfilm Roll 803.

<sup>65</sup> Diary Entry, 5 March 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL6549, item 23.

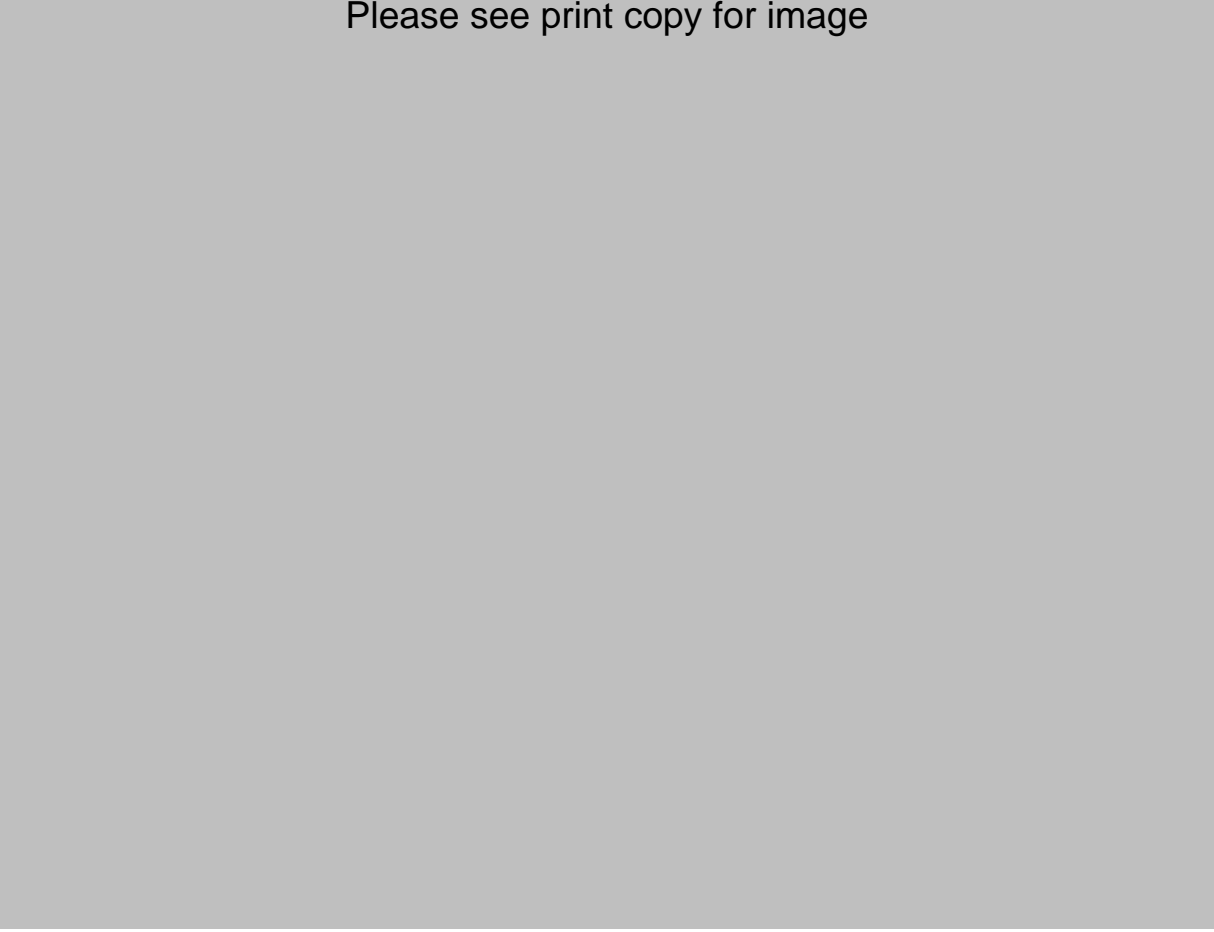
<sup>66</sup> Birdwood to Kitchener, 25 December 1914, quoted in Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 12.

of a much larger organisation and hence competing and interacting with British and New Zealand formations that exhibited different, but distinct patterns of values and beliefs. This created tensions, uncertainty and confusion as new organisational priorities and goals were negotiated and established.

The uncertainties facing the AIF were especially evident in the higher management of the organisation. The position of both Bridges and White was subordinated to the higher direction of both Maxwell's Egyptian command and Birdwood's ANZAC staff. Bridges' reaction was to abrogate his responsibilities as GOC AIF to Birdwood. White, however, moved to protect his organisation by taking the first steps toward administrative self government. Gallipoli would introduce more uncertainty and organisational change within the AIF and these would be pivotal for both White and the AIF's future development.

**Map 1: ANZAC Positions**

Please see print copy for image



Source: *Gallipoli : 85th Anniversary 2000*, Thurston Productions, Sydney, 2000.

## Chapter 8

### Gallipoli: Trial by Fire

It was said at the beginning that Gallipoli was neither a great adventure nor a great failure ... Study of the circumstances shows that instead of a great adventure ... it was an effort to put into effect ... without proper consideration and preparation by experts, a great conception, for the fulfilment of which there was a need, but for which means were not at the Empire's disposal.

Who will say that Gallipoli was a failure if from the trials endured there, and in memory of the unconquerable spirit of those who died, Australia should have developed a nationalism based on the highest ideals.

CBB White<sup>1</sup>

We never had the men or weapons to beat the Turks, so eventually we withdrew on 19 December 1915. An Australian General organised the retreat and that was the best thing about Gallipoli. It worked like clockwork. We never lost a man ... An Australian General should have been in charge of Gallipoli from the start. I reckon if an Australian had been in charge we would have won the battle at Gallipoli. Our blokes were the best because they wanted to fight — they were all volunteers.

Cpl Ted Mathews<sup>2</sup>

For Australians the words 'Anzac' and 'Gallipoli' hold a special place in Australian history. At Gallipoli the Australian soldier, the ubiquitous 'digger', proved himself on the world stage and emerged from this first trial by fire as the national hero. The digger came to be representative of all that was decent and truly Australian. For the fledgling organisational culture of the AIF Gallipoli provided the stimulus to growth. It provided ample examples the cultural values and beliefs worked. The stories and heroes of the organisation would later be used to inculcate newcomers in the beliefs and values of the organisation.

For White and the officers and men of the AIF, the Gallipoli campaign represented a steep learning curve. Few if any of the officers had the type of experience necessary to

<sup>1</sup> Brudenell White, 'Some Reflections on the Great War', address to Empire Literature Society, St James Hall, Sydney, 1 April 1921, p. 22. White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 1400, item 18.

<sup>2</sup> Corporal Ted Matthews, *The Age*, 25 April 1997. At this time Ted Matthews was aged 100 and this article referred to him as 'Australia's last Survivor'.

pragmatically solve the myriad problems they faced. This type of experience took time to gain and as a result many mistakes were made. In time the men of the AIF proved to be innovative in both techniques and technology, both of which became incorporated into the culture of the AIF. For White the learning curve was sharp and complex involving as it did the broader management of a rapidly expanding AIF and the necessity to streamline command and decision making processes. White was initially busy drawing up the operational plans for the division but once it was landed took a subordinate role. It was not until approximately July that White began to assume a more important position and proved to be a quick learner. This is perhaps best demonstrated by his defining moment at Gallipoli: the evacuation of the ANZAC force.

### **An Improvised Expedition**

The Dardanelles campaign was originally envisaged as a naval operation. The methodology was to destroy the forts protecting the Gallipoli Strait by naval bombardment. By March the situation had changed considerably and it was becoming increasingly clear that large-scale military operations would eventually be necessary. On 11 March 1915, Kitchener appointed General Sir Ian Hamilton to command the Allied forces in the Mediterranean. Hamilton's Chief of Staff was to be Major General W.P. Braithwaite. Orders were issued for the formation of a General Headquarters for the new Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.<sup>3</sup>

Kitchener had given Hamilton a strict set of guidelines that could not be exceeded. The objective was to 'force the passage of the Dardanelles' and as such Hamilton was restricted to clearly limited liability operations on the Gallipoli Peninsula.<sup>4</sup> Mindful of these 'instructions' Hamilton inspected the peninsula from the sea on 18 March. He found himself confronted by a coastline characterised by precipitous slopes and cliffs. He found Suvla to be a possible harbour for future operations but at present it was too far north to be of any support to his preferred landing points at Cape Helles.<sup>5</sup> Gaba Tepe also provided a feasible though difficult landing point:

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<sup>3</sup> Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, Vol I, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, Vol I, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

I mean we could get ashore on a calm day if there was no enemy. Gaba Tepe would be ideal, but ...it is a mass of trenches and wire. Further, it must be well under fire of guns from Kilid Bahr plateau, and is entirely commanded by the high ridges to the North of it.<sup>6</sup>

Hamilton reported to Kitchener that the peninsula looked to be 'a tougher nut to crack than it did over the map' at the War Office.<sup>7</sup>

Before Hamilton's arrival at Lemnos Birdwood had taken Bridges and White into his confidence and led them to believe that the Australian contingent would be landing at Cape Helles. Kitchener had originally advised Birdwood to prepare plans for a minor military operation to support the naval assaults on the Narrows.<sup>8</sup> Birdwood suggested that he would not have his forces to disembark before 18 March 1915 after which he envisaged landing '... a strong force at Helles Point [sic]'.<sup>9</sup>

This proposal triggered the first sign of tension between White and Bridges. Bridges supported Birdwood's intended operations at Cape Helles and was eager to enter the fray. According to Bean, White objected strongly to this proposed course of action. He argued the 70,000 troops committed to the operation were too small for the task. White pointed out that none of the beaches in the Cape Helles area allowed for the forces to be landed together and instead forced the British to split their efforts over several beaches. White believed the planned frontage was too narrow and dangerously restrictive. Confined between the two coasts at Cape Helles the landing force would not be able to manoeuvre. White believed that 150,000 men would be required to be successful and suggested that Gaba Tepe would be a better location.<sup>10</sup> White was so ardent in his opposition to the landings that Bridges informed Birdwood, 'I have told White he can stay behind if he doesn't like it'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Kitchener to Birdwood, 27 February 1915, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL8042, item 36.

<sup>9</sup> Birdwood to Kitchener, 2 March 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 56.

<sup>10</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 230. Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 46.



Bean is the only contemporary who mentions this incident. There is no mention of it in any other primary source. It cannot have been a significant personal conflict between the two men because neither Bridges nor White mention it in their diaries. Neither did White put his objections on record because no mention of it is made in the 1st Australian Division General Staff War Diary. If indeed White did raise these objections his proposal closely follows the original plan put forward by the Committee for Imperial Defence (CID) in 1906.<sup>12</sup> White (as mentioned in chapter 5) had access to these documents whilst working as a staff officer in the Directorate of Military Operations. Major General J.S. Ewart, the Director of Military Operations between 1906 and 1910, also influenced him. Ewart had been sceptical about the feasibility of a military landing on Gallipoli.

In any case the issue was resolved when Hamilton decided to make simultaneous landings at Cape Helles and near Gaba Tepe. Hamilton's main force, comprising the British regulars of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division was to be landed at Cape Helles. Hamilton informed Kitchener that:

The Australians meanwhile will make a strong feint which will, I hope, develop into a serious landing operation north of Gaba Tepe. Braithewaite has marked out a good circular holding position, stretching from about Fisherman's Hut around to Gaba Tepe, and if they can maintain themselves there, I should hope later on they may be able to make a push forward for Koja Dere.<sup>13</sup>

The divisional staffs, brigadiers and battalion commanders got their first sight of Gallipoli on the night of the 13 April 1915. They boarded HMS *Queen* for a reconnaissance of the intended landing sites. Everyone was dressed in blue clothing so that any Turkish observation posts would not recognise them as soldiers.<sup>14</sup> White wrote in his diary

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 'The Possibility of a Joint Naval and Military Attack Upon the Dardanelles, I: Memorandum by the General Staff', 19 December 1906. Public Record Office (PRO), Cab. 4/2/92B. 'Standing Sub-Committee of CID: Report Regarding Landing Places in the Near East (Secret Series No. 1), 11 July 1910, PRO, Cab. 17/71.

<sup>13</sup> Hamilton to Kitchener, 10 April 1915, quoted in J.D. Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command: General Sir William Birdwood and the AIF, 1914-1918', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1993, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Entry, 14 April 1915, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/1 Part 1.

A number of us embarked on board HMS *Queen* and made a reconnaissance of the west coast of Gallipoli. Slept all night on board and were real well [sic] done by these excellent sailors. Our allotted piece of coast looks less formidable than appears from the map.<sup>15</sup>

It was noted that no men were seen ashore nor was there any sign of work in progress.<sup>16</sup> During the trip Admiral Thursby, the naval officer in command of the Anzac landing, explained the plans for the landing to the assembled brigadiers and battalion commanders.

The ANZAC objective, as stated in the army's Force order No 1, was for the covering force to '... establish itself on the hill in map squares 224, 237, 238 in order to protect the landing of the remainder'.<sup>17</sup> This instruction gives a perimeter extending from Fisherman's Hut up Rhododendron Spur, through Battleship Hill then down Pope's Hill across 400 Plateau and past Lone Pine to Brighton Beach (see Map 1). Looking at the general plan Bridges believed 'the idea seems to be we were to hold the high ground above the Fisherman's Hut'.<sup>18</sup>

Upon receipt of these instructions White and his staff began making the necessary preparations for the landing which it was believed would proceed on 18 April 1915.<sup>19</sup> In the first set of plans and instructions that White issued on 14 April the men of the men of 3rd Brigade were to attack Battleship Hill and the 2nd Brigade were to provide support by covering the area along Rhododendron Ridge. This plan suggested Brighton Beach, just south of Anzac Cove, as the most likely landing point.<sup>20</sup> White then organised rehearsals of the landing to be carried out on Lemnos between 15 to 18 April.<sup>21</sup>

In reality though, this date was never going to be achievable since the 29th Division, which was to play the main role at Cape Helles, could not be fully assembled before the 19 April.

<sup>15</sup> Diary Entry, 13 April 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>16</sup> Entry, 14 April 1915, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/1 Part 1.

<sup>17</sup> Force No 1, 14 April 1915, AWM 45, bundle 3. See also Thursby's briefing in Bridges Diary, 12 April 1915, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>18</sup> Diary Entry, 12 April 1915, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>19</sup> Diary Entry, 12 April 1915, Bridges Collection, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>20</sup> CGS MEF, "Instructions for ANZAC", 14 April 1915, AWM4 1/25/1 Microfilm Roll 777.

<sup>21</sup> Diary Entries dated 15 to 18 April 1915, General Staff War Diary, HQ 1st Australian Division, , AWM4 1/42/1 Microfilm Roll 803.

On this day a senior officers' conference was held and it was decided that the landings would take place on 23 April, St George's Day.<sup>22</sup>

On 18 April White had issued new 'Instructions for the 3rd Brigade'. These instructions concluded:

In view of the reported presence of guns at 212L and M and troops and guns in the Peren Ovasi valley, the cover force will have to advance and occupy the ridge east of Gaba Tepe [Gun Ridge], then north-east to square 212 towards the crest of 238Q and V [Baby 700]. To assist in this task, the rest of your division is being landed immediately after the covering force and should be disposed with a view to securing the above line that is, [Gun Ridge] and the northern flank in the direction of the Fisherman's Hut.<sup>23</sup>

This set of instructions contains a clear shift of tactical focus with a greater emphasis on the Sari Bair Ridge. This change is also reflected in the instructions for the 2nd Brigade.

According to the 2nd Brigade's Operational Order No 5 of 21 April 1915 the 3rd Brigade were to seize the ridge 238M to 238Q up to the northern end of Baby 700 with the 2nd Brigade to protect the left flank, their objective being 224F to 238M.<sup>24</sup> This would tend to suggest that the primary focus was to concentrate the covering force and landing well north of Gun Ridge.

Birdwood makes the reasons for this shift in focus quite clear in a letter to Fitzgerald, Kitchener's personal military secretary. Birdwood was concerned about the likely presence of Turkish artillery on 400 Plateau and the ridge near Gaba Tepe. Birdwood believed that:

If I have any luck in this, I shall hope to secure the whole hill and entrench myself, when I shall feel pretty secure of holding my own against anything that can come against me.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Entry, MEF War Diary, 19 April 1915, AWM 4/1/4/1 Part 1.

<sup>23</sup> Diary Entry, 18 April 1915, General Staff War Diary, HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division, AWM 4/1/42/3 Part 2. See also secret despatch Bridges to Pearce, 21 April 1915, AWM 25, file A2.

<sup>24</sup> Copy of McCay's order No. 5 is held in the McNicoll Papers, NLA, MS2101.

<sup>25</sup> Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 19 April 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 60.

Birdwood was, however, clearly worried by the possibility of the first 1500 being wiped out by shrapnel and his landing being thrown into complete disarray. Birdwood wrote

I have great hopes of being able to effect my first landing in the dark without any great opposition but I am afraid we may come in for a baddish time of it when it gets light ... If I find that the firing is too heavy on the ships off the beach, I shall move the whole landing further north, up near the Fisherman's Hut. But the country just there is so very difficult and broken that it is impossible to attempt a landing there while it is dark.<sup>26</sup>

Birdwood was then contemplating moving the landings further north than the original plans suggested. It is quite possible that Birdwood's uncertainty about the landing was being translated into the operational orders during the various discussions and changes.

Postponements due to bad weather resulted in further changes to the orders and instructions. This increased the uncertainty and confusion. Birdwood's diary entry for 21 April noted that the weather was cold, wet and windy. The landing had been postponed for 24 hours. Birdwood also noted '...we only heard this by chance!'.<sup>27</sup> The next day was no better and resulted in further delays.<sup>28</sup> Birdwood noted in his diary: 'I am beginning to fear the delay may defeat my plans of being able to land as a surprise in the dark, as the moon may now give away our approach ...'.<sup>29</sup>

Hamilton's plan called for the ANZAC covering force to begin landing at daybreak after a preliminary naval bombardment of the hills and shore. Birdwood strongly objected and instead favoured landing at night and dispensing with a preliminary bombardment. In later years White was to comment 'it was peculiar to attempt to deceive, the pre-arranged spot [Gabe Tepe] was known to the Turks and had been fortified'.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 19 April 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 60.

<sup>27</sup> Diary Entry, 21 April 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM 3DRL3376, item 29.

<sup>28</sup> Diary Entry, 22 April 1915, War Diary Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, AWM 4/1/4/1 Part 1.

<sup>29</sup> Diary Entry, 22 April 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM 3DRL3376, item 29.

<sup>30</sup> White, Address to Justices of the Peace, 7 February 1920, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL1400, item 20.

Birdwood's intention was to utilise the period of darkness between moonset and sunrise to maximum effect. He hoped to land the main elements of the 3rd Brigade during this period in the hope that the main objectives would be secured prior to the remainder of the division being landed.<sup>31</sup> However, with repeated postponements due to bad weather this period of darkness was shortened from almost two and a half hours on 23 April to little more than one hour on 25 April.<sup>32</sup> There was clearly not sufficient time to allow the tows to land the men and for them to reach their objectives on Gun Ridge and Hill 971. Although the original orders no longer exist it is feasible that Birdwood reconsidered his objectives in light of the much later moonset.

It appears that a number of very late changes were made in the orders and instructions for the landing. According to Birdwood he received confirmation of the 25 April landing on 23 April and began preparing corps orders for the landing.<sup>33</sup> White's diary also records that he was busy redrafting orders and instructions until 8.00pm on 23 April.<sup>34</sup>

Given the secrecy and other factors it was not possible to give detailed briefings on any but the earlier plans. This would have caused significant confusion if battalion commanders had not been fully briefed on their new objectives. Indeed throughout the preparation for the landings there was a significant failure to identify operational goals.<sup>35</sup> David French sums up the Gallipoli expedition and the peninsula landing by saying that '...the military landing was conceived as if it would be no more than the last of Queen Victoria's "little wars" ...'<sup>36</sup> He adds that the 'whole expedition had an air of hasty improvisation', and that the 'one factor vital to success was that the British had to realise from the outset that they

<sup>31</sup> Diary entry, 18 April 1915, General Staff War Diary, HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division, AWM 4/1/42/3 Part 2.

<sup>32</sup> The moon timings for this period are noted in General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/1 Part 5.

<sup>33</sup> Diary Entry, 23 April 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM 3DRL3376, item 29.

<sup>34</sup> Diary Entry, 23 April 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>35</sup> Gooch argues the lack of a 'clear operational design' was a critical failure in the campaign and was symptomatic of serious systemic and organisation weaknesses. For more detail see Gooch, 'Failure to Adapt'.

<sup>36</sup> French, 'The Origins of the Dardanelles Reconsidered', p. 220.

were embarking on an operation against a first-class military power and not a backward oriental despotism'.<sup>37</sup>

### **Landing and Consolidation**

On Saturday 24 April 1915 the invasion force left Lemnos. White's diary states:

We sailed at about noon and it was a great sight to see the several battleships steaming out followed by the destroyers. We sailed round Lemnos and arrived at a rendezvous off Imbros at about midnight. Too much moon showing but men transferred quietly from transports to battleships.<sup>38</sup>

White's diary also gives some idea of the arrangement that had been made regarding the welfare of the troops.

On day of sailing — destroyers abt. 10 am will transp. troops wh. have to go to battleships. Will get dinner on battleships that day. Rum. No meals on destroyers — must have meal before leaving transports.<sup>39</sup>

Later in the evening, after darkness fell, Birdwood and his staff left the *Minnewaska* for Admiral Thursby's flagship *Queen*. After dinner Bridges and his staff went similarly to the *Prince of Wales*. Bean's diary describes the scene:

White made his way through them with his pistol in its case on his belt, his haversack packed, and a little blue enamelled pannikin tied onto the end of his swag. "Good-bye, White. Good luck, old chap," said various officers as he passed. Then little Blamey ran down the companionway with a small infantryman's swag on his back ... The boat cast off and slowly moved past under the ship's side. One could see the dim circle of light from some lantern in the well of her, with officers standing round it; you could not tell who they were. The men on deck near the gangway gave three cheers for General Bridges.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Diary Entry, 24 April 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>39</sup> Diary Entry, 24 April 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>40</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 51.

MacLagan, who commanded the 3rd Brigade, said goodbye to Bridges on *Prince of Wales* before leaving for the destroyer that would take him and his brigade staff to the landing point. MacLagan was somewhat pessimistic:

“Well, MacLagan,” said Bridges as they parted, “you haven’t thanked me yet.”

“Yes, sir, I do thank you for the great honour of having this job to do with my brigade,” was the reply. “But if we find the Turks holding these ridges in any strength, I honestly don’t think you’ll ever see the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade again.”<sup>41</sup>

At 3.00 am the moon sank and the tows were released to begin the journey to the beach. According to White’s diary they watched with ‘some anxiety’.<sup>42</sup> The tows were to form a line with the direction being taken from the right hand, or southern most, tow. Each tow would then keep its station with approximately 150-yard intervals between each tow. As the tows approached the beach, the troops began to land and clambered from the boats through the water and onto the narrow beach. Instead of the open ground that many had expected they were faced with steep scrub covered cliffs. The battalions were mixed up and confusion prevailed. After a brief rest the troops dropped their backpacks and then charged up the slopes to engage the Turks.

Watching the landing from the *Prince of Wales*, White and Bridges thought that the first boats had made it ashore without being fired upon, but they later found out this was not the case. As the first boats were landing White and Bridges boarded a trawler. They went to see Birdwood on *Queen* before heading for shore. At 7.20 am they landed under shrapnel fire at the rugged north end of Anzac Cove. White said:

I tried to direct the chap in charge of the boat to a pile of rocks so that we could land dry because I knew that we wouldn’t have a chance to change for two or three days, but just as the boat was being brought to the rocks with a British sailor waist deep in water guiding it, shrapnel burst overhead without doing the slightest damage except that the body of the shell fell between me and the boat. I was already on the rocks, but the shell landing ‘plomp’ in the water gave the sailor such a shock that he sat down hurriedly and I was splashed wet through to the neck.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 244.

<sup>42</sup> Diary Entry, 25 April 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>43</sup> Melbourne *Herald*, 16 March 1940. Interview with White on his appointment as Chief of the General Staff.

The scene that Bridges and White faced on the beach was total confusion. The fighting had moved inland and no senior officer was on the beach to direct the troops that were landing or to update Bridges on the current positions being held. Bridges anticipated that the main threat would appear from the south near Gaba Tepe where he knew the Turkish Reserves were being held. Bridges took White and his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Casey, to make an inspection of the positions to the south. As they scrambled along the beach Lieutenant Colonel Mackworth, the divisional signals officer, hailed them and informed them he would soon have telephone lines to the brigades operational. White informed Mackworth where they were going so that messages could be relayed and thus inform Bridges on the division's progress.<sup>44</sup>

Bridges and White climbed the neck at the southern end of the beach and moved into Shrapnel Valley. Bridges was confronted with a battalion commander who was hiding underneath an embankment as well as a number of troops who were sheltering in disorder in the gully. Bridges abused them showing 'no sympathy for any weakness' and told them to 'remember they were Australians'.<sup>45</sup> Leaving them Bridges and White moved across the valley and up to the summit of M'Cay's Hill. They had just missed M'Cay who had gone up to the summit. He did not find M'Cay but found the crest towards Bolton's Hill lined with Australian troops. White believed the 'precious hour in which an advance might still be made was being allowed to slip'.<sup>46</sup>

Surveying the scene from M'Cay's Hill Bridges was concerned that the rifle and machine-gun fire that swept down Shrapnel Gully might be coming from behind his left flank. Without full knowledge of the situation on the left flank he was reluctant to advance towards Third Ridge. Consequently he left instructions for the line on Bolton's Ridge to be held until further orders. Bridges and White then decided to visit the left flank and travelled by way of the landing beach.

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<sup>44</sup> Much of the narrative here is taken from Bean, *Official History*, vol.1; and Bean, *Two Men I Knew*.

<sup>45</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol.1, p. 366.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 367.



At the summit of the knoll at Ari Burnu Bridges met Brigadier General H.B. Walker, Birdwood's chief of staff who was temporarily commanding the New Zealand Infantry Brigade, whose brigadier was ill. They surveyed the northern approaches and were confident the Turks had not infiltrated behind the Australian force then struggling to reach Baby 700. Whilst there, bullets began to flick the ground around Bridges. White suggested that he should move, but Bridges paid no attention until Walker pressed him.

Over the next few days Bridges would repeatedly expose himself to Turkish sniper fire for no apparent reason other than to prove his own immortality. This caused some concern amongst his staff whom he mocked for taking cover. On one occasion when a shell had burst overhead Colonel Howse, the Australian Medical officer, said 'General, you'll be caught if you go risking any more of those!' The next day Bridges again braved a shell burst that prompted White to say, 'General, I think it's no use giving them the chance they want'.<sup>47</sup> It appears that the main concern was not so much that Bridges might be killed, rather that he would get White killed.<sup>48</sup>

During an exercise at Mena someone had mentioned the possibility of White being killed. Captain W.J. Foster, Bridges senior aide, had quickly retorted, 'White! Good Lord, I hope nothing happens to White! It'd simply knock the bottom out of the whole show. He's the one man we cannot afford to loose'.<sup>49</sup> John Treloar, then a clerk with the divisional staff, also expressed concern for White's safety.

... I sincerely hope with all my heart that nothing happens to my Chief [White], for one could never serve a more gentlemanly and considerate officer, and his loss would be felt by the Divn [sic] very much.<sup>50</sup>

These comments clearly indicate White's perceived importance among the members of the divisional staff. It was a status that went beyond the boundaries of formal authority that would normally be attributed to a senior staff officer. Staff officers were normally accorded

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 72.

<sup>48</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96.

<sup>50</sup> Diary Entry, 18 May 1915, quoted in Treloar, *An Anzac Diary*, p. 142.

no formal authority as such, and hence no formal recognition as leaders.<sup>51</sup> Yet these comments clearly indicate that White had established a leader/follower relationship and was being acknowledged, at least within the staff and higher management circle, as the principal leader of the division and later the AIF.

Bridges and White returned to Mackworth's signal post behind the beach. He informed them that telephone lines were now operational and contact had been made with both MacLagan and M'Cay. In light of this information Bridges approved the establishment of his divisional headquarters in the gully. The general staff, quartermaster-generals and other offices of the divisional headquarters quickly began occupying the gully and widening the ledges that would house the offices and mess for the headquarters.

Bridges and White sat at a camp table and concentrated on obtaining information about the events that had transpired thus far, and keeping track of new events as they unfolded. At this stage it was apparent that the operational plan had disintegrated once the first wave hit the beaches. Rather than waiting to be reformed the mixed units had charged up Plugge's Plateau on towards the Second Ridge. MacLagen realised that his 3rd Brigade was not in the correct position, and that any threat was on his right flank, and decided to ask M'Cay to place his 2nd Brigade on that flank, contrary to the original orders.<sup>52</sup>

Bridges knew that M'Cay's 2nd Brigade was now holding the right flank on Second Ridge. Bridges also knew that part of the 3rd Brigade had captured a battery on 400 Plateau. Bridges was aware that the Turkish firing he had faced during his reconnaissance was coming from the heights at the head of Shrapnel Gully (around Baby 700). But he had not been able to get a clear idea of the situation there. At 9.00am Bridges received a message from MacLagan stressing the need for the reserve brigade to extend the line in those heights. This position was the most vital objective and should have been in Australian hands. Without this position the whole beachhead would be under constant threat from the Turks who could direct artillery fire into the Australian position from the heights above.

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<sup>51</sup> Ashworth argues the 'staff officer has no formal authority'. Rather he/she is viewed as an information filter and conduit through which the commander exercises his authority. See Ashworth, 'The Staff Officer', p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol.1, p. 364.

Bridges sent MacLagan two battalions from the 1st Brigade then being held in reserve. At 10.55am MacLagan again contacted Bridges for further assistance informing him that the position at Baby 700 was 'seriously threatened' and was sent half of a third battalion.<sup>53</sup>

It was clear that a crisis was looming. The brigades had virtually disintegrated due to the terrain and confusion. This had made control difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. Consequently the success or failure of the landing now depended on the multifarious groups now fighting in the hills, often without orders and only their own initiative as a means of deciding the most appropriate course of action. The official British historian, and a member of Hamilton's staff, C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, wrote:

... all the infantry of the division which had been landed had been absorbed into the battle. Little progress had been made; only half of the covering force's task had been accomplished; the position was manifestly insecure; and the inevitable counter-attack had hardly yet begun.<sup>54</sup>

Another problem that faced the Australian forces was the lack of artillery. There was a desperate need for artillery to support the Australian troops trying to achieve their objectives. Most of the Australian casualties were due to machinegun and artillery fire from the Turkish entrenchments. One Indian Mountain battery found its way to 400 Plateau and improved the morale of the troops fighting there. However this battery soon faced concentrated Turkish fire from two directions and was forced to withdraw.<sup>55</sup>

During the afternoon two guns from the 4th Australian Battery were landed but a staff officer immediately ordered these guns back onto the transports.<sup>56</sup> Bean remarked that Bridges prohibited the landing of the guns due to 'old fashioned adherence to the tradition that guns must not be risked'.<sup>57</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Rosenthal observed that Bridges

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<sup>53</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, Vol I, pp. 188-9.

<sup>55</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol.1, p. 480.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. xiv.

believed 'the position was not sufficiently secure to ensure the safety of the guns, if emplaced'.<sup>58</sup>

One writer claimed that Bridges' refusal to land the guns was due entirely to the state of panic that existed on the part of Bridges and his divisional staff.<sup>59</sup> This claim can be safely rejected since there is no evidence in the records to support this claim. In addition the author was a private with the 11th Battalion and was not in a position to witness the conditions in the divisional headquarters. To be fair to Bridges his problems in landing the artillery and further troops were compounded by the lack of transports.<sup>60</sup>

White provides a good description of the atmosphere in the divisional headquarters during this period of crisis. White told Bean afterwards:

Things were often touch and go and people were very inclined to be jumpy. Urgent requests were coming in all day for reinforcements – urgent demands from every unit that went up. We even had requests from company commanders who had lost their battalions: "We cannot hold on unless immediately reinforced." The general would simply receive each message, consider it, and decide to give reinforcements here, refuse them there. Nothing was able to disturb him and, you know, his manner was a great help in that time. If we had had someone who ... said: "Dear me, now we must help those fellows – where can we get it from ...?" it would have made everyone much more jumpy than his "Um – tell them they've got to stick it". All through he was one of those who took a steady, consistent view.<sup>61</sup>

The situation during the afternoon was becoming dangerous. Bridges only had the 4th Battalion remaining in reserve. As evening approached there were still considerable delays in landing the troops. At 3.00pm M'Cay requested reinforcements on the right flank. Bridges, however, wished to keep the 4th Battalion in reserve until Monash's 4th Brigade started to come ashore. A second call from M'Cay emphasised the urgency of the situation and Bridges was assured the need for reinforcements was imperative. Bridges telephoned M'Cay:

<sup>58</sup> Diary Entry, 25 April 1915, Rosenthal Papers, State Library of NSW, MSS2739; also mentioned in a phonographic recording made in April 1953 and held in Rosenthal Papers, AWM, PR90/129.

<sup>59</sup> Howe, 'Anzac: Sparks from an old controversy', p.19.

<sup>60</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup> (Kohat) Mountain Battery was supposed to land at 8.30 am but waited all day for transport. It was finally landed at 6.00 pm. The Australian Artillery was not landed until 26 April 1915. See Bean, *Official History*, pp. 314, 464, 480.

<sup>61</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, pp. 60-1.

“I want you to speak to me not as subordinate to general but as man to man. I have only one battalion left. Do you assure me that your need for it is absolute.”<sup>62</sup>

M'Cay informed Bridges that the Turks could come in behind the right flank and threaten the entire show. At 5.00 pm Bridges sent the 4th Battalion along with Blamey, who later described the situation as “very ticklish”.<sup>63</sup>

During the afternoon the action near Baby 700 had moved backwards and forwards with the position changing hands no less than five times. On each occasion it was the arrival of fresh reinforcements that allowed the Australians to sweep over Baby 700 and push the Turks back. However, these battalions became fragmented and at 4.30 pm a major Turkish counter attack was launched. At this time there were no other reinforcements available to maintain the position. The main elements of the Australian and New Zealand Division had still not been landed and were awaiting transports. This severely weakened the Australian position. Consequently, the Australians lost the key position to the ANZAC landing and it was never again regained.<sup>64</sup>

At nightfall Bridges and his brigadiers were forced to reassess the position. A beachhead had been established but it was far from secure. The left flank had been pushed back and the right flank had been badly shaken. MacLagan had arrived at the divisional headquarters to speak with Bridges.

“Well, old pessimist,” Bridges said, “what have you got to say about it now?”

“I don't know, sir,” MacLagan replied in a serious manner, “It's touch and go. If the Turks come on in mass formation (like the Germans) on the left I don't think anything can stop them.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> Bean, *Official History*, pp. 306-315.

<sup>65</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 62.

Godley had arrived earlier in the day and was sharing the divisional headquarters until his own headquarters could be established. He was present when the reports from MacLagan and M'Cay arrived suggesting that they could not hold on during the night. Walker disagreed and believed they could hold and that the arrival of the Australian and New Zealand Division would allow them to strengthen the line. It was clear that the Australians had failed to achieve any of the objectives and the position was still not secure. Godley took part in the discussions and agreed with White that the Commander-in-Chief should be notified of the situation and that the leaders on the spot were recommending that the troops be withdrawn and used elsewhere.<sup>66</sup>

Birdwood had visited Plugge's Plateau earlier in the day with Walker. Birdwood's reports to Hamilton had been optimistic and he seemed oblivious of the situation facing his troops.<sup>67</sup> Bridges cabled Birdwood on *Queen*: 'General Godley and I both consider that you should come ashore at once ...'<sup>68</sup> In a candlelight conference in the divisional headquarters Bridges and Godley expressed their doubts about whether the troops could successfully withhold a heavy counterattack in morning. They recommended an evacuation as soon as possible. This came as a complete surprise to Birdwood.<sup>69</sup>

It appears that the conference became rather heated. Godley and Bridges both staunchly opposed Walker who was opposed to the very idea of evacuating the position. Walker was an outspoken officer and even spoke his mind to his superiors. On this occasion he told Bridges that his determination of the situation was inadequate. According to Blamey he addressed 'Bridges in terms which could have jeopardised his career'.<sup>70</sup> It is unlikely that Bridges quietly accepted such criticism and the conference was undoubtedly bitter. As Blamey observed, 'no one ever spoke to Bridges in such terms before or after'.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Birdwood's messages talk about the Australian's advancing and his continuing efforts to disembark his remaining troops and guns. At 8.45 pm he suggested the position was 'not entirely satisfactory' but does not indicate he is aware of the seriousness of the situation. The Australians had by this stage lost the struggle for Baby 700. See Bean, *Official History*, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>68</sup> Bean, *Official History*, p. 456.

<sup>69</sup> Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*, p. 259.

<sup>70</sup> Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, Vol I, p. 219.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

It was getting late and Bridges and Godley suggested that if an evacuation was to proceed then preliminary arrangements should be made with Thursby pending a decision from Hamilton. Birdwood refused and informed Bridges and Godley he would rather stay and die in the morning than re-embark. White asked Birdwood what arrangements he desired to make for himself and his staff in the event of a withdrawal being forced on the division. Birdwood replied, 'We will stay here to the last'.<sup>72</sup>

Birdwood knew that the landing at Cape Helles had faced tremendous difficulties and he was finally convinced that Hamilton should be informed of the situation at Gaba Tepe. Birdwood then asked Godley to take a message at his dictation:

Both my divisional generals and brigadiers have represented to me that they fear their men are thoroughly demoralised by shrapnel fire to which they have been subjected all day after exhaustion and gallant work in the morning. Numbers have dribbled back from firing line and cannot be collected in difficult country. Even New Zealand brigade which has been only recently engaged has lost heavily and is to some extent demoralised. If troops are subjected to shell fire tomorrow morning there is likely to be a fiasco as I have no fresh troops with which to replace those in the firing line. I know my representation is most serious but if we are to re-embark it must be at once.<sup>73</sup>

This message was sent to Thursby on board *Queen* and as circumstances would have it *Queen Elizabeth*, with Hamilton on board, arrived soon after. Thursby was able to deliver it immediately. Hamilton read Birdwood's message and said, 'This is a difficult business. What are we to do about it?'<sup>74</sup> Thursby replied that it would take the best part of three days to re-embark the troops and added that he thought, if asked, they would stick it out.<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, Hamilton replied to Birdwood:

Your news is indeed serious. But there is nothing for it but to dig yourselves right in and stick it out. It would take the at least two days to re-embark you as Admiral Thursby will explain to you ... Hunter-Weston despite his heavy losses will be advancing tomorrow which should divert pressure from you. Make a personal appeal to your men and Godley's to make a supreme effort and to hold their ground.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Bean, *Official History*, p. 457.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 458.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 460.

<sup>75</sup> Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, Vol I, p. 144.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 145.

In a postscript, Hamilton added that having 'got through the difficult business, now you have only dig, dig, dig, until you are safe'.<sup>77</sup> Birdwood was relieved to receive Hamilton's reply telling him to hold on, although he had been confident that this would be the case.<sup>78</sup> At about 2.30 am the message went out to the troops to dig in and await the morning. White's diary for that memorable day reports:

G.O.C. and I went to *Queen* in a trawler, saw General Birdwood then landed – under shrapnel fire. Found some troops on the beach. G.O.C., Casey and I pushed forward to find out how the troops were disposed – first to right and then to left. Good deal of fire, gun and rifle. 3rd brigade got most; 2nd brigade hotly engaged. Fighting all day. Troops much mixed. Enemy concentrating mostly at head of gully. Critical position at night. Doubtful if MacLagan could hold on. General Birdwood came ashore and General Godley. New Zealanders landed during the day and relieved us. Slight showers at night. Fighting continued strenuously on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> the Royal Marine Brigade of 2nd battalion [sic] landed and was sent in to our front in relief of MacLagan.<sup>79</sup>

The next morning Godley took command of the northern quarter of the Anzac line and Bridges was responsible for the rest. Both men began inspecting the line and beginning the preparations for what would be a long stay.

### Consolidation and Stalemate

In the days after the landing little progress was made. There was never any chance of a significant advance being made. The campaign quickly settled into a stalemate characterised by small-scale operations designed to capture a trench here and there and straighten out the opposing lines.

In the days following the landing the Australians consolidated their position at Anzac Cove. Bridges visited the frontline many times and continued to demonstrate a rather cavalier attitude to his safety. As Les Carlyon suggests, 'Generals are supposed to direct battles, not behave like 20-year-olds who think they are immortal'.<sup>80</sup> Bridges' style in some cases

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Birdwood to Bean, 24 July 1920, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 8042, item 2.

<sup>79</sup> Diary Entry, 25 April 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>80</sup> Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, p. 264.



extended to the manner in which he gave orders. A good example of this occurred on 26 April when he visited the line along M'Cay's Hill and Boulton Ridge.

At the junction between MacLagan's brigade and M'Cay's brigade Bridges stood in clear view of the Turkish forces and surveyed the position. It was then that Bridges noticed that some trenches were approximately 200 yards behind those of the 10th Battalion in the north and the 4th Battalion in the south. The resultant gap in the Australian line made Bridges unhappy with the situation and he asked, 'what trenches are these?' Bridges was informed that they were the remnants of the 5th Battalion under Major Saker and the 6th and 7th Battalions under Lieutenant Colonel McNicoll. Bridges was also informed that some of the trenches had been vacated that morning in an effort to straighten the line up. Bridges responded in his usual gruff manner and snapped, 'They're no damned good anyway'.<sup>81</sup> In fairness to McNicoll's men the trenches had been dug during the night when it was expected they would continue to advance the next morning. Bridges went to McNicoll's headquarters and began giving instructions for the line to be straightened. Whilst indicating where he wanted the trenches, he was exposed to Turkish sniper fire and McNicoll said, 'For goodness sake come down here sir – you'll be hit for certain'. Bridges replied with a curt, 'Be damned!'<sup>82</sup>

Happy that the line would be realigned Bridges returned to the divisional headquarters. Unbeknown to Bridges, or anyone else at the divisional headquarters, the makings of a tragedy had been set in motion and the realisation would not become apparent until many hours later. Major Glasfurd, a member of divisional staff, began assembling the remnants of the units that needed to be moved and then took them forward, across M'Cay's Hill to a position that had been dubbed the 'Daisy Patch' and lined them along the western side and ensured it was in contact with the firing line to the north. Glasfurd then collected a second group of men and aligned these along the southern side of the field and bent its right flank back towards McNicoll's line to the south. All that was required now was the remaining troops to move up into this line and align it with McNicoll's line. Glasfurd returned to the

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<sup>81</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol 1, p. 485.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 486.

divisional headquarters having left this task in the hands of Major Saker, who had proven to be a highly capable officer.<sup>83</sup>

Saker gathered 200 men and began advancing across M'Cay's Hills towards the Daisy Patch. He had not gone more than 50 yards when he fell dead. At this point the only man who knew the intention of the movement being carried out was dead and the line continued to advance with no one in command. Upon reaching the Daisy Patch the order was given to 'Left Form' and the line advanced across the Lone Pine Plateau and along the Australian firing line.<sup>84</sup>

In the meantime McNicoll was collecting his troops in order to realign at the position pointed out by Bridges. As the line began to move it was noticed further south and word began to move along the line that a general advance had been ordered. Colonel Onslow-Thompson, who commanded the 4th Battalion and was killed later that day, neither questioned this message nor stopped to formulate any operational orders. The 4th Battalion also began to move in a north-easterly direction. This was, then, a major advance across 400 Plateau with no objective or idea of what was to be achieved. The Turkish artillery quickly seized on this movement and began dropping shrapnel into the ranks of the Australians.<sup>85</sup> It is also highly likely that many casualties were caused by friendly fire, especially since Australian units in the vicinity were unaware of the Australian movement and worked on the assumption that the troop movements to the front of them were Turkish.

It was not until late in the night that the divisional staff became aware of what had transpired during the day. They were unaware that Australians had actually held both Lone Pine and Johnston's Jolly for most of the afternoon and were now retiring across 400 Plateau. Bean observed the return of the survivors and commented that only then did it bring the realisation that 'without orders and without an objective, a full-dress attack had been delivered, one of its finest battalions decimated, and two of the finest leaders ...

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 487.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 488.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, p. 490.

killed'.<sup>86</sup> The incident proved 'the great danger involved in [Bridges'] action of moving part of the line without a previous forewarning to all those parts which were not intended to move'.<sup>87</sup>

Neither Bridges nor White mention this incident in their diaries. In the case of White it almost certainly brought back the shadow of the *Drayton Grange*. White hated men to lose their lives unnecessarily and throughout the war he rejected feint attacks as too costly of human life. He also demanded a high level of efficiency in regard to staff work which this incident had shown was not carried out.

On 1 May Hamilton re-evaluated the Anzac position and issued orders restricting Birdwood's operations to minor tactical realigning of the Anzac perimeter.<sup>88</sup> Birdwood, however, was aware that the security of the Anzac position relied heavily upon gaining control of both Baby 700 and 400 Plateau. To secure this objective he had planned a combined assault on both positions to be held on the night of 2/3 May. Birdwood's plan was overly ambitious and poorly conceived. It called for coordinated attacks on 'The Nek' and 'The Chessboard' together with a night ascent and assault on the cliffs at the head of Monash Valley.<sup>89</sup>

Walker, temporarily in command of 1st Brigade, objected strongly on the grounds that it was unsafe. Walker accompanied Bridges and White on a reconnaissance of the approach and pointed out to Bridges that the angles of attack would create a gap in the line that the currently depleted brigades would not be able to defend. Bridges agreed and

Strode over to the telephone without comment – in his usual silent way. It could be seen he was convinced, and in the next few minutes the statements he made while waiting at the telephone left no doubt about the matter. He called up General Birdwood [then] ... turned and said: 'I take it upon myself, the Australian Division will not attack. You [addressing Monash] may tell General Godley so from me'.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p. 498.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. xix.

<sup>88</sup> 'Instructions for GOC A & NZ Army Corps', 1 May 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/2 Part 3.

<sup>89</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 71.

<sup>90</sup> Coutlhard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 165.

Godley was reluctant to cancel the attack and in the end Birdwood modified his plan and ordered the Australian Division to stand fast and the A & NZ Division to attack. The night proved to be costly with more than 2000 men killed or wounded.<sup>91</sup> In his report to GHQ MEF Birdwood described the attack as 'an attempt ... to improve our position by pushing up the valley and attempting to seize the knoll on spur 700 ...'<sup>92</sup>

Bridges' style of leadership at Gallipoli was in marked contrast to his behaviour in Egypt. His behaviour in Egypt, certainly in reference to his relationship with subordinates, is best described as churlish. He was a difficult man to work with. His leadership lacked drive or enthusiasm and yet, his previous military record demonstrated he was a capable administrator when he chose to apply himself. His comments to Birdwood, his commanding officer, suggest a degree of professional confidence which had not previously been displayed.

After this a virtual state of siege quickly established itself and each side developed its trench system. Bridges complained to his wife: 'We are still sitting on the same spot and seem likely to remain for some time'.<sup>93</sup> Bridges described the routine that had become established at Anzac:

We breakfast at 7am and soon the Turks begin shelling the beach ... [They] don't keep up shelling long as a rule, but give us another turn about lunchtime, and another in the evening about 5pm. I generally go up to the trenches in the morning and get back between 1 and 2, and often go up in the afternoon. Dinner at 7 and bed at 9 pm.<sup>94</sup>

A few days later Bridges went on to describe the beach area and the sense of order that was being established:

We are getting the beach straightened up. It is filled with stacks of kerosene tins holding our fresh water, biscuit boxes, and cases of tinned meat, carts and forage. There is a narrow roadway on the

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<sup>91</sup> James, *Gallipoli*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>92</sup> Birdwood to Braithwaite, 8 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 47.

<sup>93</sup> Bridges to Lady Bridges, 10 May 1915, Viscount Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, file 3487.

<sup>94</sup> Bridges to Lady Bridges, 5 May 1915, Viscount Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, file 3486.

edge of the water and another just at [the] foot of [the] cliff. The whole of the cliff and gullies are honeycombed with dug-outs ...<sup>95</sup>

Bridges also told his wife of the dangers that he and his staff shared. The area around the headquarters was regularly shelled. On the morning of the 1 May White was struck in the waist and another officer struck in the hand whilst having breakfast.<sup>96</sup> Treloar's diary similarly recounts the hazards of the Anzac position with White, Gellibrand and Birdwood being wounded in the first two weeks of May.<sup>97</sup>

On 6 May White was struck a second time, receiving a minor wound in the left arm.<sup>98</sup> Birdwood was concerned at the potential implications of losing senior commanders to this random shelling and sniper fire and issued instructions that commanders were to restrict their visits to the units in their own sector.<sup>99</sup> On 14 May White wrote to his wife:

I am obviously not a soldier – that is to say a war soldier. I confess to any quantity of obsolete notions of peacetime soldiering of which I am no longer proud or boastful! I am not a soldier because I don't like war – modern war. For the successful waging of present day war one wants the courage a lion is believed to possess, the cunning of a serpent and the instincts of a rabbit! A hole in the ground is the only place of moderate safety – I am writing in one now. When the gentleman Turk starts to shell us really it is ludicrous to look on. You'll see exactly the same thing on any rabbit burrow at Eurambeen at 5 or 6 pm if [Uncle] Tedo takes a gun out! The first crack and everyone starts for their burrow – or more often than not drops into the nearest one. It's surprising how quickly you learn the habit and cease to think it 'infra dig'! Australia has every reason to be proud of these fellows – the best of them are as game as pebbles. We would be much farther afield had we not had the initial difficulty of landing necessarily slowly, on an exposed beach. There were some shirkers – as always happens, but the bulk of them are goers. The general is the coolest cuss under fire I've ever struck – doesn't care a hang. I tell him that he is trying to be shot!<sup>100</sup>

White's comments are interesting for several reasons. First, he mentions the quality of the Australian soldiers. These comments reinforce the values and beliefs that were beginning to emerge as an integral part of the AIF's organisational culture. The exploits of these men became part of the organisational stories and myths thereby imparting valuable lessons to

<sup>95</sup> Bridges to Lady Bridges, 10 May 1915, Viscount Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, file 3487.

<sup>96</sup> Bridges to Lady Bridges, 5 May 1915, Viscount Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, file 3486.

<sup>97</sup> Diary entry 18 May 1915, quoted in Treloar, *An Anzac Diary*, p. 142. For mention of the wounds received by White, Gellibrand and Birdwood, pp. 131, 138, 140.

<sup>98</sup> Diary Entry, 6 May 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>99</sup> Coutlhard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*, p. 171.

<sup>100</sup> White to Wife, 14 May 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

organisational newcomers. In later years these organisational stories and heroes would become part of the broader national mythology of Anzac.

Second, White mentions difficulties on the beach during the landing. He points to the slowness and the exposed nature of the landing. He does not comment on the location being wrong. While others have commented on the Australian forces being landed in the wrong position it is interesting that the chief Australian operational staff officer and planner has made no such comment. It is possible that White believed there had been no error based on his redrafting of operational orders on 23 April. Certainly White's diaries give no indication of any such error.

White's concerns for Bridges proved to be rather prophetic. On 15 May Bridges decided to visit his friend Colonel Chauvel, who commanded the 1st Light Horse Brigade that was part of Godley's division. This was certainly in contravention of Birdwood's instructions. White, and Bridges' aide Lieutenant Casey, accompanied Bridges on the journey to Monash Valley. This journey was especially dangerous with Turkish snipers commanding Dead Man's Ridge. The Turks had seized this ridge on 2 May after Godley's failed assault. To provide a measure of protection sandbag revetments had been constructed.

As Bridges and his party approached Steele's Post Bridges was wounded in the femoral artery by a sniper's bullet. Captain Clive Thompson, the medical officer at the nearby 1st Battalion Aid Post, rushed to his aid and applied first aid before having him removed to the Aid Station. After some further attention Bridges was placed on a stretcher for transportation to the beach and was subsequently transferred to the hospital ship *Gascon*. Interestingly, Bridges told Thompson, 'Don't have me carried down; I don't want to endanger any of your stretcher bearers'. Thompson dismissed Bridges comments, 'Nonsense, sir, of course you've got to be carried down'.<sup>101</sup>

On 17 May White visited Bridges onboard *Gascon* before it was due to leave for Alexandria. He noted that Bridges was very low and that all the medical opinion that he

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.

consulted gave very little hope for his recovery. Bridges told Colonel Ryan, the chief medical officer for the AIF, 'I have commanded an Australian division for nine months'.<sup>102</sup>

Birdwood also visited Bridges on the *Gascon*. His feelings were mixed. In letters to his wife he wrote that he was angry with Bridges 'who had no right to be where he was' when he was shot and he regarded Bridges' loss as a serious handicap because he had no-one else to replace him.<sup>103</sup> His diary noted that he was distressed by the loss of 'such a nice fellow'.<sup>104</sup> His letter to the Australian Governor General, Sir Munro-Ferguson, however, showed the politician at work. He wrote that the Expeditionary Force owed Bridges a 'very deep debt of gratitude', praised Bridges as 'an uncommonly able and fearless soldier' and expressed his sadness at the 'idea of having to carry on in future without him'.<sup>105</sup> But the letter also contained a passage that both obliquely criticised Bridges and revealed the importance White had already begun to establish for himself in the organisational structure of the AIF.

I am only thankful that I have in Colonel White, Senior Staff Officer of the Division, a man who is worth anything, and one of the best and most capable soldiers I have met for a long time. As long as he is there I feel quite content, as he is full of commonsense and has much detailed knowledge and sound judgement.<sup>106</sup>

Bridges died on 18 May 1915 before the *Gascon* reached Alexandria and with his death the Australian Division and the AIF entered a new phase. A new commander had to be appointed. Until that happened Bridges' executive and administrative commands now passed to Birdwood. Although Bridges had been involved in creating the AIF his main legacy to the organisation was in the selection of its brigade commanders. In the years following Bridges death his talent for choosing commanders would be confirmed on many occasions.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Birdwood to Wife, 15 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 15.

<sup>104</sup> Diary Entry, 15 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 29.

<sup>105</sup> Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 17 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 31.

<sup>106</sup> Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 17 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 31.

### Transfer of Power

The selection of Bridges' replacement opened up a rift within the high command of the AIF and was the subject of some controversy in Australia. The choice of commander has significant implications for the organisational culture of the AIF and consequently it is worthwhile to discuss this issue in some detail. Upon hearing of Bridges' death Birdwood proposed that command of the 1st Division be given to Brigadier General G.M. Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick was a former member of Kitchener's staff as well as a former Inspector-General of the AMF. Until this could be facilitated he placed Walker in command of the division. The Australian Government, however, had moved quickly upon hearing of Bridges' death and appointed another Australian officer, Colonel J.G. Legge, then Chief of the General Staff, to replace him. Like Bridges, Legge was to assume executive command of the Australian Division and the administrative command of the AIF.<sup>107</sup>

White seems to have foreseen Legge's appointment and visited Birdwood on the same day Bridges was wounded. He informed Birdwood that Legge did not have the confidence of the Australian commanders and that many of them 'would only serve under him with the greatest reluctance'.<sup>108</sup> In a note to Kitchener on 25 May 1915 Birdwood pointed out that although he did not know Legge he had doubts about his capabilities and that these were based on the lack of confidence that was being expressed by the senior Australian officers.<sup>109</sup> He told Kitchener that although Legge was 'a man of brilliant mentality' and 'probably the cleverest soldier in Australia', he was 'regarded even in that wire-pulling country as a political and self seeker [sic] ... with a knack for quarrelling and writing'.<sup>110</sup>

The senior brigadiers shared White's view and clearly demonstrate the extent to which certain values were shared at the upper command level. These values had been crystallised to the point where they expressed serious concern about Legge's ability not only to fit into

<sup>107</sup> Legge's appointment was reported in *The Argus*, 21 May 1915. For a small pen portrait of Legge entitled 'The New Chief' see *The Bulletin*, 27 May 1915, p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> Birdwood to Kitchener, 25 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 31.

<sup>109</sup> Birdwood to Kitchener, 25 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 31.

<sup>110</sup> Birdwood to Kitchener, 27 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 31.



the group dynamic but also to appreciate the values and ideals under which the AIF had been formed.

The senior commanders of the AIF were infuriated at being superseded by an officer they regarded as professionally junior, inexperienced with the current campaign and personally unpopular within the ranks of the officer corps. M'Cay, a former Minister of Defence and highly volatile, told Bean he could 'hardly stand the idea of being under [Legge]' and suggested that he would leave once Legge arrived.<sup>111</sup> Monash regarded Legge's appointment, 'as an awful piece of logrolling . . . and it is a severe blow to the ambitions of M'Cay, Chauvel and myself'.<sup>112</sup> So strongly did Monash feel about Legge's appointment that he wrote to Chauvel and questioned the Australian Government's right to appoint officers to a force it had placed under the control of the British: 'It has no more right to appoint a Commander of a British or Colonial Division than it has to appoint a Battalion Commander or Corporal'.<sup>113</sup> This prompted the normally introverted Chauvel to take up the matter with Birdwood. Chauvel found that Birdwood 'would not take any stand in the matter at all', an attitude he still found hard to understand some years later.<sup>114</sup>

Birdwood could not help but be concerned by the solidarity expressed by the Australian commanders and their staunch opposition. On 19 May Birdwood relayed his concern about the developing situation to Hamilton and advised him that Legge's appointment would be 'a most unpopular one' with the Australians and asked Hamilton to prevent it.<sup>115</sup>

Hamilton, who was caught by surprise with this turn of events, cabled Kitchener and advised him that Legge's appointment would cause considerable resentment within the AIF and asked him to prevent the appointment.<sup>116</sup> By this stage, however, it was too late to alter the appointment, and both Birdwood and Hamilton were forced to accept Legge's appointment.

<sup>111</sup> Diary Entries 23-24 June 1915, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL606, item 9.

<sup>112</sup> Monash to his wife, 30 June 1915, Monash Papers, NLA MS1884, Box 127, vol. 2.

<sup>113</sup> Monash to Chauvel, 14 June 1915, Monash Papers, NLA MS1884, item 4/940.

<sup>114</sup> Chauvel to White, 26 August 1917, White Papers, NLA MS5172, item 60.

<sup>115</sup> Birdwood to Hamilton, 19 May 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 31.

<sup>116</sup> Letter Hamilton to Munro Ferguson, 6 October 1915, Novar Papers, NLA MS696/3660; Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 8 November 1915, Pearce Papers, AA A4719, item 63, vol. 12.

Back in Australia questions were being raised about Legge's suitability. Munro-Ferguson, the Governor General in Australia, and revelling in his newfound role as Commander-in-Chief questioned Pearce, the Minister for Defence, on his choice of commander. Pearce justified Legge's appointment on national grounds. He told parliament 'we shall have the satisfaction of knowing the Division is still in the command of an Australian officer'.<sup>117</sup> This continued to be an important aspect of the debate, at least from the point of view of Fisher and Pearce. They went on to inform Munro-Ferguson that 'it was expedient that an Australian Officer should command the First Australian Division'.<sup>118</sup>

In September Pearce wrote to Birdwood on the subject of Legge and acknowledged that there was considerable jealousy of Legge. Pearce attributed this jealousy to the fact that Legge:

... has done brilliant administrative work here and, as a result, and prior to the War he was picked out by myself for advancement. This of course gave great annoyance to those who were senior to him but who, having had the same chances, had not displayed the same conspicuous ability. Then again, on the introduction of our Defence Acts and the scheme for Universal training he was my chief adviser on many points, and many of his recommendations were much too revolutionary for those Officers who clung to their old ideas. This also earned him considerable resentment.<sup>119</sup>

Pearce went on to express regret for failing to seek advice from Hamilton and Birdwood before Legge was appointed. In a further letter in October Pearce told Birdwood not to feel 'in any way, in dealing with this Officer, hampered by the fact that he was sent forward by this Government'. This virtually told Birdwood that he was free to deal with Legge as he saw fit.<sup>120</sup> This reversal of his earlier stance in supporting Legge remains a mystery because it is not mentioned in any of the surviving records.

When Legge arrived in Cairo on 15 June 1915 Birdwood suggested that he spend a few days to acquaint himself with the situation there. At the time the new brigades that he had raised in Australia had arrived in Egypt and were starting their training and Legge decided

<sup>117</sup> *CPD*, vol. 76, 20 May 1915, p. 3262.

<sup>118</sup> The debate over Legge is discussed in Munro Ferguson dispatch 28 May 1915, Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, item 1652-4. Fisher Pearce interview 28 May 1915, Novar Papers, NLA, MS 696, item 1652.

<sup>119</sup> Pearce to Birdwood, 11 September 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 15.

<sup>120</sup> Pearce to Birdwood, 6 October 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 15..

to tour the Australian camps and training areas. He was not impressed by what he found and reported to the Australian Government that Cairo was 'a totally unsuitable centre for the training of Australian troops'.<sup>121</sup> Legge was presumably acting in his capacity as GOC AIF and in all probability never realised the impact this course of action would have. In making his report directly to the Australian Government, he ignored the C-in-C of the British Forces in Egypt, General Maxwell. Maxwell maintained that Legge's report to the Australian Government should have been submitted through him.<sup>122</sup> As administrative commander of the Australian contingent Legge was quite within his rights to report directly to the government that paid his wages. Nevertheless, Legge appeared to find this rebuke from Maxwell rather chastening.

When Legge arrived at the Anzac position on 24 June 1915 he quickly assumed command of the Australian Division. One account provides an affable description of the hand over:

There were no formalities in Gallipoli when ... Major General Legge arrived at his destination at 2 o'clock in the morning, and he slept in Colonel White's dug-out. Commencing at daybreak, he was escorted over a portion of the position at Gaba Tepe, but the complete inspection occupied three full days, during which time there were constant consultations with commanding officers and the acting divisional chief. At the end of the week Brigadier General Walker handed over all his papers to Major General Legge, and again took command of the 1st Australian Infantry Brigade.<sup>123</sup>

One can only assume that this is the official version and was intended to reassure the Australian public that the situation at Anzac was under control.

In reality Legge's reception and relationship with his fellow Australians was anything but cordial. Bean was concerned about the enmity between Legge and the other Australian commanders and recorded that Legge was received rather coldly by many of the Australian officers.<sup>124</sup> Interestingly enough White does not mention either Legge's appointment or arrival in his diary or letters and yet evidence stated previously suggest that he was the first to voice opposition to Legge's potential appointment.

<sup>121</sup> Bean *Official History*, vol. 2, p. 423, n. 15.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Argus*, 6 August 1915. See also *Military Orders* 466, 488 of 1915.

<sup>124</sup> Diary Entry, 28 June 1915, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL606, item 9.

Legge's relationship with his fellow officers did not improve, especially when it became common knowledge that Legge wished to introduce a principle of having all AIF appointments above the rank of Major based on selection from the AIF as a whole. Monash in particular objected to this principle and wrote to Godley and urged 'great caution' in adopting this principle. Monash was concerned that such a procedure would interfere with the territorial distinctions between his battalions and might result in officers being appointed who were total strangers to 'the policies, doctrines and ideals' under which his brigade had been formed and trained.<sup>125</sup>

Legge's relationship with Birdwood was no better than his relationship with his fellow Australians. Upon arrival at Anzac Legge reported to Birdwood, who immediately censured Legge for his supposed breach of protocol in Cairo.<sup>126</sup> As a result relations between Birdwood and Legge were less than cordial and this situation worsened when Legge objected to Birdwood's proposed attack on Lone Pine.

Hamilton had, since the end of May, been developing a plan that called for a surprise attack to be made against the higher ridges of Sari Bair. This attack would be in combination with the landing of fresh British troops at Suvla Bay.<sup>127</sup> The proposed date of the attack was 6 August and the plans called for a diversionary attack to be made against Lone Pine. Hamilton, ever the stickler for secrecy, had not even briefed his corps commanders in mid July. Birdwood on the other hand, primarily because he had produced the initial plan, had briefed his divisional commanders Godley and Walker (and subsequently Legge) in June.

Walker, who in June was in temporary command of the 1st Division, was opposed to the plan. Walker, and White, argued that such an attack would be futile unless the northern perimeter was seized beforehand, or attacked simultaneously with the 1st Division.<sup>128</sup> This plan, which became known as Lone Pine formed part of the August offensive and is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Birdwood had overruled Walker on this matter but found Legge to be even more unrelenting in his opposition. Birdwood was

<sup>125</sup> Monash to Godley, 2 July 1915, Monash Papers, NLA, MS1884, file 4/940.

<sup>126</sup> Diary Entry, 24 June 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 29.

<sup>127</sup> For a revisionist account of the Suvla Bay landings see Prior, 'The Suvla Bay tea-party'.

<sup>128</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 452.

concerned at the prospect of having to engage in operations with a commander who was strongly opposed to the operation. Legge provided the solution that Birdwood was looking for and may have inadvertently contributed to his own demise.<sup>129</sup>

When Legge arrived at Gallipoli he had informed Birdwood that three new infantry brigades were in Egypt and had already begun training. Legge, perhaps unwisely, urged the formation of a second division and informed Munro-Ferguson that:

... the Australian troops were already taking on a lion's share of the hardships here, and that for many reasons they would get better looked after if they were all under one head.

In order to achieve this result it was necessary to get our detached troops back from Cape Helles to Anzac, and also to get the new Brigades arriving in Egypt formed into a definite Aust. Division, to form part of the A and NZ Army Corps.<sup>130</sup>

Approval to form a 2nd Australian Division was sought from Kitchener and upon its receipt on 10 July 1915 arrangements were made to have the division established. Initially, Legge and Birdwood chose M'Cay to command the 2nd Australian Division because of his training abilities. But on 11 July 1915, the day before M'Cay was to leave Gallipoli to return to Egypt, he suffered an unfortunate accident and broke his leg at the point where it had previously been weakened by a bullet wound received at Cape Helles. He was subsequently invalided to Australia.<sup>131</sup>

This unforeseen situation necessitated the selection of another officer to command the 2nd Australian Division. According to Bean, 'the officer most suitable for the task of organising the new division appeared to be Legge, whose capacity as an administrator was well known, and under whom its three infantry brigades had been raised in Australia'.<sup>132</sup>

This was not entirely correct and one wonders whether White was considered for the position. White had, after all, demonstrated his administrative capacities both before the war and during the organization of the 1st Australian Division. The primary sources

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p. 453.

<sup>130</sup> Legge to Munro-Ferguson, 5 October 1915, Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, item 3606.

<sup>131</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 424.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p. 424.

however do not indicate whether this option was given consideration. Nor do they indicate who suggested Legge be transferred away from the division that he already commanded. It seems the decision to transfer Legge to Egypt was seen as an organisational expedient. Legge made it clear in a letter to Munro-Ferguson that the transfer had been against his wishes.<sup>133</sup>

The proposal to give Legge the responsibility for the organisation and command the 2nd Division was referred through official channels to the Australian Government. After some consideration the government subsequently agreed to 'Major-General J. G. Legge being transferred from command of the AIF . . . to organise and to command the 2nd Australian Division'.<sup>134</sup> On 26 July Legge handed over command of the 1st Australian Division to Brigadier-General Walker again.

Little is known about Legge's relationship with White and given White's earlier act of disloyalty it is unlikely to have been more than a strained professional relationship at best. It is not known if White played a role in Legge's shift from his position at Anzac but a letter that Legge wrote to White suggests that he believed that White was undermining him. Legge wrote:

I shall find it very hard to forgive whoever was responsible at Anzac for leaving me in such a hole for 'A' duties Staff. Dodds is not here and I had no-one at all, yet you send me a letter dated 28 July saying that [Major W.E.H.] Cass does not 'want' to come. What has that got to do with it? He was appointed by the War Office. The letter reaches me 16 Aug & asks me what are my wishes? You can imagine what I think after having an incomplete Division on my hands for a fortnight with no 'A' duty officers. I have had to take Blamey away from GS work & make him act . . . Everybody helps to do nothing. You can tell the Anzac Staff that I only asked for the minimum & that was held back. There are no officers to be got here who are any good. The completion of the Division has been much delayed in consequence, though I have not averaged 6 hours sleep & have been doing Staff officer's work.<sup>135</sup>

Legge's tone here is interesting. As a Major General and General Officer Commanding the AIF he had the power to transfer any officer that he wished to and yet he is deferring to White, who as a Colonel and chief staff officer for the 1st Australian Division, should

<sup>133</sup> Legge to Munro-Ferguson, 5 October 1915, Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, item 3606.

<sup>134</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 133, vol. 2, 28 October 1915, p. 2767.

<sup>135</sup> Legge to White, 18 Aug 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

technically have had no say in the decision. This certainly suggests that White was regarded, even by Legge, as the real power and authority within the growing AIF.

With Legge out of the way it was now possible to facilitate a transfer of Legge's executive and administrative powers to Birdwood. In a letter to Munro-Ferguson Birdwood actively sought this transfer of power and suggested 'that I might perhaps be honoured with [Legge's] appointment' as GOC.<sup>136</sup> Birdwood claimed that he was not acting out of personal interest but rather in 'the general interest of the Commonwealth troops'.<sup>137</sup> It is not known what prompted Birdwood to suggest that Legge's powers be transferred to him. White had become Birdwood's main advisor on Australian affairs and had been privy to the original Cabinet meetings on the formation of the AIF. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Birdwood may have been led to believe the Australian Government would view such a proposal favourably. Birdwood's letter certainly prompted the Australian Government to reconsider its position.

Munro-Ferguson referred the matter to Pearce, who arranged for the GOC's powers to be transferred to Birdwood. Initially Birdwood had to settle for the powers but without actually being confirmed in the appointment. Legge's position was redefined by an order of the Executive Council that merely stated that Legge had surrendered his command of the AIF when appointed 'to organise and command the 2nd Australian Division'. Birdwood was not formally granted the title GOC AIF until September 1916, (although it was backdated to 18 September 1915).<sup>138</sup>

Legge's request that his personal papers be destroyed upon his death substantially hinders an accurate evaluation of this episode. But, it is possible to make a plausible, if speculative, appraisal. Coulthard-Clarke believes that Legge's demise was due to an imperialist conspiracy to usurp control of the AIF.<sup>139</sup> The basis of Coulthard-Clark's thesis is a letter

<sup>136</sup> Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 31 Aug 1915, Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, item 3455.

<sup>137</sup> Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 31 Aug 1915, Novar Papers, NLA, MS696, item 3455.

<sup>138</sup> Delegation of powers to Birdwood, see *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, vol. 2, 15 September 1915, p. 2312; For Birdwood's appointment as GOC AIF see, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, vol. 2, 14 September 1916, p. 2582 (backdated to 18 September 1915); Appointment terminated *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, vol. 2, 10 September 1920, p. 1323.

<sup>139</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*.

that Legge wrote in January 1917 to the Secretary of the Australian Department of Defence that states the transfer was undertaken without Legge's knowledge.<sup>140</sup> It is difficult to believe that a man in Legge's position, and well versed in the highly political nature of high command, would be unaware of the events taking place around him.

A cultural analysis provides an alternative, though less conspiratorial, account of this episode. When a leader goes into an existing organization and seeks to change its culture he/she must find ways to discredit portions of the existing culture and replace its champions lest they try to maintain it. Rites of degradation, which symbolically represent the reduction or removal of specific status, are ideally suited to this purpose and are consequently quite common. The new leader, must also, convince members of the organization to follow his/her new visions. To do this, he/she needs exceptional personal qualities. Members are unlikely to give up whatever security they derive from the existing culture and follow a leader in new directions unless that leader exudes self-confidence, has strong convictions, a dominant personality, and can preach the new vision with drama and eloquence.<sup>141</sup>

In Legge's case, he was unpopular with the core members of the culture he was seeking to change, he does not appear to have articulated a specific vision for the future of the AIF, and he was largely regarded as a nominal leader in an organization operating in an externalised coalition environment with ambiguous chains of command. This placed him in a rather untenable situation where core members had the latitude and flexibility to utilise the organisation's culture and administrative apparatus to initiate a rite of degradation against Legge himself. This opened the way for key organisational members to consolidate the reins of power firmly within the cultural boundaries they had established. White, as a key founding leader, was especially able to utilise the system he created and consolidate his position within the organization.

After planning the landing at Gallipoli the imperatives of the campaign pushed White into a largely subordinate role. He was highly regarded by the commanders within the AIF and his views were shared by them. The organisational culture was being crystallised into a

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<sup>140</sup> Letter Legge to Trumble, 23 January 1917, Bean Papers, AWM 3DRL 606/255; Coulthard-Clarke, *No Australian Need Apply*, Appendix 2, pp. 222-4.

<sup>141</sup> For a more detailed discussion on this process see Trice and Beyer, 'Cultural Leadership in Organisations'.



tightly knit group dynamic. Legge's appointment threatened that dynamic and consequently resulted in White and his fellow commanders taking steps to protect the organisational culture and group status. Once Legge was removed White became more important within the social structure of both ANZAC and the AIF. This importance would increase White's power and ability to further develop the organisational culture of the AIF.

## Chapter 9

### A Hitherto Unattained Masterpiece

... no recollection is more bitter than the complaints of the men themselves that they had not had sufficient training to give them a fair chance. That complaint was made to me bitterly before the battle of Lone Pine, and, in such few hours that remained to us efforts were made to remedy the deficiency. But time was not available, and the need of the men great, and ever, in consequence, rests upon our consciences a deep sense of the responsibility incurred.

CBB White<sup>1</sup>

It is I think the most extraordinary performance in the history of the World, to think that two huge armies were only 20, 30, 40 and 50 yards apart in a lot of places and that one could slip away without the other knowing.

Brigadier General Granville Ryrie<sup>2</sup>

... the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac will stand before the eyes of all strategists as a hitherto unattained masterpiece<sup>3</sup>.

German Officer<sup>3</sup>

After the disastrous Turkish counter attacks in May the campaign at Gallipoli settled into a stalemate characterised by small-scale operations designed to capture a trench here and there and straighten out the opposing lines. In June plans were made to attempt a breakout of the Anzac perimeter. This plan included a second landing of British troops at Suvla Bay. This breakout failed and with the possibility of German reinforcements arriving in the following spring a decision was made to evacuate the peninsula.

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<sup>1</sup> CBB White, 'Some Recollections on the Great War, 1 April 1921, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 66.

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier General Granville Ryrie quoted in Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> German officer quoted in James, *Gallipoli*, p.342.

For both White and the AIF Gallipoli was a period of both change and growth. White learnt about the realities of modern warfare and how to deal with it. The evacuation would be the culmination of these lessons. It demonstrated his grasp of the techniques of warfare and his confidence in articulating solutions to senior officers whose ideas were often constrained by experiences and a socialisation that had not prepared them for the war they now found themselves fighting. The AIF witnessed marked change as it continued to grow at an unprecedented rate and was forced to come to terms with several changes in leadership. These changes worked to White's advantage and placed him in an unassailable position to continue exerting his influence on the development of the AIF and its organisational culture.

### Lone Pine

By the end of May Birdwood was becoming increasingly frustrated by the deadlock that had developed at Anzac. It was Birdwood's contention that by moving up the valleys at night and seizing the summits of the Sari Bair range the deadlock could be broken. Birdwood's plan was for the A & NZ Division to secure Hill 971 and for the 1st Division to make a 'demonstration' against Gaba Tepe.<sup>4</sup> With this in mind Birdwood sought the views of Walker, his chief of staff, who in turn discussed the idea with Brigadier General Carruthers, the DA & QMG and temporary commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade. Carruthers could not see any advantage in capturing Gaba Tepe before Baby 700 and the Lone Pine position had been captured.<sup>5</sup> Carruthers went on to say:

The more I study the ground the more I am convinced that our advance should be against baby 700 and Lonesome Pine plateau. The former is the key to the Northern half of the position, the latter to the Southern position. The capture of these two points would make the Turkish positions untenable and would, I think, give us the dark [Gun] ridge (our original objective). If we hold the dark ridge the enemy must give up Gaba Tepe as we would be in a position that would make its capture a certainty. To take Gaba Tepe now would only saddle us with another responsibility and another source of casualties without any clear tactical objective.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 450.

<sup>5</sup> Carruthers to Walker, 30 May 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/2, Part 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Both Walker and White supported this view. In view of these opinions Birdwood began to turn his attention towards Lone Pine.<sup>7</sup>

Birdwood believed the seizure of the summits of the Sari Bair was the crucial objective because they commanded the entire Anzac position. From the beginning Birdwood regarded the southern attack against Lone Pine as a feint. The intention was not so much the capture of Lone Pine as the creation of such an impression in the minds of the Turkish commanders. This would draw their attention towards the southeast.<sup>8</sup> Since this attack was to be a major demonstration Birdwood planned to have the attack against Lone Pine begin some hours before the main operation.<sup>9</sup>

By the middle of June Hamilton was beginning to warm to Birdwood's plan. Like Birdwood, he was becoming frustrated with the deadlock on the peninsula. He told Kitchener that his force was 'knotted up' in trench warfare and this new plan offered a way out of the situation.<sup>10</sup> Hamilton had recently been informed that he was to receive three New Army divisions and decided to postpone the offensive from Birdwood's original date of early July until August.<sup>11</sup> Hamilton asked Birdwood how he would deal with possible reinforcements should they become available for the proposed action.<sup>12</sup> Birdwood doubted that a third division could be landed at Anzac with any degree of comfort. But once the situation on Hill 971 had been evaluated and it was confirmed that Hill 971 would be taken it was possible that fresh reinforcements could be landed to the north of the Anzac positions:

... I think it is very much for consideration whether a Third Division should not be landed either at Anzac – on the coast North of it in the vicinity of Fisherman's Hut, or at Suvla Bay, as the navy may think more suitable, and for this Division to advance ... when its left would be safe on the sea at

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<sup>7</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 450.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 451.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 452.

<sup>10</sup> James, *Gallipoli*, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup> Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, Vol. 2, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

Ejelmer Bay – and with its right covering Kuchuk Anafarta. This should give us command of the valley between the two Anafartas, which would be invaluable and possibly essential for supply purposes. It would give us a broad and comparatively speaking secure base for the supplies for a large force in the vicinity of Suvla Bay, while wheel transport of all sorts could also be used.<sup>13</sup>

Rhodes James suggests that Birdwood's proposal was 'the germ of the Suvla plan'.<sup>14</sup> Whilst Birdwood viewed the Suvla Bay landing as an adjunct to his own attack, Hamilton regarded it as a base for all the forces in the north.<sup>15</sup> In the end Hamilton's priorities won out over Birdwood's. However, this led to considerable confusion between the Corp Commanders as to the exact objectives of the Suvla Bay landings.

Although Walker and White supported the original proposal they both opposed the revised plan. As mentioned previously Birdwood also faced opposition from Legge. In White's case his opposition generally stemmed from a view that feints frequently had a substantial cost in human life with very little tactical gain, a view, as noted earlier, that White would hold throughout the war.<sup>16</sup> White was well aware that Lone Pine was commanded by the heights of Baby 700, which was currently in the hands of the Turks. White believed that sound tactical thinking suggested that Lone Pine should not be assaulted until Baby 700 was either captured or was being attacked. Since the plan called for the 1st Division to assault Lone Pine several hours before the main operation White felt it would result in the virtual destruction of the division.<sup>17</sup>

White, in collaboration with Walker submitted an alternative plan to Birdwood. This plan called for a simultaneous assault on Baby 700 and Lone Pine. Birdwood held firm to his intention of assaulting Lone Pine well before the main assault began on Baby 700. If the attack was not staggered he contended that insufficient Turkish forces would be drawn away from Baby 700 and this would not sufficiently assist the main attack. In later years

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<sup>13</sup> Birdwood to Hamilton, 1 July 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/4, Part 3.

<sup>14</sup> James, *Gallipoli*, p. 238.

<sup>15</sup> Prior, 'The Suvla Bay tea-party', pp. 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Rosemary Derham mentions her father's opposition to feints in *Silent Ruse*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 452.

Birdwood wrote, '... what we had to learn by actual experience was the actual interval required between a feint and the real attack'.<sup>18</sup>

In the initial plan Birdwood expected the Lone Pine assault to begin at 3.00 pm and the baby 700 attack to begin immediately after dark. Under considerable pressure from White and Walker he agreed to change the start of Lone Pine assault to 5.00 pm. This was subsequently changed to 5.30 pm when it was realised the naval gunfire bombardment was insufficient.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting that Birdwood later informed the Dardanelles Commission, 'I have since been rather sorry that against my better judgement I did not make an attack there rather earlier than I did'.<sup>20</sup> He pointed out that had he stuck to his original plan, more Turkish troops would have been diverted to Lone Pine.<sup>21</sup>

In the weeks leading up to the August offensive, White and Walker were busy planning the operation in detail. On 30 May 1915 Birdwood informed White he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO),<sup>22</sup> and on 27 July White was promoted to full Colonel.<sup>23</sup> White's letters at this time indicate a concern for his lack of energy and his battle against fatigue. Even though he often felt fatigued he wrote that he was determined not to give in to the tiredness or the depression that he felt, and that he was determined to maintain his ideals and standards.<sup>24</sup>

Walker's instructions were to begin the operation with 'a strong and sustained attack on Hill 126 [Lone Pine]'.<sup>25</sup> White and Walker had, since June, been using aerial photographs, which was a relatively new technique, in order to prepare a rough plan of the Turkish trenches. These photos indicated that communication trenches ran back to a transverse

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p. 453.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> Birdwood evidence, The Dardanelles Commission, 6 March 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 40.

<sup>21</sup> Birdwood evidence, The Dardanelles Commission, 6 March 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 40.

<sup>22</sup> Diary Entry, 30 May 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>23</sup> Diary Entry, 27 July 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>24</sup> For example see material on page 266.

<sup>25</sup> 'Instructions for GOC Australian Division', 4 August 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/5, Part 3.

trench approximately a third of the distance back towards the edge of the plateau. White and Walker believed this would be a suitable limit for the attack but were concerned this would also constrain the attack because it only allowed for a frontage of 160 yards.<sup>26</sup> It was clear that this frontage, even allowing for control of the flanking trenches would not hold more than three infantry battalions. White, and Walker, then decided to have three battalions undertake the initial assault. The 3rd Battalion would seize the central trench and take control of the transverse trench. The 4th and 2nd battalions would assault the northern and southern flanks respectively. The 1st Battalion would act as Brigade reserve.<sup>27</sup>

Every effort was made to ensure the attacking brigade was given a good start. This work was mainly undertaken by White who was assisted by the Brigade Major, the senior staff officer at brigade level, Major King. Together they worked out the exact space to be occupied at the starting line by each battalion and then arranged for these areas to be widened and separate approach routes to be marked.<sup>28</sup> Rhodes James suggested that the plans for attacking Lone Pine had been prepared with a thoroughness and skill that had previously been absent during the Gallipoli campaign.<sup>29</sup>

The Lone Pine operation began with a bombardment of the Turkish position at 4.30 pm. An hour later the infantry attacked in waves from "secret saps" and the front fire trenches. Some units occupied the first Turkish trenches they came to while others pushed on to their final objective. By the morning of 8 August 1915, despite several attempts by the Turks to recapture it, the Lone Pine position was firmly held by the Australians.<sup>30</sup> The British historian, Aspinall-Oglander, argues that by 12 August it was a clear victory. A total of seven Victoria Crosses were awarded for this action. However, the cost was heavy for both sides, the attack at Lone Pine cost the Turks almost 7,000 men and the Australians 2,277 casualties.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 498.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 499.

<sup>29</sup> James, *Gallipoli*, p. 263.

<sup>30</sup> Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, Vol. 2, pp. 179-180.

<sup>31</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 566, n. 61.

White was obviously busy during the battle for Lone Pine but he continued to write in his diary during this period.

5 August 1915. Moved HQ to head of WHITE GULLY. Busy with prelim. arrgts.

6 August 1915. Battle of LONE PINE. Successful attack on enemy trenches. Big losses. Up all night. Great deal of shell fire. Enemy rigorously counter attacked.

7 August 1915. Operations towards SUVLA BAY – Ships guns firing as on 25<sup>th</sup> April! Progress slow. LONE PINE continually counter attacked. Place like a charnel house.

12 August 1915. Counter attacks on LONE PINE continued up to this day.<sup>32</sup>

By 12 August it was becoming clear that that the assault on baby 700 and Hill 971 had failed as had the landings at Suvla Bay. The stalemate had not been broken and the status quo remained intact. Only the Lone Pine operations had succeeded in gaining their objectives. On 14 August White wrote to his wife and praised not only the gallantry of the Australians but also the Turks.

Will people hereafter learn the lesson that preparation wards off war and enables it to be properly met promptly if it does come? ... We have been living through rather an inferno for the past week but please God we will come out of it victorious. Of the gallantry of these Australians I cannot speak with sufficient pride. They and their officers have performed feats as resolute and as brave as any troops in history, and I hope that the future and the Australian people will do them honour. I confess that I did not know that such a large body of men could be so careless of death and ready to make such sacrifices for victory. The Turk so far fights fair and he is a worthy foe of brave men. May he never succumb to the meanness and the dastardly tactics of the accursed German.

Most of the statements of Turkish atrocities are incorrect. The Turk has been quite an honourable foe.<sup>33</sup>

Towards the end of August White was stricken with dysentery. In a letter to his wife, White confided, 'The endurance of this soldier is not great'.<sup>34</sup> But the constant heat and poor hygiene was making many men ill and causing considerable strain for the medical services at Gallipoli. Colonel Howse, the Australian Director of Medical Services, sent White, and

<sup>32</sup> Diary Entries, 5-12 August 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23. Capitalisation in the original entries.

<sup>33</sup> White to Wife, 14 August 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

<sup>34</sup> White to Wife, 22 August 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.



MacLagan who was also ill, to Alexandria to recuperate. White was generally dissatisfied with the standard of service being provided and was glad when he was subsequently transferred to Cairo.<sup>35</sup>

By 25 September White had sufficiently recovered to return to Anzac. He embarked on SS *Osmanieh* for the journey to Mudros and was in command of 1000 reinforcements.

Arriving at Mudros White was informed that upon arrival at Anzac he was to take up the position as Brigadier General, General Staff.<sup>36</sup> On 1 October he noted in his diary:

Saw General Walker who told me I was to go to General Birdwood as BGGS. Reported to General Birdwood who was very kind and said I was to take up duty as soon as possible.<sup>37</sup>

White was pleased with the new position but had some doubts about his capabilities to do the job:

... I feel myself a most unworthy successor for Skeen was an extraordinarily able staff officer, indeed the ablest and most energetic I have ever met. However I can but do my best and you must pray that I may be able to, I do not want to have the title of Brigadier General if I cannot deserve it.<sup>38</sup>

White need not have worried about his abilities. He had over the past twelve months established a solid reputation as a staff officer and organiser. His position as the senior administrator of the Australian Imperial Force was now cemented, as well as his position as Birdwood's principle advisor on all matters Australian.

The organisational culture of the AIF, which had been used to effectively isolate and marginalise Legge, was consolidated by one other change that occurred at this time. Major Griffiths, who was at the time Deputy Assistant Adjutant General of 1st Australian Division, was transferred to Birdwood's headquarters. Griffiths as noted in chapter six had

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<sup>35</sup> Diary Entries, 30 August and 4 September 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>36</sup> Diary Entry, 30 September 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>37</sup> Diary Entry, 1 October 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6549, item 23.

<sup>38</sup> White to Wife, 3 October 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

been selected by Bridges as his military secretary. He was now to assume responsibility for all details concerning promotions effectively making him Adjutant General of the AIF. In later years White declared that

No praise can be too high for Griffiths. The administration of nearly a half a million men in war conditions without much guide and precedent, was no mean task and its successful accomplishment was mainly due to Griffiths.<sup>39</sup>

Griffiths was one man who knew military procedure, routine and organisation as did few others and he was to be of great assistance to White and Birdwood.

The changes in command and structure were not confined to the AIF. After the failure of the August offensive sections of the British Cabinet began to lose faith in the Dardanelles strategy and were anxious to withdraw.<sup>40</sup> On 11 October Hamilton was asked for his thoughts on a possible withdrawal. Hamilton was opposed to any abandonment of the Peninsula and firmly believed that a withdrawal would result in the loss of at least half of the troops then in the Dardanelles.<sup>41</sup> The Dardanelles Committee viewed Hamilton's pessimistic appreciation of the situation at Gallipoli with some concern. The Committee believed that Hamilton had been given enough opportunities to ensure the success of the Gallipoli campaign and had lost confidence in him.<sup>42</sup>

The Dardanelles Committee met on 14 October 1915 and decided to recall Hamilton and hand his command over to Birdwood.<sup>43</sup> Kitchener informed the Committee that Birdwood was too junior for such a command and recommended that Hamilton remain in command until General Sir Charles Monro, commander of the Third Army in France and Hamilton's

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<sup>39</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Bibliography*, Vol. 9, p. 123.

<sup>40</sup> Meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, 7 October 1915, quoted in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3, pp. 1209-1210.

<sup>41</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 781.

<sup>42</sup> Meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, 14 October 1915, quoted in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3, p. 1217.

<sup>43</sup> Meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, 14 October 1915, quoted in *ibid.*

successor, arrived at Gallipoli. The British Prime Minister Asquith was adamant that Hamilton be recalled immediately before any public debate could take place.<sup>44</sup>

In a personal message to Hamilton Kitchener broke the news of the Government's decision:

The War Council held last night decided that though the Government fully appreciate your work and gallant manner in which you personally have struggled to make the enterprise a success in face of the terrible difficulties you have had to contend against, they, all they same, wish to make a change in the command which will give them an opportunity of seeing you.<sup>45</sup>

Birdwood was surprised at Hamilton's recall and was sorry that it had happened. He wrote to his wife: 'He is, I must say, most wonderfully good about it ... No ranting and raving that it is someone else's fault etc ...'.<sup>46</sup> Birdwood felt that Hamilton had been made a scapegoat for the lack of success at Gallipoli and told his wife:

He has ... been asked to do the impossible here – whether these might have been achieved I will not say, but from the first difficulties and strength of the Turkish Army has evidently been underestimated from home, and the final success aimed at has been impossible with the troops at our disposal. So it is hard lines that he should be sacrificed in this way ...<sup>47</sup>

Hamilton left Imbros on 17 October 1915 leaving Birdwood in temporary command of the MEF (and Godley in temporary command of ANZAC) until Monro arrived at the end of the month. Monro's instructions were precise; he was to consider the feasibility of Gallipoli and report 'whether, on purely military grounds, the Peninsula should be evacuated or another attempt made to carry it'.<sup>48</sup> Monro arrived at the end of the month and quickly assumed command of the MEF. He similarly wasted no time in making his decision. On 30 October, he visited Helles, Anzac and Suvla and on the strength of this brief visit informed his corps commanders, Lieutenant General F.J Davies of VIII Corps, Lieutenant General Sir J. Byng of IX Corps and Birdwood, that he had recommended evacuation of the

<sup>44</sup> Meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, 14 October 1915, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, Vol 2, pp. 271-2.

<sup>46</sup> Birdwood to Wife, 15 October 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 15.

<sup>47</sup> Birdwood to Wife, 15 October 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 15.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 784.

peninsula.<sup>49</sup> Monro went on to stress that ‘on purely military grounds ... I recommend the evacuation of the Peninsula.’<sup>50</sup> When Churchill heard of Monro’s recommendation he observed that ‘General Monro was an officer of swift decision. He came, he saw, he capitulated’.<sup>51</sup>

Kitchener appeared to be stunned by Monro’s precipitate recommendation and asked Monro if he had sought the views of his senior commanders. Kitchener told Monro if he had not, then he was to do so.<sup>52</sup> Byng and Davies were both for evacuating Gallipoli.<sup>53</sup> Birdwood, however, was opposed to an evacuation because the Turks would regard it a complete victory and this would have serious ramifications for India, Egypt and Persia.<sup>54</sup> Kitchener did not accept Monro’s recommendation and telegraphed Birdwood that he was going to visit Gallipoli to examine the situation himself.<sup>55</sup> Kitchener also told Birdwood that,

The more I look at the problem the less I see my way through. So you had better very quietly and very secretly work out any scheme for getting the troops off the Peninsula.<sup>56</sup>

On 10 November Kitchener arrived at Gallipoli. Upon his arrival Kitchener had discussions with Birdwood about contingency plans and preparations in the event that an evacuation should take place.<sup>57</sup> On 15 November Kitchener cabled the British Prime Minister, Asquith and informed him that he had inspected all the positions held on the Peninsula and that what had been achieved was ‘a most remarkable feat of arms’.<sup>58</sup> Kitchener told Asquith

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<sup>49</sup> Davies had replaced the invalided Hunter-Weston in August and Byng had replaced Stopford after Hamilton sacked him in August. Munro to Kitchener, 31 October 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/7, Part 5.

<sup>50</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 785.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in James, *Gallipoli*, pp. 322-3.

<sup>52</sup> Kitchener to Monro, 1 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum from Davies, 1 November 1915. and Memorandum from Byng, 2 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>54</sup> Birdwood to Monro, nd., Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>55</sup> Kitchener to Birdwood, 3 November 1915, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL8042, item 27.

<sup>56</sup> Kitchener to Birdwood, 4 November 1915, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL8042, item 27.

<sup>57</sup> Diary Entry, 10 November 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 26.

<sup>58</sup> Kitchener to Asquith, 15 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

that plans for evacuating the positions held were progressing, but if undertaken, the operation would be of extreme difficulty and danger. He added:

...but I have hopes that given time and weather, which may be expected to be suitable until the end of December, the troops will carry out this task with less loss than was previously estimated. My reason for this is that the distance they have to go to embark and the contraction of the lines of defence to be held by a smaller force gives them a better chance than I thought previously.<sup>59</sup>

Then on 22 November Kitchener decided to recommend the evacuation of the Peninsula and informed Asquith the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac should proceed but Helles could be held for the present.<sup>60</sup> Asquith replied that the War Council had approved the evacuation of all three Gallipoli positions and that a final decision of cabinet would be communicated to him the following day.<sup>61</sup> On 24 November Kitchener sailed for England with Cabinet still to make a decision. This was still the case on 30 November when Kitchener advised Monro that a decision was still to be reached and that his instructions referring to a policy of evacuation should be suspended.<sup>62</sup> During this visit Kitchener made further changes to the operational command structure. The MEF was to consist of the 'Dardanelles Army' under Birdwood and the 'Salonika Army' under General Mahon.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Kitchener to Asquith, 15 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>60</sup> Kitchener to Asquith, 22 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>61</sup> Asquith to Kitchener, 23 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>62</sup> Kitchener to Monro, 30 November 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>63</sup> Birdwood to Wife, 12 November 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWL 3DRL 3376, item 15.

### White's Silent Stunt

For Brudenell White, recently appointed as BGGS at ANZAC Headquarters, these changes were to prove fortuitous. White now had two senior British commanders, Birdwood and Godley, who had, through close association, developed great confidence in his abilities and were prepared to allow him a more independent role than might otherwise have been the case.

Whilst Birdwood was in command at Gallipoli and awaiting the arrival of Monro, White continued his routine duties at headquarters and began preparations for spending winter on the Peninsula. Birdwood wrote to White on 17 October

Godley will have told you the reason for my having to stop here and for which I am really sorry. Sir Ian has always been so absolutely charming and considerate to everyone that one cannot help feeling for him very much indeed at being recalled. I must say he is taking it splendidly. As he says, he has not succeeded and there is nothing more to be said. I do not know his successor, but hear he is a good man. He has a difficult job and I do not see how he is to get forwarder without more men and ammunition. Do you know one Murdoch, an Australian correspondent? I gather he may be partially responsible for all this as I hear he has written most heatedly about things here to the high authorities and has abused all of us – as Sir Ian told me he hoped and thought I might have succeeded him here, but that what Murdoch has said might well have militated against this at home!!  
... I think it will be well if I continue to deal with all purely AIF appointments etc. in Griffiths [sic] department, so he might send those over to me daily with short explanatory slips attached – but you might approve all junior Regimental appointments etc for me – I presume Monro will come as soon as possible, but I suppose I may be here any time up to a week – I do hope you are going on all right yourself and if you do not lie still – till you really are well – I'll be very annoyed.<sup>64</sup>

Birdwood's comments are especially interesting. They suggest that he has every confidence in White and that he is already delegating some of his command responsibilities to White. This began a trend that continued for the remainder of the war.

Unlike Birdwood White had previously met Monro and wrote to his wife of the change in leadership:

we are getting a new commander [Monro] but whether or not that is going to do anything to force a decision one cannot tell ... I have, in England and in Ireland, met the new man a few times. He once

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<sup>64</sup> Birdwood to White, 17 October 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

said I had given the best lecture he had heard! He has apparently been a great success in France. Life here is becoming a regular routine – shells and noise and all. It sounds strange and so it is.<sup>65</sup>

On 22 November a small committee of Naval and Military officers was convened to draft an evacuation plan. This plan was signed by Colonel G.F. MacMunn (QMG branch at GHQ), Captain F.H. Mitchell (Royal Navy) and Lieutenant Colonel C.F. Aspinall (General Staff, GHQ) and merely provided an outline that was lacking in detail and tactics.<sup>66</sup>

This outline plan proposed a three-phase evacuation of the peninsula. The preliminary stage would make the necessary reductions to meet the requirements of a winter defensive. This was a reasonable process since many troops already believed that rest was required before any future operations. The intermediate stage would commence when Cabinet approved the evacuation of the peninsula. The numbers would then be reduced to the minimum required to hold the position for one week. The final stage would be carried out with the greatest possible speed. It was estimated that the minimum required to hold the position was two rifles and one-third the artillery for every yard of frontage. Based upon the 11,000-yard frontage at Anzac and Suvla and the 7,000-yard frontage at Helles, it was calculated that a minimum of 26,000 troops each would be required at Anzac and Suvla and 18,000 at Helles.<sup>67</sup>

At Anzac Godley, who was now GOC ANZAC due to Birdwood's appointment to the Dardanelles Army, left the formulation of the scheme for the evacuation of Anzac in White's hands. Once this was finalised Godley closely examined the plan before accepting responsibility for it. White's plan combined the preliminary and intermediate stages into the 'First Stage', when 'time was not a vital factor'.<sup>68</sup> In this phase 'everything surplus to actual requirement to resist attack' would be removed from Anzac.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Birdwood to White, 24 October 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

<sup>66</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 853.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 854.

<sup>68</sup> White, 'Evacuation Plan', 27 November 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

For the 'Second Stage' White established two important conditions that would determine the success or failure of the evacuation. The final stage had to be as short as possible and planned to evacuate all remaining personnel from Anzac and Suvla in two nights. The final withdrawal from Anzac and Suvla had to be simultaneous since any earlier withdrawal from Suvla would place Anzac in the utmost peril.<sup>70</sup> For White the key to success lay in keeping the Turks ignorant of the evacuation. He emphasised that the firing line had to be held until the last moment. In order to deceive the Turks the line would be gradually thinned out over the two nights with troops being 'extended in the fire trenches ... [and] actively employed at firing from various places – but not wildly'.<sup>71</sup> All movement during the final two nights would be coordinated and synchronised with IX Corps and on the last night would be initiated 'by a pre-arranged communication between the Rear-guard Commander Anzac, and IX Corps'.<sup>72</sup>

White's plan emphasised the need to deceive the Turkish garrison into thinking the lull in activity was a normal aspect of the preparations for winter. White said, 'for the final operation I feel that we should do the utmost to avoid alarming the enemy in any way'.<sup>73</sup> White therefore planned to 'school the Turk to silence' and issued orders for a cessation of all normal sniping and routine artillery fire to begin at 6.00 pm of 24 November. The orders emphasised that the Turks were to be fired upon only in exceptional circumstances such as a direct attack and that silence was to be the norm for two days.<sup>74</sup> This 'policy of silence', or 'Silent Stunt' as it would become more commonly known, baffled the Turkish defenders.<sup>75</sup> The 'Silent Stunt' closed on the night of 27 November at a time when a severe blizzard hit the Anzac position. For several days the troops endured freezing winds and rain. Birdwood wrote to his wife,

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 113.

<sup>74</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 843.

<sup>75</sup> Bean gives a detailed list of all the Turkish probes of the Anzac perimeter. The local commanders seemed quite confused about this policy and were attempting to decide whether the Australians were withdrawing or preparing for winter. See Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, pp. 843-45.



It began with a tremendous storm of rain and SW wind, which suddenly turned round to the NE and came down in a regular blizzard of snow and sleet with 12 degrees of frost. The cold wouldn't have mattered so much but for the wind which simply killed the men.<sup>76</sup>

Birdwood's only consolation was that the Turks were even worse off because their trenches were higher and still full of snow, and that they appeared to have no warm clothing or blankets.<sup>77</sup> This storm and its proximity to the 'Silent Stunt' tended to reinforce Turkish views that the Australians were merely undertaking winter preparations.<sup>78</sup>

On 30 November White, and Godley, presented White's plan to a conference held by Birdwood on 30 November. Birdwood was presented with two different plans and a heated debate followed. Byng, the commander at Suvla, planned to withdraw IX Corps to successive positions. Although Byng's plan was in line with traditional British military thought, White was quick to realise this would seriously jeopardise the evacuation of ANZAC. He pointed out that such a tactic would forewarn the Turks. Few locations within the ANZAC perimeter were afforded protection from the Turkish defenders on the heights above Anzac. Although the Turkish garrison at The Nek, a mere eight hundred yards from the beach, were not in direct line of sight of the likely embarkation points at Anzac and North Beach, a determined push along Russell's Top would place them in a commanding position to significantly hinder any evacuation.

White also declared that if the troops at Suvla did not remain in the firing line until the last moment it would be impossible to leave ANZAC troops in the distant positions along The Apex and Damakjelik Bair. He advised the immediate withdrawal of these troops into the old Anzac perimeter.<sup>79</sup> Byng and Birdwood both realised these troops protected IX Corps right flank at Suvla and their premature withdrawal would allow the Turks to reposition artillery along the heights and direct artillery fire along the embarkation points. The

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<sup>76</sup> Birdwood to Wife, 4 December 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 15.

<sup>77</sup> Birdwood to Wife, 4 December 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 15.

<sup>78</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 2, p. 845.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 872.

withdrawal of ANZAC troops would also provide the Turks with a corridor through which they could attempt a flanking manoeuvre and get behind the withdrawing British forces.<sup>80</sup>

White, with Godley's support, urged Birdwood to accept simultaneity as the guiding principle for the withdrawal. After some conflict of opinion Birdwood finally agreed. Birdwood fully accepted White's arguments and ordered that the frontline be maintained until the last possible moment. Birdwood also moved to improve the co-ordination between the two corps by proposing that the northern most Anzac troops be withdrawn from Suvla. This was agreed and the withdrawal of the frontline was set for 1.30am on 20 December.<sup>81</sup> White's tactical plan was fully endorsed and has since become recognised as a model of succinctness.

By 1 December Birdwood was able to inform Monro that his plans for the evacuation were 'assuming definite shape'.<sup>82</sup> He told Monro that due to lack of naval resources he was going to evacuate Suvla and Anzac in the first instance and Helles a little later.<sup>83</sup> Birdwood further informed Monro that he was 'ready to begin the intermediate period at Suvla and Anzac immediately your orders are received and the necessary sea-transport collected'.<sup>84</sup> These orders did not eventuate until 8 December when Kitchener telegraphed Birdwood that Cabinet had approved the immediate abandonment of the Anzac and Suvla positions. At this point Birdwood informed his commanders at Anzac and Suvla to begin the evacuation and initiate White's plan. For the next ten days White guided the proceedings by issuing daily memorandums to the divisions ordering them to lighten their numbers in order to prepare for winter.

Once the decision to abandon Anzac and Suvla was made a conference was held to discuss the arrangements for the final stage. With the vessels that were available it was only possible to embark 10,000 troops each from Anzac and Suvla on each night. Thus, at

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Birdwood to Munro, 1 December 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 66.

<sup>83</sup> Birdwood to Munro, 1 December 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 66.

<sup>84</sup> Birdwood to Munro, 1 December 1915, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 66.

daylight on 19 December only 20,000 troops could remain at each position. Since the preliminary stage was progressing better than expected the final stage was set down for 18/19 and 19/20 December.<sup>85</sup>

The guiding principle for the evacuation was laid out in White's order:

... a gradual reduction from our present fire trenches — the times of withdrawal being determined by the times at which the troops will be required to embark and the distance from the places of embarkation.<sup>86</sup>

Working closely with the two naval liaison officers attached to his headquarters White arranged for two berths each to be established at North Beach and Anzac Cove. The transports would arrive in three stages at 7.00 pm, 10.00 pm, and 1.00 am, and would depart one hour later. With each stage the transports would embark 4,700, 3,200, and 2,800 men respectively, thereby, removing 10,700 troops on the first night of the final stage.<sup>87</sup>

The final night was to be considerably different from the first night. The method determined by White called for a gradual withdrawal to be made in three stages. The units would retain their organisational integrity but would be reduced to a skeletal representation: 'A' Party would consist of 4,000 men and would be withdrawn at dusk, 'B' Party would consist of 4,000 men and would be withdrawn between 9.00 pm and 11.00 pm, and 'C' Party would consist of 2,000 men and would be gradually withdrawn between 1.30 am and 4.00 am.<sup>88</sup>

After 11.00 pm the defence of the entire Anzac area would fall on the remaining 2,000 men, so in case any part of the force was still ashore at daylight White arranged for an inner

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<sup>85</sup> 'Instructions to General Officers Commanding 9<sup>th</sup> Corps and Australian and New Zealand Army Corps', 10 December 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/9, Part 7.

<sup>86</sup> 'Army Corps Order No. 21', 14 December 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL6288, item 1.

<sup>87</sup> 'Army Corps Order No. 21', 14 December 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL6288, item 1.

<sup>88</sup> 'Army Corps Order No. 21', 14 December 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL6288, item 1.

line of defence to be established extending from No. 1 Post in the north, through Walker's Ridge and Plugge's Plateau to MacLagan's Ridge in the south.<sup>89</sup>

The final garrison was to retain its organisation, with communication passing through a skeleton structure from brigade headquarters, to battalion and companies holding the line, even though only a dozen men might represent the actual unit during the final night. At the end of the first night the Corps Commander and staff would be withdrawn along with Divisional Commanders and staff. Control would then be handed over to the Rear Guard Commander and representatives of the divisional headquarters. On the last day only 10,000 troops were to remain at Anzac and on the last night these would be withdrawn in three stages, and 'so that all fire may not cease suddenly arrangements may be made for connecting cartridges to fuse-lengths at various places'.<sup>90</sup>

The first night's programme was carried out with precision at both Anzac and Suvla. Godley and White left Anzac at 11.00 pm having handed over the remainder of the evacuation to the Rear-Guard Commander. After the 'B' party was withdrawn at 11.00 pm the Anzac-Suvla line was held by one man for every 7 or 8 yards. At 1.30 am the critical stage was reached and the Suvla line was withdrawn in entirety, the Anzac line making the gradual withdrawal towards the inner defence line. Shortly after 3.30 am the entire area of Anzac was deserted.<sup>91</sup> Describing the last minutes of the withdrawal one witness wrote:

The rear party commander, the NTO [Naval Transport Officer] & the landing staff stand on the pier waiting for the end of the little trickle of men to stop. It has been a continuous stream for the last 20 minutes, but now it is dying down, the gaps between the little groups and then between the single men grow wider and then the trickle stops.

The enemy machine guns are going hard on Russell's Top now. They did not know what to make of the mine [large mines at Russell's Top and the Nek were exploded at 3.30 am], but the bullets go into our parapets in front on the empty trenches or over our heads into the sea. The [men on the] last lighter ... lie down on the deck & no harm is done. The two hospitals that were warned to stay behind in the event of casualties have both gone – the first about 1 am – the second one goes now. We get into the picket boat. The NTO goes round his lighters whipping them in to their transports

<sup>89</sup> 'Amendment to Army Corps order No. 21', 15 December 1915, White Papers, AWM 3DRL6288, item 1.

<sup>90</sup> 'Notes by Brudenell White on the withdrawal from ANZAC', n.d., original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

<sup>91</sup> For a detailed account of the activities on the final night see, 'ANZAC 4pm 19<sup>th</sup> – 4am 20<sup>th</sup> December 1915', 20 December 1915, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL6588, item 6.

and then we stand in once more to the pier and hail it with a megaphone. But there is no answer, Anzac is deserted now.

The only Australians left there are in the little graveyards in the gullies & on the beach.<sup>92</sup>

In his study of General Birdwood, historian John Millar argues that Bean ‘magnified the role of White in the official history, and consequently he believed that ‘more credit has been given to White than is his due for the part he played in this operation’.<sup>93</sup> As noted in chapter 6, Millar argued that White was merely doing a job that could be accomplished by any competent staff officer.<sup>94</sup>

Millar does not give an account of the evacuation and does not provide any evidence to demonstrate that other ‘competent’ commanders or staff officers could have achieved the same results. Indeed the evidence of the campaign points to critical command leadership failure and generally poor staff work. The campaign, as a whole, was a byword for ineptitude and proved to be a killing ground for generals. Hunter-Weston, Stopford, Braithwaite and Hamilton all metaphorically died at Gallipoli. Could any of these generals have achieved similar results? The evidence would tend to suggest not.

Godley certainly entertained no doubts about White’s role in the evacuation. Godley informed Birdwood that;

The thoroughness and excellence of the Staff work, which resulted in the success of the operation, were mainly due to the conspicuous ability and hard work of this Officer. He never spared himself in perfecting all the arrangements and I look upon him as a General Staff Officer of exceptional merit.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Letter PRB to White, 20 December 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne. It is not known who PRB was only that he was a Military Liaison Officer on the final nights.

<sup>93</sup> Millar, ‘A study in the limitations of command’, p. 113.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Godley to Birdwood, 23 December 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, HQ ANZAC, AWM 4/1/25/9, Part 12.

Although many military historians have generally ignored White's role in the evacuation, the achievement of the evacuation has generally been acknowledged as one without precedent. In a special order of the day Major General Lynden Bell, Chief of Staff of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force stated:

The Commander-in-Chief desires to express to all ranks in the Dardanelles Army his unreserved appreciation of the way in which the recent operations, ending in the evacuation of the 'Anzac' and 'Suvla' positions, have been carried to an issue successful beyond his hopes. The arrangements made for withdrawal, and for keeping the enemy in ignorance of the operation which was taking place, could not have been improved ... [they] proved themselves more than equal to the most difficult task which could have been thrown upon them ... and carried out without a hitch the most trying operation which soldiers can be called upon to undertake – a withdrawal in the face of the enemy ... It is no exaggeration to call this achievement one without parallel. To disengage and withdraw from a bold and active enemy is the most difficult of all military operations; and in this case the withdrawal was effected by surprise, with the opposing forces at close grips – in many cases within a few yards of each other. Such an operation, when succeeded by a re-embarkation from an open beach, is one for which military history contains no precedent.<sup>96</sup>

The German Military Correspondent of the *Vossische Zeitung* wrote; 'So long as wars last the Evacuation of Suvla and Anzac will stand before the eyes of all strategists as a hitherto unattained masterpiece'.<sup>97</sup> Monash suggested the evacuation was 'A brilliant conception, brilliantly organised and brilliantly executed'.<sup>98</sup> Although Birdwood may have approved the plan, it was White who did the planning and then executed it.

White generally hated to brag but on Christmas Day 1915 he wrote to his wife and voiced, with some justification, his pride in his role in the evacuation of the Anzac position. White also indicated the anxiety he suffered during the days of the evacuation.

#### My Own Beloved

I have neglected you somewhat just recently but perhaps you will forgive me when I say I have been living through another ordeal ... the responsibility for the arrangements for removing to the sea an Army Corps already in close grips with an alert and intelligent enemy ... However it was done, and done so successfully that it did not cost us one life, which I think is a feat for which history has no parallel ... God forbid that I should be boastful, and especially to you ... whose dislike of brag would cure most husbands ... but I can honestly say that it was on my plan ... that the operation was

<sup>96</sup> 'Special Order of the Day', 21 December 1915, Appendix, General Staff War Diary, GHQ MEF, AWM 4/1/4/8, Part 2.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in *The Argus* (Melbourne), 9 April 1932.

<sup>98</sup> Cutlack, (ed.), *War Letters of General Monash*, p. 102.

carried out ... and this too in spite of considerable opposition. Naturally it was my job to make the detailed arrangements ... but I feel a certain pride in having evolved the plan. More than one General will probably get KCBs etc for the great feat.

I have suffered ... the most appalling anxiety ... for days I could feel nothing but the thump of my heart against my ribs ... nor did I think my peace of mind would ever return ... Godley appeared to take it calmly, whether because he is brave and stouthearted or did not realise the possibilities, one cannot tell ...<sup>99</sup>

White's influence and success were due in many respects to his high level of professional knowledge and ability to identify problems and clearly articulate solutions. But it was also due to a number of other factors. The changes in command structure had clearly worked in White's favour placing him under commanders who had confidence in and appreciated White's talents. Consequently, White was allowed considerably more freedom to make decisions than was normally the case. His successes in organising the AIF and at Gallipoli made him an indispensable member of Birdwood's staff and Birdwood would, as the war progressed, come to depend on White more and more.

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<sup>99</sup> White to Wife, 25 December 1915, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne.

## Chapter 10

### National Interests and Imperial Priorities

The transforming [or cultural] leader is concerned with minutiae ... but he is concerned with a different minutiae; he is concerned with the tricks of the pedagogue, the mentor, the linguist – the more successfully to become the value shaper, the exemplar, the maker of meanings. His job is much tougher than that of the transactional leader, for he is the true artist, the true pathfinder. After all, he is both calling forth and exemplifying the urge for transcendence that unites us all. At the same time, he exhibits almost boorish consistency over long periods of time in support of his one or two transcending values. No opportunity is too small, no forum too insignificant, no audience too junior.

Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps even more than the original organisation of the force, its reorganisation and duplication in Egypt was White's outstanding achievement in military administration ... [i]t is true that the dividing of the battalions into two and then building up each of the halves into a whole battalion was Birdwood's idea ... [b]ut every leader in the force knew that the main task of invention, of performance, and even, to a large extent, of decision, was White's.

CEW Bean<sup>2</sup>

[White] is far and away the ablest soldier Australia has ever turned out.

Brigadier General John Monash<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that in spite of the general failure of the Gallipoli campaign it was a personal success for many of the Australian commanders. Commenting on Birdwood, Winston Churchill informed his brother John, then still serving with Birdwood, that 'I am so glad you have attached yourself to Birdwood ... He is regarded as the best General we

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<sup>1</sup> Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Letter Monash to his Wife, 26 April 1916, quoted in Cutlack, F.M., (ed.), *War Letters of General Monash*, p. 112.



have'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, White's reputation also improved significantly as a result of his experiences at Gallipoli. Returning to Cairo White wrote to his wife:

We arrived here in the battleship *Glory* ... Howse is here too, I met him last night talking to an Engineer General who wanted to know who was 'The very young General, Quite the youngest General I have seen' he said ... Howse replied, 'Yes and he has more brains than all the old ones put together'!!

... Funny thing success, everyone was quite ready to bow down to me when I arrived in Cairo ... and senior Generals prepared to listen to me quite respectfully ...<sup>5</sup>

Although White had just cause to be proud he was allowed little time to reflect on, or celebrate, his new found kudos. Upon returning to Cairo White was confronted by the immediate problem of absorbing the 40,000 unattached Australian and New Zealand reinforcements then in various camps around Cairo and its environs. The AIF at this time consisted of the original 1st Australian Division, the recently formed 2nd Australian Division and elements of the New Zealand and Australian Division. Even after bringing these formations up to strength there would still be approximately 35,000 troops who could not be allotted to units. This did not count the 12,000 reinforcements per month promised by the Australian Government.<sup>6</sup> This clearly necessitated a major reorganisation of the AIF, and this would in turn require a rethink about the administrative mechanisms and subsequently, the question of command.

### A 'New Model' AIF

Godley, then commanding the ANZACs during Birdwood's temporary absence with the Dardanelles Army (which was created after Hamilton's recall to England), suggested the surplus troops be formed into two new Australian divisions. These new divisions would form the basis of a new 'Australian Army Corps', while the veteran divisions would remain

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<sup>4</sup> Winston Churchill to John Churchill, 14 January 1916, quoted in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3, p. 1373.

<sup>5</sup> Letter White to Wife, 9 January 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>6</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 32.

in 'ANZAC Corps'.<sup>7</sup> According to Bean, Godley had a vested interest in that he not only hoped to establish a New Zealand Division as a separate entity rather than a composite force of Australians and New Zealanders, but Godley also hoped to gain command of the ANZAC Corps with Birdwood commanding the newer Australian Army Corps.<sup>8</sup>

General Sir Archibald Murray, recently appointed Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, supported the scheme and during an inspection visit of Australian Forces at Tel el Kebir discussed it with Godley and White. On 19 January 1916 Birdwood returned to Cairo after disbanding the Dardanelles Army. Murray discussed the scheme with Birdwood, who was more interested in the possibility of forming an Australian and New Zealand Army consisting of an Australian Corps and the original ANZAC Corp.<sup>9</sup> Murray supported this proposal and cabled his recommendation to the War Office on 21 January.<sup>10</sup>

Birdwood's plan was simple. He proposed to establish a New Zealand Division using existing New Zealand units and the unattached New Zealand reinforcements. This would release the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, as well as the Light Horse units that were in the process of being formed into the ANZAC Mounted Division.<sup>11</sup> The Australian forces would create two new divisions. To achieve this aim Birdwood proposed that the existing 16 battalions of infantry be divided in half to create the 16 new battalions. All these battalions would then be brought up to full strength using the reinforcements that were available. The 2nd Australian Division had only recently been established and consequently was only partially trained. For this reason Birdwood planned to leave the 2nd Australian Division unchanged and create his new battalions from the 1st Australian Division and the now unattached 4th Australian Infantry Brigade.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* The term ANZAC Corps is a misnomer. The acronym ANZAC actual stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Adding the additional Corps to the title would be confusing except for the fact that ANZAC had become synonymous with Australian troops.

<sup>8</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Diary Entry, 20 January 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 29.

<sup>10</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Birdwood's plan was rather ambitious. White, along with the other Australian Divisional and Brigade Commanders objected. They believed that such a significant change to the current structures of the battalions would adversely affect the pride of the veteran battalions and diminish the regimental *esprit de corps* that had been established. White argued that it would be preferable to transfer selected officers and non-commissioned officers the new units. Birdwood, however, dismissed these objections and held to his original decision.<sup>13</sup>

The objections advanced by White and the Australian Commanders are not surprising. The personal identity of organisational members is linked to the symbols and traditions of the organisation's cultural identity. The regimental system in which White was inculcated during his Staff College training was based on cultural identity within the framework of individual regiments and the Australian battalions were similarly establishing a coherent culturally based regimental (or battalion) identity that was embraced by organisational members. Moreover, the organisation's power distribution is constituted in, and through, an organisation's culture. The longer a management team had been in place, the greater the homogeneity of beliefs and values, and concomitantly, the greater the resistance to any disruptions to that homogeneity and balance.<sup>14</sup>

The task of reorganising the AIF and doubling its formations and strength was to be undertaken throughout February and was to be completed by the end of March when the Australian forces were due to be transferred to France. This was a significant undertaking and was not only unprecedented in Australian history but was one of the greatest events in the history of the AIF. It may have been Birdwood's plan but he was astute enough to borrow White from the ANZAC staff to assist him with the reorganisation of the AIF. In reality the entire task of reorganisation fell upon White's shoulders. In order to complete this mammoth task White gained the assistance of Major Thomas Griffiths.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Tushman and Romanelli, 'Organisational evolution', pp. 171-22. This article provides a theoretical basis for understanding change in organisations, including (a) issues about core belief and value systems and (b) propositions about the necessity for discontinuity in real change.

<sup>15</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 38.

In January White wrote to his wife and foreshadowed the coming reorganisation. His letter also indicates his social position within the AIF command:

General Birdwood has returned and we are now awaiting some further reorganisations. This old Army spends all of its time re-organising its higher commands, apparently only in order to place its officers of high rank! Have you read Sir Ian's despatch about Suvla Bay? Parts of it are rather fine but it displays a lamentable ineptitude somewhere. He omits, however, any criticism of the whole plan and the preparations for it, wherein to my mind lay the root and seeds of failure.

... I had a longish talk with Legge – who has much more to say now that we are free from the perils of ANZAC. He is quite affable to me however and would eat out of my hand and is always ready to ask my advice. I wish I was not getting so irritable! I find myself always ready to eat the head off anyone whose perception is a little slow – not excluding Generals!! Is it a penalty of old age or merely that I am getting tired of nothing but work?<sup>16</sup>

White's letter displays a certain confidence not only in his abilities but also in his social position within the AIF. Although his comments about Hamilton's report could be misconstrued as disloyalty he astutely points to the crux of the entire Gallipoli campaign. White's skills as a General Staff officer had grown significantly and White felt comfortable in his abilities to the extent that he confidently questioned the opinions of more senior and experienced officers. This would not be the last time that White would challenge the opinions of senior British officers.

Some weeks later Murray had cause to question the lack of discipline displayed by the Australian troops in Egypt. He drafted a letter to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Robertson, detailing the shortcomings of the Australians. Possibly as a courtesy he sent a copy to Birdwood. Upon being shown the letter White took Murray to task and suggested the Australian Government be informed. White argued that if this letter truly reflected Murray's opinion of the value of Australian troops then the Commonwealth Government should be given the opportunity to re-evaluate whether such suspect troops should be sent to France.<sup>17</sup> This certainly indicates a growing confidence on the part of White. It also shows that he was not past pressing Australian interests even when they conflicted with the interests of the Imperial authorities.

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<sup>16</sup> Letter White to Wife, January 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>17</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, pp. 57-8.

White's comments are also illustrative of the power dynamic that was developing within the higher ranks of the AIF. White's comments tend to be somewhat condescending, especially in his attitude towards Legge. It is obvious that White, now a Brigadier General, was regarded within the higher commands of the AIF to be the driving force behind the AIF. Even Birdwood implicitly acknowledged this by keeping White on his staff and deferring most organisational tasks to White.

White set about the task of reorganising the AIF with his usual efficiency. On 12 February he issued the first of fifty-one 'Circular Memoranda' laying down the method and principles of the reorganisation:

Out of the sixteen veteran battalions in the A & NZ Army Corps (1st to 16th) it is intended to form 16 new battalions.

This will be done by dividing the veteran battalions into two wings as shown below [see Table 1.] - a headquarters wing and a second wing. Both wings will then be filled up by reinforcements ...

- (1) Headquarters will not actually be divided, but the following details will be transferred to the second wing -

Pioneers	5
Signallers	12

- (2) Machine-gun section will not be divided; it will remain with Headquarters wing.

- (3) Companies will be fairly divided into two parts ...<sup>18</sup>

The second memoranda ordered the formation of the new Australian infantry brigades and the fifth memoranda created two ANZAC Corps instead of one. The remaining memoranda issued between 14 February and the end of March detailed the creation of new artillery units, and support units such as field ambulances, engineers, signallers, and other lines-of-communication sections.<sup>19</sup> The last memoranda dealt with the creation of the ANZAC Mounted Division and the depot units that would henceforward be responsible for training AIF reinforcements.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Circular Memoranda, No. 1, 12 February 1916, NAA, Series B539, File No. AIF264/1/176.

<sup>19</sup> Circular Memoranda, Nos. 1-51, February and March 1916, NAA, Series B539, File No. AIF264/1/176.

<sup>20</sup> Circular Memoranda, Nos. 48-51, March 1916, NAA, Series B539, File No. AIF264/1/176.

**Figure 3: AIF Reorganisation, 1916**

Old Divisions	Old Units	New Units	New Divisions
1st Div	1st Bde 1 Bn 2 Bn 3 Bn 4 Bn	14th Bde 53 Bn 54 Bn 55 Bn 56 Bn	5th Div (includes unattached 8th Bde)
	2nd Bde 5 Bn 6 Bn 7 Bn 8 Bn	15th Bde 57 Bn 58 Bn 59 Bn 60 Bn	
		3 Bde 9 Bn 10 Bn 11 Bn 12 Bn	13th Bde 49 Bn 50 Bn 51 Bn 52 Bn
Formerly NZ & A Div Now part of 4th Div	4th Bde 13 Bn 14 Bn 15 Bn 16 Bn	12th Bde 45 Bn 46 Bn 47 Bn 48 Bn	
2nd Div (unchanged)	5th Bde (17-20 Bn) 6th Bde (21-24 Bn) 7th Bde (25-28 Bn)		
Unattached Now part of 5th Div	8th Bde (29-32 Bn)		
	9th Bde (33-36 Bn) 10th Bde (37-40 Bn) 11th Bde (41-44 Bn)		3rd Div (to be formed in Australia)

Source: Adapted from Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 42.

The battalions of the 1st Infantry Brigade, camped at Tel el Kebir, were the first to be divided. On 14 February the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions created the second wing formation that provided the nucleus for the 53rd, 54th, 55th, and 56th Battalions. Within forty-eight hours trainloads of reinforcements were brought in from Cairo and used to bring these embryonic battalions up to full strength. Once this was achieved the now full strength

mother and daughter battalions began training.<sup>21</sup> At this time the General Headquarters in Cairo expressed concern that the process being used by the Australians was disrupting the normal daily railway movements necessary to maintain the British Forces in Egypt. Consequently, from the 21 February the battalions were divided two at a time. Once the original battalions had been separated, reinforcements arrived to fill the ranks of the 'old' battalion and the 'second' wing was transported back to Cairo on the now empty trains.<sup>22</sup> The last two battalions were divided on 7 March 1916.

With the reorganisation progressing according to plan White then proceeded to create a symbolic organisation, in which individual attitudes toward the organisation were shaped into a collective representation of the organisation's unity. The symbolic organisation was at first tentative. In late 1914 an AIF Order provided small flags, nine inches square, to be used to mark headquarters and unit lines. These different coloured flags, with some minor changes, were to become the basis of the 1st Division's colour patches.<sup>23</sup> A 1st Division Order issued in Egypt on 8 March 1915 stated:

In order to better distinguish the several units of the Division, coloured patches of cloth will be worn on the sleeve one inch below the shoulder seam. Except in cases of Headquarters of Brigades and the Divisional Artillery, the Engineers and Army Medical Corps, badges will consist of two colours, the lower indicating the formation, the upper the unit etc. Light Horse (4th Light Horse) and Artillery will be divided diagonally, the others horizontally.<sup>24</sup>

Later the same year a Divisional Standing Order amended the patch detail for the gunners to one patch for all Divisional artillery. Each brigade within the Division was allocated an identifying colour patch, and this system was then extended to other organisations within the Division.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> "Organisation of Fourth and Fifth Divisions", NAA, Series B539, file no. AIF264/1/176. 'Australian Imperial Force, Units and Formations of the AIF Serving Abroad', NAA, Series MP367/1, item 469/2/418.

<sup>23</sup> 'Paper on the AIF Colour Patches', AWM27, item 610/2.

<sup>24</sup> Entry, , 8 March 1915, AIF Administration Staff War Diary, AWM 4/1/28/1.

<sup>25</sup> 'Paper on the AIF Colour Patches', AWM27, item 610/2.

These small patches of cloth, Australia's nearest equivalent to heraldic devices, quickly became symbols of honour and esteem. They embodied a pride in, and a loyalty to, a battalion that became as deep and sincere as in any of the traditional regiments of the 'motherland' with their long established regimental system and cap badge loyalties.<sup>26</sup> However, this was yet to come. The veterans of the original battalions had come to identify with their units, traditions and symbols, regarding them as families. The reorganisation of the battalions and the redistribution of men throughout the new battalions disrupted the patterns of social relations that had been formed. For many this was a bitter experience as they watched comrades leave. Witnessing his comrades leaving the battalion a 12th Battalion officer commented, 'I felt as though I were having a limb amputated without anaesthetic'.<sup>27</sup>

White was aware that the division of battalions had created a sense of shock and dislocation in the ranks of organisational members. To ameliorate the bitterness that was felt orders were issued allowing the new battalions to wear the colour patches of their parent, or mother, battalions. The difference between the two battalions was that whereas the 'old' battalion's colours were divided horizontally, the 'new' battalion's colours were to be divided vertically.<sup>28</sup> Overall about 300 colour patches were authorised for the AIF in World War I.

The symbolic reorganisation of the AIF did not stop at colour patches and by the end of the war a wide range of symbols had been approved. Most significant were those which valued the efforts of the original Anzacs and represented them as organisational heroes and role models. In November 1917 AIF orders authorized the wearing of a small badge in the form of the letter 'A' on unit colour patches to denote that the wearer had taken part in the 1915 Gallipoli campaign. It was later prescribed that the badge would be a brass letter 3/4-inch high. A further order, in January 1918, extended the eligibility to service 'on the islands of

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<sup>26</sup> For a more in depth discussion on the regimental system see Keagan, J., 'Regimental Ideology'.

<sup>27</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, pp. 48-9.

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum, 18 February 1916, AIF Administration Staff War Diary, AWM 4/1/28/1.



Lemnos, Imbros, and Tenedos, on the transports or hospital ships at or off Gallipoli or these islands or in the AIF line of communications units from Egypt'.<sup>29</sup>

Lieutenant H.R Williams of the 56th Battalion responded to the sight of Anzac badges following one of the battles in the 1918 August advance:

I looked at some of the Australian dead. Each of one group of three wore the brass A on their red-and-black colour patches which denoted that the wearers had served at Anzac on Gallipoli. We covered with their waterproof sheets these three men of the peerless 1st Australian Division, and went on our way with bitter hearts.<sup>30</sup>

These symbols become a fixed and enduring reminder of the organisation's unity, a totem that signifies the sense of community within the group. The sociologist Emile Durkheim, who is credited with the first theory of totemism, provides some idea of the importance in maintaining a coherent attachment to the group's symbols: 'It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison'.<sup>31</sup> Focusing the attention of the group on a single object tends to restrict the natural propensity to reflect on negative aspects of organisational life and keeps the attention of organisational members focused on the positive. In time, more loyalty may be expressed toward the symbols than to the organisation itself, allowing organisational members to espouse the virtues of the organisation despite recognised organisational flaws. Commenting on how belief in totems helps to clarify values, Durkheim remarked, '[f]or we are unable to consider an abstract entity, which we can represent only labouriously and confusedly, the source of the strong sentiments which we feel. We cannot explain them to ourselves except by connecting them to some concrete object of whose reality we are vividly aware'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Australian Infantry Forces Orders*, No 937, 6 Nov 1917; No 994, 30 Nov 1917; No 1012, 11 Dec 1917; and No 1084. 25 Jan 1918.

<sup>30</sup> Williams, *The Gallant Company*, p.237.

<sup>31</sup> Durkheim, *the Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 230.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 220.

Through preoccupation with these symbols, an intimate bond, or 'ritual relation', is formed between organisational members and symbol. 'Ritual' in this context refers to an intense, continuous, and reverential response to an object of identification. The emblem's symbolic power lies in its ability to endure beyond the period in which it was introduced. The symbolic power of the First AIF continues to shape the ritual relations of Australian military culture even today. The wearing of the colour patches was reintroduced in 1987 primarily on the basis of fostering the Army's heritage, through unit lineage and similarity of roles to units of 1915–49 which had approved colour patches.<sup>33</sup>

White finished the task of restructuring the AIF in mid-March 1916 in time for the transfer of I ANZAC to France. Bean later suggested that as an organiser and a master of tactics White had outshone Birdwood, and that he had accomplished two most brilliant and successful operations: the tactical evacuation of Gallipoli and the administrative reorganisation and doubling in size of the Australian Forces. 'No Army officer', Bean wrote, 'had ever before attempted anything of this magnitude'.<sup>34</sup> Commenting on this latter task White wrote:

I have just got to the end of the most trying job – the organisation of two new Divisions from our surplus reinforcements. It has meant a tremendous amount of labour ... I am feeling rather that there is precious little more left of me. However, the job is nearly done and if I can get a day or two's rest I daresay I will be fit for the pay elsewhere, for which we are shortly bound.<sup>35</sup>

White did not get his rest days and now turned his attention to creating the administrative apparatus that would keep the now burgeoning organisation of the AIF in the field.

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<sup>33</sup> Department of Defence, *Army Standing Orders for Dress*, Volume 2, Part 6, Chapter 1.

<sup>34</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 126.

<sup>35</sup> Letter White to Wife, 17 March 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

### **The Path to Administrative Self-Government**

In chapter seven it was pointed out that it had originally been intended to establish the AIF Headquarters in London and this plan had been postponed due to the redirection of the Australian force to Egypt. Once in Cairo it was found necessary to establish an 'Intermediate Base' on White's suggestion, the control of which was entrusted to Colonel Victor Sellheim. From the very beginning Sellheim's authority had been prescribed, not only by Bridges' indifference, but also by the vested interests of the British Commander-in-Chief in Cairo, General Maxwell. Maxwell, in consultation with Kitchener, had appointed a British officer, Major-General Spens, to superintend to the training and discipline of the Australian forces in Egypt.<sup>36</sup>

In November Pearce referred the complaints he had been receiving from Keith Murdoch and others to Sellheim at the Intermediate Base in Cairo.<sup>37</sup> Murdoch's letter gave no indication of the mammoth task for which Sellheim had been given responsibility. Sellheim pointed out that he had no control over the training and discipline of Australian reinforcements arriving in Egypt. This area was under the control of the GOC Australian and New Zealand Training Depots, Major-General Spens. Spens was a British officer and had been appointed to Maxwell's staff by Kitchener, with the approval of Bridges, on the assumption that colonial instructors would not be as highly qualified as imperial instructors.<sup>38</sup>

This response upset Pearce because it implied that the Australian Government did not have administrative control of its own troops, a point that the Government had always been keen to emphasise. Pearce asked Colonel Thomas Dodds, then acting Adjutant-General and one

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<sup>36</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 2, p. 410.

<sup>37</sup> Keith Murdoch was an Australian journalist. He had been on Gallipoli and then went to London in September 1915. He gained the ear of Asquith and delivered a damning report on Hamilton and the GHQ. For amore detailed account of these events see James, *Gallipoli*, pp. 313-4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

of the most vociferous supporters of the 'Australianisation' of the AIF's command structure, to investigate the administrative structure of the Intermediate Base.<sup>39</sup>

Dodds confirmed that Sellheim's powers had been circumscribed by Bridges and suggested that it would be necessary to increase these powers to provide for any 'definite' control of the Australian forces in Egypt. Dodds recommended that Sellheim's position be augmented by the provision of a stronger staff. Unfortunately for Sellheim, Pearce believed that a more assertive commander was necessary, and without any consultation with the senior AIF commanders decided to appoint Brigadier-General G. G. H. Irving, formerly Chief of the General Staff in Melbourne, as GOC Australian Troops in Egypt. In fairness to Pearce he was in all probability guided by Keith Murdoch's constant protestations that Sellheim was making a muddle of his job and was a national embarrassment.<sup>40</sup> Sellheim was to be transferred to Irving's staff as Deputy Adjutant General, and Sydney businessman Robert McCheyne Anderson was appointed as Deputy Quarter Master General with the rank of Colonel. On 15 November the Australian Government informed the War Office that the Australian Government was appointing Irving to command Australian troops in Egypt. Irving was to be placed under Maxwell's command but would be responsible to the Australian Government for the 'co-ordination of training, administration, and organisation'.<sup>41</sup>

Godley appears to be the only ANZAC commander that viewed the arrangement favourably, and this was possibly because it suited his own personal agenda to separate the control of the new Corps. He wrote to Pearce and suggested that Irving's appointment would allow the establishment of a new 'Headquarters of the Australian Imperial Force in Egypt'.<sup>42</sup> He further informed Pearce that Irving would be 'the unquestioned and absolute head of everybody and everything Australian not actually serving with the Army Corps' and that his position would be 'one of unquestioned authority and responsibility'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Verney, 'The Army High Command', p. 237; Hill, 'Dodds, Thomas Henry', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 8, p. 315.

<sup>40</sup> Murdoch to Pearce, 13 September 1915, Pearce Papers, AWM 2DRL970, bundle 7, item 48.

<sup>41</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, pp. 146-7.

<sup>42</sup> Letter Godley to Pearce, 10 January 1916, Godley Papers, AWM 3DRL 2233.

<sup>43</sup> Letter Godley to Pearce, 10 January 1916, Godley Papers, AWM 3DRL 2233.

According to Godley, Irving would be the representative of the government, of the corps commander and the Australian High Commissioner in London.

The reality was very different and Irving's assignment was overtaken by events. Prior to Irving's arrival in Cairo the evacuation of Gallipoli resulted in the ANZAC forces being returned to Egypt. This created an embarrassing and potentially confusing situation because the AIF's return effectively placed them under Irving's command, and thus provided the AIF with two commanders. The Government, and especially Pearce, was forced to admit their blunder and amend Irving's appointment to 'GOC Australian Details and Reinforcements in Egypt'.<sup>44</sup>

As with Legge, the Australian Government had promoted a junior officer over the heads of senior commanders and placed that officer in an awkward position with very little direction in regards to an actual job description and relationship to the normal chain of command. Irving was technically junior to Sellheim, and it quickly became apparent that the government's decision had been made with very little appreciation of the task that Sellheim had been given. Although Godley had approved of the Government's actions most Australian commanders, including Irving and Anderson, thought Sellheim had been unfairly treated.<sup>45</sup>

The reorganisation of the Australian division added to the Government's embarrassment. Irving was in command of the Details and Reinforcements that were constantly being drafted to form the new battalions, brigades and divisions. His new command was rapidly dwindling to the point where his command was a paper appointment only. Consequently it was decided to offer Irving the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade, and this was subsequently changed to the 14th Australian Infantry Brigade when Brigadier General (Later Major General) Harold (Pompey) Elliot was given command of the 15th Infantry Brigade.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Letter Pearce to Birdwood, 15 January 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 68, vol. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> White (and Birdwood) had originally offered Elliott the 14th Brigade but he suggested the 15th because it was an all Victorian Brigade. This had been agreed and Irving transferred to the 14th and the 15th was handed to Elliott. Letter Elliott to Wife, 8 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

Although there is no documentation available it is likely that the original recommendation for Irving's appointment to Brigade came from White. Birdwood had not been back from the Dardanelles Army long enough to have much contact with Irving and hence form an opinion as to his abilities. He would in this case have relied on White's advice. It is clear, however, that returning to the status quo reinstated the organisational culture that White had originally created when he established the AIF and the Intermediate Base.

Sellheim was subsequently promoted to Brigadier General on 1 February 1916 and then resumed command of the Intermediate Base. By this time the command was a formidable one, involving the control of some 40,000 troops, mostly reinforcements in training. This base was now reconstituted as 'AIF Headquarters, Cairo' and Sellheim, as Commandant, was recognised as the representative of the GOC AIF and the Australian Department of Defence.<sup>47</sup>

Bean suggests that had the Gallipoli campaign continued the Government would have effectively separated the administrative and operational commands of the AIF. Irving would have had administrative command and Birdwood the operational command.<sup>48</sup> If this was the Government's intention it begs the question as to why the policy was not continued, especially given the subsequent separation of operational command between Birdwood, Godley and Chauvel. It is unlikely that Pearce envisaged such a proposal and was acting independently to preserve a measure of Australian control. Certainly this is to some extent supported by the Government's later appointment of Birdwood as GOC AIF.

Pearce also questioned the selection of officers to the command of the new brigades and divisions, and further pursued the issue of Australian control. The expansion of the AIF opened up new opportunities for command at all levels. Birdwood, and White, gave the battalion and brigade commands to officers already serving within the AIF. While most of these appointments went to Australian officers, two of the new brigadiers (Glasfurd and

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<sup>47</sup> General Routine Order, No. 62, 11 January 1916, AWM 26, item 13/80; Memorandum No. 7, 8 March 1916, AWM 26, item 13/80.

<sup>48</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 146.

Gellibrand) were British officers whom White had met at Camberley, and were appointed on White's recommendation.<sup>49</sup>

For the most part these appointments went without comment or problems. Elliott, however proved to be a more difficult problem and this sowed the seeds of a controversy that would continue until Elliott's death on 23 March 1931. Soon after taking command of the 15th Brigade Elliott attempted to emulate the territorial affiliations with the Victorian districts that had been so successful in his 7th Battalion, as discussed in chapter 6. To achieve this Elliott attempted to replace some of the battalion commanders that had been assigned to his brigade. Elliott wrote in his diary that he could do without several officers he had been given: 'If only General White will support me ... I will feel happier with men I can fully trust and rely upon to keep keen discipline'.<sup>50</sup> In an effort to achieve his objectives he made applications to both White and the Second Division commander, General Legge. In a letter to White Elliott stated he was happy to keep Cam Stewart with the 57th Battalion but attempted to replace Davies (58th Battalion), Harris (59th Battalion) and Field (60th Battalion) with Smith, Layh, and Duigan.<sup>51</sup> These officers had served with Elliott in the militia and all were familiar with his methods and temperamental quirks.

White's approval and support was not forthcoming. The reorganisation of the AIF had been a complex process and was further complicated by the War Office's urgent request to send Australian Divisions to the Western Front as soon as possible. The decision had been made to send the 1st and 2nd AIF Divisions first with the 5th Division, to which Elliott's 15th Brigade belonged, with the later transfers. Consequently, White wanted to ensure these Divisions were in order and gave a lower priority to the demands of the 5th Division. Writing to Elliott White began diplomatically: 'I would not for anything damp your enthusiasm, and ... I have the greatest sympathy for your territorial scheme.'<sup>52</sup> White then continued to outline his position:

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<sup>49</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 1, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Diary Entry, 9 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>51</sup> Letter Elliot to White, 12 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>52</sup> Letter White to Elliott, 12 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

... but instead of going at it 'neck and crop', would it not have been wiser to work towards the territorial idea than to have attempted to get it in one jump? It seems to me that the result of your effort has been to disunite you from three of your battalion commanders, and this is not a happy start. One has always to bear in mind too that these fellows' reputations are in your hands and are of course just as precious to them as your own is to you. I am going into the whole thing to see what can be done and the General [Birdwood] wishes to help you, but your precipitancy has not made it easy for us. I am sorry that it is not possible to give you *carte blanche* in the way you suggest ... to get men from other infantry battalions; as you know the 1st and 2nd Divisions are about to move, and their efficiency for the time being takes priority over yours ... you say that you will not countenance any blocking of transfers where it is clearly to the advancement of the applicant to obtain the appointment in question. May I suggest to you that the advancement of the applicant is a minor thing to the efficiency of the whole? All this sounds a little more of a rebuke than I actually intend, but I hope shortly to get a chance of talking it over with you as a friend. Do not rush into it too hard; such a reorganisation as we are attempting is unnatural enough, and nature dislikes sudden eruptions.<sup>53</sup>

Elliott received a similar response from Legge. 'I sympathise very much with your desires, but am sorry to say they are not practicable under present circumstances', wrote Legge. Legge pointed out he had, 'already let a number of officers go', and 'making further changes' when they were about to depart for France was 'out of the question'.<sup>54</sup>

Elliott regarded these responses as a reflection on his judgement and without waiting to think about his options wrote an angry reply. He not only denigrated the officers in question but went on to inform White:

With regard to the question of transfers of officers injuring the efficiency of the whole, I contend that it will have the very opposite effect. Of what interest is it to a man to be earnest, zealous and untiring in his work if it will merely result in his battalion commander refusing to part with him. No doubt ... you yourself would be a brilliant adjutant and the salvation of a man like Field. The Division is the worse off because of your promotion, but is the efficiency of the whole not served by advancing you to your present position? Is this same argument not to be applicable to everyone then, or is it only to apply to the Staff? I tell you your argument is totally wrong if it involves this. Everyone who is worthy of it should be pushed on irrespective of the inconvenience it may cause the man who loses by the advancement.<sup>55</sup>

The more Elliott wrote the more excessive Elliott became:

The territorial idea was adopted not as an end in itself, but as a means of inspiring enthusiasm in men who feel just a little sore in being cast out of the fold of the old battalions. If I seemed to you to have

<sup>53</sup> Letter White to Elliott, 12 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>54</sup> Letter Legge to Elliot, 12 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>55</sup> Letter Elliot to White, 14 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.



pushed the idea hastily you were wrong; nothing, as you will now perhaps admit, has been recommended without the gravest consideration. The reputation of the men upon whom I have reported adversely may be sacred – to me, the lives of the men who may depend on them [are] more sacred still, and in two cases, viz Field and Harris, I fear greatly for those entrusted to them. But ... this matter lies with you for decision, and on your head be the blame if you find for any reason that you cannot follow my recommendations ... As I asked before, do you desire an efficient brigade or will any old thing do? ... I conscientiously believe my judgement of these men is just, and my recommendations are made in the sole interest of the efficiency of the force. Upon investigation you may conclude that my judgement is wrong ... then do your plain duty and relegate me to the 7th battalion, to the Base, or to Australia as your conscientious judgement may determine is the right place for me. Reputation or no reputation, I ask no one to bear what I will not readily stand myself.<sup>56</sup>

This letter almost proved to be the death knell of Elliott's career. Birdwood was extremely angry over the contents of this letter and was inclined to accept Elliott's invitation to return him to Australia. It was only after White intervened that Birdwood softened his stance. White knew Elliott much better than Birdwood did and his growing reliance on White was becoming more evident. White's intervention is interesting because it contrasts with his attitude to Legge and Irving. These officers had been appointed by the Department of Defence, which was an external agency and thus in some respects represented a threat to the existing organisational culture. Elliot was one of the original officers and was espousing the community/territorial concept that White had established as a fundamental aspect of the original recruiting criteria.

Ross McMullin, author of a biography on Elliott, pointed out that although Birdwood was a general of eminence and reputation he was in fact rather ordinary in regards to the everyday administration, organisation and tactics of war. In McMullin's opinion Birdwood relied for much of his success on the much less ambitious and self-effacing White, who bore the weight of the real work in managing the AIF.<sup>57</sup> McMullin goes on to state that Elliott retained considerable respect for White even though he vigorously disagreed with him on some issues. But Elliott thought Birdwood was an essentially shallow individual. He wrote to his wife that it was preposterous to suggest that 'I should hesitate to differ from him and tell him so. He ... has not handled Australians as long as I have, and has not studied them

<sup>56</sup> Letter Elliot to White, 14 March 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>57</sup> McMullin, *Pompey Elliott*, p. 186.

as I have done'.<sup>58</sup> Elliott went on to propose that Birdwood's primary motive for wanting to stay with the AIF was self-interest. He also advised his wife that he would not have been surprised to discover that Birdwood was equally assiduous in striving to prolong his dependent relationship with White.<sup>59</sup> This comment was a very astute one and Birdwood's letters to Pearce and others during the remainder of the war proved that Elliot had been quite correct in his assessment.

Although the brigade commanders had been relatively easy to choose and, apart from Elliot, had been unproblematic the divisional commands were a much more complex affair. When the 2nd Division was being raised in August the Australian Government had informed the War Office that it was unable to supply officers for the divisional headquarters and requested that these be provided from the available resources in Egypt and at Gallipoli.<sup>60</sup>

With this restriction in mind Birdwood proposed offering the new divisional commands to two British generals, Major-Generals H.V. Cox and H. A. Lawrence, who were at that time in Egypt and available for appointment. On 31 January Birdwood submitted their names to the Australian Government for approval, along with the suggestion that M'Cay, who was convalescing in Australia and performing the duties of Inspector-General, be appointed to command the 3rd Division currently being raised in Australia.

Pearce, and other military staff in Australia, were disappointed that Australians had not been given the new commands, especially given the distinguished service of the AIF brigadiers at Gallipoli. To some extent, however, Pearce was somewhat chastened after his earlier bungles and appears to have been prodded into action by Dodds, who aggressively pursued the appointment of Australians:

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<sup>58</sup> Letter Elliott to Wife, 14 April 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>59</sup> Letter Elliott to Wife, 14 April 1916, Elliot Papers, AWM, 3DRL3297, item 14.

<sup>60</sup> Perry, 'James Gordon Legge', p. 206.

... the appointment of the (British) officers can only have a heartbreaking effect on Australian officers in being debarred from attaining the high distinction. . . . I feel sure that, were this matter made known at the present time, the result would be an expression of public indignation.<sup>61</sup>

Pearce, an experienced politician, was fully aware of the implications of Dodds' barely concealed threat and wrote to Birdwood expressing the opinion that:

... some of [the Australian Brigadiers], for instance Chauvel; Monash; White; and Holmes, would have been considered fit for these Divisional commands. I am assuming of course that Generals Legge and Walker will re-assume their Divisional commands when available. We were also very pleased that you recognised and recommended General M'Cay.<sup>62</sup>

Pearce questioned the suitability of Lawrence, but made it quite clear that it was not his intention to interfere with the GOC AIF's command prerogatives:

I wish you to please fully understand that I thoroughly appreciate how necessary it is for you to have a free hand in these matters; I also recognise that upon you will devolve the responsibility for failure due to any incompetency on the part of Commanding Officers. My object in writing is only to acquaint you with the feeling there is here and ask you to give due consideration when exercising your discretion in these matters.<sup>63</sup>

Birdwood replied that it was 'extremely difficult . . . to find men competent for a really big command like that of a division, unless they have considerable previous training'.<sup>64</sup>

Birdwood went on to suggest that this was hard enough in the British army and was substantially harder in the Australian army where few officers 'have had consistent and regular military training'.<sup>65</sup>

Birdwood then explained why he had not considered the Australian brigadiers suitable for the command of the 4th and 5th divisions. Chauvel was already being allotted the ANZAC

<sup>61</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> Letter Pearce to Birdwood, 4 February 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Letter Pearce to Birdwood, 4 February 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>64</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 24 March 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 24 March 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

Mounted Division which would consist of the three Light Horse Brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade. Of the other three officers, Monash, Holmes and White, Birdwood suggested that Holmes and Monash were both men of considerable ability, but emphasised that they needed to develop more confidence in commanding a brigade before being considered for divisional command.<sup>66</sup>

Pearce accepted Birdwood's explanation and his choice of commanders, but insisted that M'Cay be appointed to command one of the new divisions in Egypt. Birdwood thus gave him the 5th Division and Cox the 4th Division, but requested that the command of the 3rd Division be left vacant, explaining that he was tempted to offer it to Chauvel, since an infantry command was deemed to be more prestigious.

Of White, Birdwood was especially eulogistic, and pointed out that White was 'of far greater value to the Australian force and to the Empire as my Chief of Staff than he would be as a divisional general. He helps me and advises me on all Australian matters, and . . . I should feel very lost without him'.<sup>67</sup>

White confessed to some disappointment in a letter that implies he may have preferred one of the divisional commands:

Just at the moment I am feeling rather rushed for we have embarked on the organisation of our Australia Army. I am to be Chief of the General Staff with the rank of Major General if they will give it – but this news is for you only. In many ways I feel rather sorry not to have had a command of Division instead but such a billet as I am getting is of course a great thing for it at least gives you great power over a large force.<sup>68</sup>

On 30 September 1916 Birdwood wrote to General Hutton with an in depth assessment of White:

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<sup>66</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 24 March 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>67</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 24 March 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Letter White to Wife, 6 February 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

You so rightly describe White, for whom I have the greatest affection, and whom I regard as one of the best officers it has been my good fortune to have with me. He is so very much the old head on young shoulders – a well balanced mind – much knowledge and the activity of youth. My only regret about him is that he is not commanding a division, for which he is thoroughly suited. I have, however, thought it out very carefully, and come to the conclusion that he really is of more value to the State in his present position than he would be in command of a division.

He is still very young, and I think can afford to wait, though I often have a feeling of regret that he is perhaps being kept back on account of his usefulness as a staff officer.<sup>69</sup>

White does not appear to have been an active participant in the discussions between Birdwood and Pearce. Indeed, Birdwood appears to have made a conscious effort to keep White out of the discussions. In his letter to Hutton, Birdwood recognises White's value as a staff officer and publicly acknowledges White's value to the State. Privately Birdwood was astute enough to appreciate White's talents and realise his own fortunes could be advanced by holding White back.

The deference paid to Birdwood by Pearce suggests not only that Pearce was becoming more circumspect in his involvement in the affairs of the AIF, but also that the Australian Government was quite happy to leave matters in the hands of Birdwood. But Birdwood's position was not entirely secure and the impending transfer of the Australians to France renewed the debate over administrative and operational control of the AIF. Some Imperial officers saw an opportunity to separate Birdwood from the administrative control and allow themselves to benefit from the now solid reputation of the Australian forces.

### **A Commanding Question**

In late February 1916 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Robertson, rejected the idea of an 'Australian Army' arguing that it would not serve any useful purpose.<sup>70</sup> Bean suggested this action was due to jealousy within the ranks of British High Command who believed that Birdwood had risen through the ranks too quickly

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<sup>69</sup> Letter Birdwood to Hutton, 30 September 1916, White Papers, AWM, PR 85/83, item 19.

<sup>70</sup> Diary Entry, February 1916, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 40.

because he was a 'Kitchener' man.<sup>71</sup> This may have been a factor in the Robertson's decision. A more likely factor was the attitude of Robertson, and the British military establishment, to colonial troops in general and the autonomy that an 'Australian Army' would imply.

Robertson informed Murray that since the Australian forces would now be separated and Birdwood would be accompanying the 1st ANZAC Corps to France, an opportunity existed for Murray to take control of the remaining Australian Forces and deal directly with the Australian and New Zealand Governments.<sup>72</sup> Murray, as did other senior Imperial officers, believed that Birdwood could not effectively perform the duties of corps commander in France and, at the same time deal with the administration of the Australian forces in both France and Egypt.<sup>73</sup>

Birdwood responded to this challenge by reiterating his own position and emphasising his determination to perform both functions. Birdwood told Maurice Hankey, the British Cabinet Secretary, that he would still like to see an army formed with the freedom for him 'to move between France, Egypt and London, until such time as the two Corps are brought together in one theatre of operations'.<sup>74</sup> Birdwood replied to Murray that he did not believe in duality of control because it seemed essential to him that there should be 'one controlling authority for the Dominion Forces who should preferably be the Officer Commanding the Australian and New Zealand Forces in the field'.<sup>75</sup> Birdwood continued by pointing out:

While the forces are all employed in the same field this imposes no difficulty for we have already provided the machinery to relieve the Commander of administrative detail by the establishment of 'Headquarters of the AIF' and 'NZMF' respectively.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Diary Entry, February 1916, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 40.

<sup>72</sup> Letter Robertson to Murray, 14 March 1916, Heyes Papers, AWM 45/30/2.

<sup>73</sup> Letter Murray to Birdwood, 16 March 1916, Heyes Papers, AWM 45/30/2.

<sup>74</sup> Letter Birdwood to Hankey, 16 March 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL3376, item 46.

<sup>75</sup> Letter Birdwood to Murray, 17 March 1916, Heyes Papers, AWM 45/30/2.

<sup>76</sup> Letter Birdwood to Murray, 17 March 1916, Heyes Papers, AWM 45/30/2.

Although Birdwood had conveniently ignored the fact that Godley held the same powers as himself in regard to the New Zealand Force he continued to lobby support for the continuation of his charter as GOC AIF. Birdwood explained to Kitchener's private secretary, Fitzgerald, that he had been able to keep his command intact without an army formation because he had 'a special small staff of four officers in my capacity of Commandant of the AIF'.<sup>77</sup> With these officers, Birdwood explained, he had been able to carry out a reorganisation of the administration of the AIF and was able to carry out transfers and alterations throughout the whole force without friction.<sup>78</sup>

Birdwood further informed Fitzgerald that he had made arrangements for the administration to proceed after his departure to France and for reports to be forwarded to the Australian Army Headquarters, 'which I think should be established in London'.<sup>79</sup> Birdwood proposed the appointment of a commandant who could deal with all correspondence. This had been the case at Gallipoli when he had a headquarters in Cairo which dealt directly with him. Now that he was going to France, he proposed the establishment of a London headquarters with a branch in Egypt.<sup>80</sup>

At this point, Murray's staff had completed a submission to the War Office dealing with the control of the Anzac forces. This scheme was probably more logical than Birdwood's proposal. The headquarters, they suggested, be moved to London and the two functions of administration and operational command be separated. Consequently, they proposed that Birdwood should either move to London and administer the Anzac forces, or alternatively, Birdwood should continue to command the Anzac forces in the field. In either case it necessitated Birdwood relinquishing one of the functions that he currently held.<sup>81</sup>

White recognised the inherent difficulties of retaining both operational and administrative command of the AIF. He had already seen these difficulties with Bridges. However, he felt

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<sup>77</sup> Letter Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 17 March 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/64 WL150.

<sup>78</sup> Letter Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 17 March 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/64 WL150.

<sup>79</sup> Letter Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 17 March 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/64 WL150.

<sup>80</sup> Letter Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 17 March 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/64 WL150.

<sup>81</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 150.

that Birdwood's reputation was such that if he retained control of the AIF his authority would remain unchallenged by Imperial officers thus allowing the development of an administrative apparatus dedicated to producing an efficient fighting force. White believed that with a capable administrative staff Birdwood could effectively carry out both tasks.<sup>82</sup>

On 24 March 1916 Birdwood urged Pearce to allow him to continue as Commandant of the AIF and to establish a headquarters office in London as a central base.<sup>83</sup> The same day Birdwood wrote to the Governor General, Munro-Ferguson, and informed him that he proposed sending his headquarters staff to London to establish a headquarters there, leaving a branch in Egypt: 'I have delegated considerable powers to divisional generals to carry out all junior promotions etc. in their divisions, and now propose to delegate full powers to General Godley concerning the two divisions left behind here ...'<sup>84</sup> This was a very astute move, and was possibly advised by White, as Birdwood had pre-empted any action the Australian Government may have wanted to take to force him to relinquish his charter.

On 27 March 1916 Birdwood left for France with the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions under his command. After a five day trip on *SS Transylvania* the Australian Force arrived in Marseilles. From Marseilles they travelled to Armentières where a headquarters was established in the Chateau La Motte au Bois (the home of Baroness Ernest de La Grange).<sup>85</sup> The issue of control of the Australian forces remained unresolved until later in April when it was arranged for Birdwood, with support from Andrew Fisher, the Australian High Commissioner, to place his proposal before officials of the War Office in London.

Writing to his wife, Ethel, White gave a description of the situation as it then stood:

You have no idea of the difficulties that beset the British Officer in trying to administer this Force. As a General Staff Officer I am supposed to be freed of all administration but the whole of the administrative principles and a great deal of the detail have fallen on my shoulders ever since we started. All the principles on which we now act, or nearly all of them, are the work of my hand often under great difficulties ... Were it not for the extreme difficulty of making other people understand and fall in with our proposal I would think nothing of it. But the labour of convincing others is very

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 150-1.

<sup>83</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 24 March 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>84</sup> Letter Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 24 March 1916, Novar Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2574/12/24.

<sup>85</sup> Diary Entry, 7 April 1916, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 24.



trying and wears me out. As General Staff here I have my hands more than full but I have devised a machine for dealing with detail which the General has taken to the War Office and if they concur in its establishment all should run well hereafter. The force has grown so big that some special administrative measures have become necessary and up till now I have wrestled with these in addition to my own job. Gen. Birdwood is over at the [War Office] on the subject and from his letter I rather gather they have insisted on the services of some Australian Officer whom he could recommend. I hate the idea of it. It would mean half my time at the [War Office] and half here and would – and this is the worst of all – take me away from the handling of our Australians in the field. So far in everything that has been done I have as [General Staff] done the planning and worked out the details ... I hate the idea of their being put into anything without me having a say in it.<sup>86</sup>

In London, the Australian Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, had heard a rumour that the Australian divisions would be split up amongst the British divisions once they reached France.<sup>87</sup> Hughes wrote to Robertson and pointed out this would dampen the Australians' enthusiasm. He stated that he felt 'perfectly sure that infinitely better results will be gained if we have an Australian army commanded by General Birdwood, a man in every way competent, who knows the Australian soldier and who is respected and loved and admired by him ...'<sup>88</sup> The British Commander-in-Chief on the Western Front, General Douglas Haig, protested to Robertson that he had no intention to separate the Australian forces. Robertson relayed this to Hughes adding it would be premature to consider the formation of an Australian Army because of the small size of the Australian forces.<sup>89</sup> This was not strictly correct as an army can consist of any number of divisions, but is normally two Corps, and varies according to the needs of the moment.

When Birdwood arrived at the War Office he found them more acquiescent. In the discussions between Hughes and the War Office, which preceded Birdwood's arrival, it had become clear that Birdwood had the support of the Australian Government. Consequently, Birdwood had no problems getting approval for the AIF HQ to be transferred to London and for the official in charge of the London headquarters be the representative of Birdwood. The War Office did, however, make one proviso. Once the transfer had been completed the

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<sup>86</sup> Letter White to Wife, 24 April 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>87</sup> Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion*, p. 91.

<sup>88</sup> Letter Hughes to Robertson, 12 April 1916, quoted in Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 126.

<sup>89</sup> Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion*, pp. 91-2.

War Office would only deal through either the High Commissioner or the official in charge of the military headquarters in London.<sup>90</sup> The War Office also agreed to provide accommodation for 30,000 troops on Salisbury Plain where all training of Australian troops would now take place, rather than in Egypt. On 21 April 1916 Birdwood wrote to White and requested that Sellheim and the New Zealand Headquarters be sent over immediately. Birdwood thought it best to have an Australian officer in London who could answer for him and be responsible for all Australian matters.<sup>91</sup>

This proposal pleased White who wrote to his wife:

The General came back yesterday ... He has abandoned the idea of getting me to go to the [War Office] and take over administration control ... I would have hated it in many ways ... I would like to stick to this show until it is over, when I wonder ...<sup>92</sup>

The Administrative Headquarters, AIF, was quickly established at Horseferry Road in London, and on 22 May 1916 an advance party arrived to take over the duties originally performed by the High Commissioner's Office. Brigadier-General Sellheim transferred command of the AIF Headquarters in Cairo to Colonel Tunbridge and moved to London where he took up the appointment as 'Commandant, Administrative Headquarters, AIF, England'.<sup>93</sup> Sellheim was to be assisted by Lieutenant-Colonel T. Griffiths, who had previously occupied the rather ill defined position of Military Secretary, and now assumed the Adjutant-Generalship of the AIF and acted as liaison between Sellheim and Birdwood's headquarters. Griffiths was to be

... responsible for the promulgation of all decisions on questions of policy and principle connected with the personnel of the AIF, and will deal with all questions affecting promotions and appointments and promulgate all orders thereon.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Memorandum White to Sellheim, 14 May 1916, AWM 25, item 99/12.

<sup>91</sup> Letter Birdwood to White, 21 April 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>92</sup> Letter White to Wife, 29 April 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum Sellheim to White, 22 May 1916, AWM 10, file 4345/2/33.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum White to Sellheim, 14 May 1916, AWM 25, item 99/12.

War Office would only deal through either the High Commissioner or the official in charge of the military headquarters in London.<sup>90</sup> The War Office also agreed to provide accommodation for 30,000 troops on Salisbury Plain where all training of Australian troops would now take place, rather than in Egypt. On 21 April 1916 Birdwood wrote to White and requested that Sellheim and the New Zealand Headquarters be sent over immediately. Birdwood thought it best to have an Australian officer in London who could answer for him and be responsible for all Australian matters.<sup>91</sup>

This proposal pleased White who wrote to his wife:

The General came back yesterday ... He has abandoned the idea of getting me to go to the [War Office] and take over administration control ... I would have hated it in many ways ... I would like to stick to this show until it is over, when I wonder ...<sup>92</sup>

The Administrative Headquarters, AIF, was quickly established at Horseferry Road in London, and on 22 May 1916 an advance party arrived to take over the duties originally performed by the High Commissioner's Office. Brigadier-General Sellheim transferred command of the AIF Headquarters in Cairo to Colonel Tunbridge and moved to London where he took up the appointment as 'Commandant, Administrative Headquarters, AIF, England'.<sup>93</sup> Sellheim was to be assisted by Lieutenant-Colonel T. Griffiths, who had previously occupied the rather ill defined position of Military Secretary, and now assumed the Adjutant-Generalship of the AIF and acted as liaison between Sellheim and Birdwood's headquarters. Griffiths was to be

... responsible for the promulgation of all decisions on questions of policy and principle connected with the personnel of the AIF, and will deal with all questions affecting promotions and appointments and promulgate all orders thereon.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Memorandum White to Sellheim, 14 May 1916, AWM 25, item 99/12.

<sup>91</sup> Letter Birdwood to White, 21 April 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>92</sup> Letter White to Wife, 29 April 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum Sellheim to White, 22 May 1916, AWM 10, file 4345/2/33.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum White to Sellheim, 14 May 1916, AWM 25, item 99/12.

This arrangement lasted until June when Murdoch questioned whether Sellheim was a suitable officer to be undertaking the complex negotiations with the British War Office concerning the method of payment for goods and services supplied to the AIF. Murdoch urged Hughes, who was of the opinion that such negotiations would be better handled by a businessman like Anderson, to make a change in command.<sup>95</sup> Hughes decided to confer with White about the future of the AIF Headquarters and its Commandant. On 25 June 1916 White wrote to his wife from Fox Hills, Chertsey:

You will be surprised at my address dear ... Mr Hughes had immersed himself in various military questions and wired for me to come over. I came, greatly against my will, on Wednesday. General Birdwood was so kind and good about it altho' the time was most inconvenient, to him and to me, he insisted on my going and in the dearest and most affectionate way begged me to try and get a little rest and respite during my sojourn ... Mr Hughes was very appreciative of my assistance ... Friday night I went to the Australian dinner to Mr Hughes – quite interesting. On Sat. [sic] morning the King sent for me, presented me with my CB and DSO and then talked to me for half an hour.<sup>96</sup>

White was initially opposed to the proposal and only agreed after some lengthy negotiations. Consequently, it was agreed that Anderson would take over the AIF Administrative Headquarters and Brigadier Newton Moore was appointed GOC AIF Depots. Sellheim was to return to Australia and take up the important post of Adjutant General. Griffiths drafted the necessary orders and informed Sellheim that Anderson was to act as the Department of Defence representative in London and would 'deal direct with the War Office'.<sup>97</sup>

Hughes' decision to discuss the matter with White rather than Birdwood indicates White's importance in the AIF's organisational structure. Hughes could have demanded his proposed organisational restructure be implemented rather than seeking White's acquiescence and support. White's opposition suggests that he was attempting to protect the organisational culture he had formed.

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<sup>95</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 172.

<sup>96</sup> Letter White to Wife, 25 June 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum Griffiths to Sellheim, 1 August 1916, AWM 48, file 2194/9.

Although White accepted Anderson's appointment he had doubts about the man. In a letter to his wife White described Anderson as a pushy and ambitious man who was lacking in military knowledge. White informed his wife that he had 'suggested that [Anderson] should take over the Admin office [sic]' and that 'we are trying to provide him with the requisite military advice'.<sup>98</sup> White's role in determining Anderson's position in the organisational structure is significant. Rather than placing Anderson in a central position in the organisation White has effectively marginalised him and maintained the fundamental organisational structure.

Although decisions about the London headquarters moved along at a rapid pace once the decision was made to move, Birdwood was frustrated at the lack of progress in regard to his own position within the AIF. Birdwood told Pearce that he found the lack of progress a 'nuisance'.<sup>99</sup> He suggested to Pearce that a new Order in Council be issued vesting in him the powers he had held as GOC ANZAC or alternatively appoint him as Commandant of the AIF.<sup>100</sup> Birdwood was clearly concerned that he would lose his position as administrative head of the AIF and it was his intention to hold to the position as long as possible.

In September Pearce informed Birdwood that the War Office had agreed to him being gazetted to the command of all the Australian Forces.<sup>101</sup> Pearce backdated Birdwood's appointment to September 1915 and completed the final stage of the transfer of formal authority from Legge to Birdwood.<sup>102</sup> Bean suggests that Legge concurred with the cancellation of his appointment. However, a letter written by Legge to the acting Secretary of the Department of Defence in Melbourne, Thomas Trumble, in January 1917 suggests otherwise. Legge stated:

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<sup>98</sup> Letter White to Wife, 22 July 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>99</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 6 June 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>100</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 6 June 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>101</sup> Letter Pearce to Birdwood, 14 September 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 25. Birdwood's status as Commander of the Australian forces was acknowledged in a memorandum issued by the CGS in France Lieutenant-General Kiggell, 3 July 1916, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>102</sup> Delegation of powers to Birdwood, see *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, vol. 2, 15 September 1915, p. 2312; For Birdwood's appointment as GOC AIF see, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, vol. 2, 14 September 1916, p. 2582 (backdated to 18 September 1915); Appointment terminated *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, vol. 2, 10 September 1920, p. 1323.

I was surprised the other day to see that gen. Birdwood had been appointed GOC AIF. This of course operates as a cancellation of my appointment, but I was surprised that it was done without saying anything to me. In actual fact I was certainly only a titular or nominal GOC, because by detaching the various divisions, the British authorities intentionally made the actual command of the whole an impossibility ... Gen. Birdwood does not actually command the whole in the field any more than I could.<sup>103</sup>

Pearce seemed to appreciate the difficulties that Birdwood would have in commanding the AIF with its forces now spread amongst two Army Corps in France and the light horse units in Egypt. Pearce asked Birdwood how he would regard his powers being disseminated to Godley, GOC 2nd ANZAC Corps, and Chauvel, GOC Anzac Mounted Division, which remained in Egypt. Birdwood wanted to maintain the status quo and emphasised to Pearce that it was essential 'that there should be one head for the whole AIF as the only possible means of ensuring uniformity, coordination and justice to all'.<sup>104</sup> Birdwood pointed out to Pearce that Hughes had told Haig that it was the Australian Government's wish that the whole Australian contingent remain under Birdwood for administrative purposes.<sup>105</sup> In regard to Chauvel, Birdwood remarked that he was carrying on 'perfectly comfortably' with the powers that Birdwood had previously delegated to him. Birdwood noted that as things were running so smoothly and to the satisfaction of all the senior Australian officers, 'it would seem a pity to make any alterations'.<sup>106</sup>

Chauvel offers a very different perspective to Birdwood's 'perfectly comfortably' mode of operation. Chauvel's dual role as field commander and force commander paralleled Birdwood's role. For more than two years Chauvel not only made frequent visits to the hospitals, remount depots and various other installations under his command but also visited the General Headquarters in Cairo as well as his own AIF Headquarters. This was undertaken in addition to his duties as operational commander of the AIF in the Middle East.<sup>107</sup> Birdwood delegated circumscribed powers which restricted the manner in which

<sup>103</sup> Letter Legge to Trumble, 23 January 1917, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 255.

<sup>104</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 14 July 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>105</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 14 July 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>106</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 14 July 1916, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>107</sup> For a more detailed examination of Chauvel's career see Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*.

Chauvel could make staff appointments within his force. Chauvel felt the frustration of these restrictions especially when he attempted to mitigate the shortage of Australian officers by having them appointed to British staffs for valuable experience. Writing to Henry Gullett in 1923 Chauvel mentioned one such incident when: '[I] was immediately hauled over the coals by Birdwood ... I pointed out that it was in our interests to have representation on the Staff under which we were operating. I was told that it was not to be done except under very special circumstances which must be approved by GOC AIF'.<sup>108</sup> Chauvel went on to comment, 'I carried on for nearly three years under two masters, which would have been impossible had one of them been anyone else than Birdwood'.<sup>109</sup>

Alex Hill agrees that a unified command was in the best interests of the AIF but Birdwood failed to exercise the responsibility of command, a responsibility which necessitated seeing and being seen. He suggests that Birdwood, or at the least White, could have visited Chauvel's force and these visits would have been beneficial and stimulating to the Australian forces in Egypt.<sup>110</sup> Millar, on the other hand, argues there is no evidence to suggest that Chauvel's force suffered as a result of its isolation in Egypt.<sup>111</sup> This is possibly a premature conclusion considering that at the present time no study has yet examined the development of Chauvel's force in comparison to the AIF Divisions in France.

Birdwood exercised command of the Australian forces until the end of the war. There were two advantages in having a unified command structure within the AIF. Firstly, the supreme command rested solely with Birdwood and minimised the potentially disastrous effects of internecine rivalry. Ironically, many recognised Birdwood's reliance on White and supported the continuation of this relationship thus allowing for a strong and coherent leadership of the AIF. Secondly, the AIF enjoyed relative freedom from political control and social influences that characterised the other British and Dominion forces. Only in 1918 did political and social influence intrude on the AIF's command structure.

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<sup>108</sup> Letter Chauvel to Gullett, 4 January 1921, quoted in *ibid*, p. 72.

<sup>109</sup> Letter Chauvel to Gullett, 4 January 1921, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>111</sup> Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 127.

For Birdwood personally, the role of commander of the AIF gave him a status not enjoyed by other corps commanders. There is no doubt that he revelled in the dual roles of administrator and field commander. The former was the senior position, but it was the latter position which encapsulated social and professional prestige. The combination of both was an obvious attraction to Birdwood's vanity. For practical purposes it made good sense for Birdwood to be in command of the whole AIF rather than fragmenting it and placing the AIF under several commanders. However, it is doubtful that Birdwood could have successfully maintained his position had it not been for the constant support and talents of White. As will be shown in the remainder of the thesis Birdwood became increasingly dependent on White's skills.

### **The Media and the Politics of Corps Command**

After the bloody battles of Bullecourt, Messines and the third battle of Ypres, there was a widespread dissatisfaction with British generalship and this resulted in an increasing demand for the 'Australianisation of the AIF command' and a push for the formation of an Australian Army.<sup>112</sup> The prime mover behind this push was the journalist Keith Murdoch. On 11 July 1917 Murdoch cabled Hughes and complained about the ineffectiveness of British High Command and suggested that it was time the Australian divisions were united under one command.<sup>113</sup> Writing in a similar vein, Bean urged Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, to allow the Australian divisions to fight together because of their 'intensely strong family feeling'.<sup>114</sup>

Birdwood sympathised with Murdoch and Bean, and possibly because it was in his own interests, informed Murdoch the nature of the warfare on the Western front would make it difficult to keep the divisions together continually. He emphasised 'how enormously their value does go up when they are fighting side by side'.<sup>115</sup> The solution, in Birdwood's

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<sup>112</sup> Verney, 'The Army High Command', p. 246.

<sup>113</sup> Cable Murdoch to Hughes, 11 July 1917, Murdoch Papers, NLA, MS 2823, item 33. See also Cablegram Fisher to Hughes, 13 July 1917, Murdoch Papers, NLA MS 2823, item 34.

<sup>114</sup> Letter Bean to Lloyd George, 15 July 1917, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 82.

<sup>115</sup> Letter Birdwood to Murdoch, 15 July 1915, Murdoch Papers, NLA, MS 2823, item 33.



opinion, was to form an 'Australian and New Zealand Army' which would bring the two ANZAC Corps together with other corps being attached from time to time.<sup>116</sup>

On 30 July 1917, no doubt as a result of the urgings of Murdoch and Bean, the Governor-General, Munro-Ferguson, cabled the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London pointing out that the Australian force exceeded 100,000 men in the fighting line. Munro-Ferguson requested that Australian national feeling be recognised and the AIF divisions be united under Australian officers and staffs.<sup>117</sup> The Imperial Government was however, reluctant to take this action and viewed the staffs as an imperial formation:

the policy of the Army Council has always been to regard the Staff as an Imperial organisation in which officers of the Dominion forces equally with those of the British service shall be considered interchangeable, that is to say, a proportion of the appointments on the Dominion formations should be held by officers of the British service, and vice versa.<sup>118</sup>

As the AIF Headquarters in London already had a commanding officer who exercised, to all intents and purposes, the function of Australian representative at the War Office, the Army Council believed no further action was necessary.<sup>119</sup> For his part, Birdwood was in favour of replacing British staff officers with Australians at 1st ANZAC Corp headquarters whenever an opportunity arose. He was doubtful whether it would be possible to implement this policy within 2nd ANZAC Corps because of the mixed composition of the corps.<sup>120</sup>

The Australian Government was disappointed with the Army Council's response. Munro-Ferguson again wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and emphasised the Australian Government's wish that the five Australian divisions be grouped together in one

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<sup>116</sup> Letter Birdwood to Murdoch, 15 July 1915, Murdoch Papers, NLA, MS 2823, item 33.

<sup>117</sup> Telegram Munro-Ferguson to Long, 30 July 1917, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12. Telegram Munro-Ferguson to Long, 30 July 1917, Birdwood Papers, India Office Library, London, MSS EUR D 686/57/2.

<sup>118</sup> Telegram Long to Munro-Ferguson, 6 August 1917, Heyes Papers, AWM 45, item 27/34. Telegram Long to Munro-Ferguson, 6 August 1917, Birdwood Papers, India Office Library, London, MSS EUR D 686/57/6.

<sup>119</sup> Long to Munro-Ferguson, 6 August 1917, Birdwood Papers, India Office Library, London, MSS EUR D 686/57/6.

<sup>120</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 9 August 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 79.

or two corps staffed by Australian officers.<sup>121</sup> From London Murdoch continued to fuel Hughes wish for a separate Australian corps by asserting that an Australian representative was necessary at the War Office because, although Birdwood filled this role as commander of the AIF, he owed 'absolute allegiance to Haig and is at Haig's mercy as corps commander.'<sup>122</sup>

Millar argues that Murdoch's assertion does not have credibility since Birdwood was not in any real danger of being removed because of the influence he had amongst the Australian commanders and government.<sup>123</sup> Chauvel, the commander of Australian troops in Egypt, for example, and contrary to his earlier comments about Birdwood, informed White that he had every confidence in Birdwood and that he had no difficulties with the present system of administration. Nor did he have any desire to alter it as long as Birdwood remained in command:

... though I feel it would be logical and economical to run Egypt as a separate administrative command, corresponding direct with Australia, these advantages are outweighed by the prestige established by General Birdwood, the protection, to a large extent, from political interference and his own personality.<sup>124</sup>

Yet, Millar's assertion ignores the considerable status and power Haig exercised as Commander-in-Chief. It would have been difficult for the Australian government not to acquiesce to Haig's wishes had he seriously objected to Birdwood's continued presence with the AIF. There can be no doubt that Haig wished Birdwood's removal but such a removal would have serious implications and Haig needed to have a replacement that would meet with the approval of the Australian Government.

In July the Canadians had been formed into the Canadian Corps under the command of a Canadian, Sir Arthur Currie. Haig, consequently, believed that it might be possible to form

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<sup>121</sup> Long to Munro-Ferguson, 25 August 1917, Birdwood Papers, India Office Library, London, MSS EUR D 686/57/10.

<sup>122</sup> Letter Murdoch to Hughes, 26 August 1917, Murdoch Papers, NLA, MS 2823, item 34.

<sup>123</sup> Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 130.

<sup>124</sup> Letter Chauvel to White, 26 August 1917, White Papers, NLA, MS 5172, item 60.

the Australians into a corps. Haig's only reservation was the unwieldy nature of a Corps of five divisions and the competence of its commander. Haig, who was motivated by a certain personal ambivalence towards Birdwood, believed Birdwood could be transferred to London as administrative commander of the AIF and another commander appointed to the corps command.

Only days after the Canadian Corps was formed Haig visited Birdwood's headquarters where he asked White:

"Why don't you have a corps commander of your own? You know, you ought to be commanding this corps."

White replied as he felt: "God forbid! General Birdwood has a position among Australians which is far too valuable to lose."<sup>125</sup>

Haig stated that he was aware of that, and that Birdwood could continue as administrative commander. White pointed out that Birdwood's 'great reputation in Australia depended upon his being the fighting commander of their troops'.<sup>126</sup>

Writing to his wife on 29 July 1917 White described his meeting with Haig:

The C in C (Haig) was in to see us today. My General was out so he had to content himself with me. He became very confidential when he was leaving and said that I ought to have command of the Corps and General Birdwood ought to move out and make room for me. I remonstrated with him because it seemed like disloyalty to my Chief, and said I hoped General Birdwood would never be removed as he had the confidence of the Australian people and was in consequence an Imperial asset, to all of which he only replied – 'Imperial asset be damned, you should have it and Birdwood should take an administrative job ...

I have not told my little General because I hope that is the end of it and there was an implied slur in the last part of the phrase which was unjustifiable ...<sup>127</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Diary Entry, 12 Oct 1917, Bean Papers, AWM 3DRL 606, item 90.

<sup>126</sup> Diary Entry, 12 Oct 1917, Bean Papers, AWM 3DRL 606, item 90.

<sup>127</sup> Letter White to Wife, 29 July 1917, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

It is clear from this account that Haig hoped to remove Birdwood by enticing White with the command of the Australian force. However, Birdwood's position was secure while ever White's support continued. Only a force restructure, which White could not ignore, could provide the opportunity to replace Birdwood. Birdwood's future then depended on White's skill and loyalty. For the time being the status quo was maintained but efforts continued to be made to bring the Australian divisions together under one field commander. In these efforts Birdwood and the Australian Government were in step.

On 29 August Birdwood wrote to General Plumer, the commander of the Second Army under which the Anzac Corps was serving. Birdwood said that he wished to emphasise the Australian Government's desire that Australian troops serve together especially as it had been suggested that there was a possibility of the 4th Australian Division being transferred to Birdwood's corps from the 2nd ANZAC Corps.<sup>128</sup> As the Australian Government's representative, he felt that he must represent their views as strongly as possible, regardless of whether it was to an army commander or the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>129</sup> Clearly in this instance his stance on the issue resulted in a measure of success because Plumer arranged for the 4th Australian Division to be transferred to Birdwood's corps.<sup>130</sup>

In late September the Australian Government again made a request for the five Australian Divisions to be grouped under the command of Birdwood and staffed by Australian officers.<sup>131</sup> Haig however still believed that a corps of five divisions was tactically unworkable. At this point in time a manpower crisis intervened in the debate. Birdwood informed Haig that by early spring the five Australian divisions would be faced with a deficiency of 8,000 men and that there were no reinforcements available to bring the divisions up to strength. Birdwood and White proposed reorganising the AIF by withdrawing the now much depleted 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Division and temporarily reassigning it

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<sup>128</sup> Letter Birdwood to Plumer, 29 August 1917, Pearce Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2222/9/54.

<sup>129</sup> Birdwood to Plumer, 29 August 1917, Pearce Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2222/9/54.

<sup>130</sup> For greater detail see Powell, *Plumer*, p. 211.

<sup>131</sup> Letter Munro-Ferguson to Long, 26 September 1917, Birdwood Papers, India Office Library, London, MSS EUR D 686/57/15.

as a depot division.<sup>132</sup> This proposal also provided the best opportunity for securing the regrouping of the Australian divisions into one corps. Birdwood and White suggested to Haig that a corps of four divisions could now be formed. After some consideration of this proposal Haig agreed and on 3 November 1917 the Australian divisions were formed into a single corps commanded by Birdwood. This new corps was to be known as the 'Australian Corps'.<sup>133</sup>

On 13 May 1918, Birdwood informed Pearce that he had been offered command of the reconstituted Fifth Army. Birdwood's initial reaction had been to refuse the appointment, but Haig suggested that Birdwood's refusal would block the appointment any Australian officer hoping to gain command of a corps. Although Haig was keen to replace Birdwood as a corps commander he felt that Birdwood should retain administrative command of the AIF.<sup>134</sup> Birdwood recommended this arrangement to Pearce and nominated Monash to command the corps.

Birdwood considered others for the position. M'Cay who was at the time, GOC AIF Depots, UK, had coolly asked Birdwood to relinquish the corps command to him and when Birdwood refused M'Cay had requested command of the 3rd Australian Division. As the senior AIF officer in Europe this would have placed him in an ideal position to succeed Birdwood. Birdwood later stated 'I told him I didn't want the 3rd Division ruined like he had ruined the 5th!'<sup>135</sup> This was a clearly reference to the widespread perception that M'Cay had failed as a divisional commander at Fromelles in 1916, when his 5th Division was virtually decimated. Chauvel was ignored as a candidate because of his position in the Middle East. It was thought that Chauvel would be seriously out of touch with events on the Western Front and would thus be unlikely to secure the approval of the C-in-C. Hobbs

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<sup>132</sup> Letter Birdwood to GOC, All Australian Divisions, 3 November 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 33.

<sup>133</sup> Diary Entry, 3 November 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 29.

<sup>134</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 13 May 1918, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>135</sup> Cablegram Birdwood to Pearce, 13 May 1918, AWM 27, file 361/10. This file also contains a number of letters from Dodds to Pearce suggesting that M'Cay's appointment would have a detrimental effect on the AIF, 22 May 1918 and 15 May 1918.

could command most corps, but, Birdwood felt that he lacked the ability and strength to command the Australian Corps.<sup>136</sup>

This left White as Monash's main rival. There was very little to choose between the two officers. Monash claimed, '[White] has never been tested as a commander. As an interpreter of another man's policy he has been very brilliant indeed'.<sup>137</sup> This was an unfair assessment of White who had commanded the corps on many occasions during Birdwood's absences and it had long been recognised that White was the key leader in the AIF hierarchy. Indeed years later Monash wrote an assessment of Birdwood:

[Birdwood] was always 'buzzing around', looking people up, perambulating all over the place, barely ever at Headquarters and not *really* exercising command at all ...<sup>138</sup>

The question is clear then, if Birdwood was not exercising command then who was? Even Monash would have to answer that White exercised the prerogatives of command in all but name. This fact had even been recognised by British military leaders. Towards the end of the war Bean noted in his diary that General Sir Henry Wilson, then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, told the Australian Prime Minister, William Hughes that White was the 'brain of the AIF'.<sup>139</sup>

Birdwood, as much he wished to promote White, recognised that Monash was senior and to supersede him would be a considerable injustice.<sup>140</sup> It is likely that White assisted Birdwood reach his decision. Writing to Bean some years later White described the decision making process that occurred over the issue of command.

... You give the impression that both Haig and Birdwood had decided – more or less – on Monash as Birdwood's successor, should the need arise, some considerable time beforehand. That is not in accord with the facts as I know them. When Birdwood was offered the Fifth Army, he spoke to me openly in the matter – told me would like me to have it, said the C in C was ready to adopt either as

<sup>136</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 13 May 1918, Pearce Papers, AA A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>137</sup> Monash quoted in Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander*, p. 215.

<sup>138</sup> Monash quoted in *ibid*, p. 298.

<sup>139</sup> Diary Entry, 18 June 1918, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 116.

<sup>140</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 13 May 1918, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

Birdwood and the Australian Government decided; said he had cabled Pearce his doubts and that Pearce had left it to his judgement, saying only the Government would prefer me. Birdwood then asked me what I thought, adding that he wished to have me with him in the Fifth Army, more particularly as he hoped to remain GOC AIF. I made him a very short reply, thanking him for his consideration of me and adding that as Monash was my senior and an abler man I could not see on what grounds he could be passed over without injustice – and at that the matter concluded.<sup>141</sup>

There is no doubt that Birdwood's decision to recommend Monash was made considerably easier by the fact that he was able to recommend White's appointment as Major General, General Staff, the principle staff officer, to the Fifth Army. Birdwood argued that it was an extremely important appointment, second only to the CGS at Haig's headquarters.<sup>142</sup> It is also clear that as time had progressed Birdwood had become substantially dependent on White and it was in Birdwood's interests to maintain the relationship and hence hold White back. White was aware of Birdwood's actions and acquiesced. White probably realised that a close relationship with Birdwood was advantageous to his own career.

When informed that Monash would take command of the Australian Corps a cabal of key media figures (including Murdoch and Bean) began lobbying against the appointment. When Haig had first suggested the appointment of Monash in September 1917, Bean wrote;

... Monash for an Australian C-in-C we cannot have. He is not the man ... The purity and absence of jealousy or political intrigue in Birdwood's administration is worth anything. There is no 'eye wash' and bluff and humbug and insincerity in it; and there is in Monash's.

Besides, we do not want Australia represented by men mainly because of their ability, natural and inborn in Jews, to push themselves.<sup>143</sup>

Bean believed that 'the work which really waits to be done by the GOC AIF is greater than any army commander can undertake in his spare time.'<sup>144</sup> Murdoch agreed and wrote to Hughes, who was in the United States, asserting that AIF opinion favoured Birdwood's replacement with Monash as GOC AIF and White's appointment as GOC Australian Corps.

<sup>141</sup> Letter White to Bean, 14 October 1938, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>142</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 13 May 1918, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>143</sup> Diary Entry, 18 October 1917, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL606. item 91.

<sup>144</sup> Diary Entry, 31 May 1918, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL606. item 113.

Murdoch believed that Birdwood could not fulfil the demanding position of GOC AIF in addition to his Army command.<sup>145</sup>

Hughes agreed and telegraphed Pearce to postpone the appointment of Monash until he arrived in London.<sup>146</sup> On his arrival in Britain in June, Hughes let it be known that should Birdwood's command of the Fifth Army become permanent (it was still temporary), the position of GOC AIF would become vacant.<sup>147</sup> Hughes also noted that senior officers such as White and Monash owed their promotions to Birdwood and this may have swayed their judgement.<sup>148</sup>

In the meantime the AIF's senior officers heard about the campaign that Bean and Murdoch had begun and they rallied around Monash. Colonel Dodds, who was now the DAG AIF, cabled Pearce and informed him that Murdoch did not represent the feeling of the AIF. He told Pearce that the senior commanders were disturbed at the delay in making appointments, and that Birdwood should be retained as GOC AIF because he was 'a national asset' and other 'Army Commanders may not understand their capabilities and limitations'.<sup>149</sup>

In a letter to Hughes, Birdwood emphasised that his army command must be regarded as temporary and he could revert to the corps command at any time. All appointments, including the promotion of Monash to the corps must also be regarded as temporary. Birdwood added:

This being the case I think you may perhaps not wish to consider any alteration in existing arrangements until this question is cleared up ... I believe I am right in thinking that the present organisation has resulted in smooth and efficient working of the AIF, and the fact of my having gone to an Army really makes far less difference in my position than might appear to be the case at first sight.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Cable Murdoch to Hughes, 23 May 1918, Murdoch Papers, NLA, MS 2823, item 34.

<sup>146</sup> Cable Hughes to Pearce, 23 May 1918, AWM 27, file 361/10.

<sup>147</sup> Letter Hughes to Pearce, 17 June 1918, Pearce Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2222, item 8.

<sup>148</sup> Letter Hughes to Pearce, 17 June 1918, Pearce Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2222, item 8.

<sup>149</sup> Cable Dodds to Pearce, 15 May 1918, AWM 27, file 361/10; Cable Dodds to Pearce, 22 May 1918, AWM 27, file 361/10.

<sup>150</sup> Letter Birdwood to Hughes, 18 June 1918, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 16.



On 27 June General Hobbs wrote to Pearce and informed him that Monash had the full support of the divisional and corps commanders and the staffs. Hobbs suggested that White's appointment to the Fifth Army was a position 'of the greatest value to the Army, the Empire, and the cause for which we are fighting'. Hobbs believed that if the wishes of the 'gentlemen in London' were accepted then the AIF would lose a commander 'of very great ability'.<sup>151</sup> Hobbs suggested that Hughes visit the Australian Corps headquarters and gain the views of the men whose responsibility it was to administer and command the AIF.

Some months before the end of the war, while this debate was raging, Hughes spoke to White and asked him which officers were most suitable to command the Australian Corps. White replied, 'First Monash, next Hobbs'. Hughes asked, 'Isn't there a man named White?' This suggestion was dismissed by White and Hughes was forced to accept that White would not discuss personal interests any further.<sup>152</sup> On 1 July, Hughes, at the request of Monash, visited the Australian Corps Headquarters and spoke to the senior officers of the AIF. Hughes later told Birdwood that he had never before witnessed such solidarity as was found in his 'union of generals'.<sup>153</sup>

Bean records that Murdoch and White had discussed the command of the AIF privately one night. White told Murdoch he disliked this kind of press and political pressure appearing in the affairs of the AIF. White said it was 'not straight' and that it was already being spoken of as 'the intrigue by White's friends'. He further informed Murdoch that he would only accept command of the Corps under protest and then only after it had been submitted to Monash and approved by him.<sup>154</sup>

White's letters to his wife describe these political machinations and his abhorrence of them. One such letter written on 16 June 1918 states:

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<sup>151</sup> Letter Hobbs to Pearce, 27 June 1918, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

<sup>152</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 173.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

Great discussions and fussings in some circles here and in London over the change in ... Australian Commands!! The political scheme is apparently to get Monash in command of the AIF and me in command of the Australian Corps. You may rest assured that I will have no part or sympathy in any political or other juggling and I will refuse any appointment that may be offered to be by such means.<sup>155</sup>

Murdoch was aware of the opposition being mounted by the senior commanders to his interference and was unperturbed by it. He believed the commanders were subservient to England and thus ignorant of the wider picture. Murdoch believed, somewhat foolishly, that an Australian commander would gain Australian entry to the strategic decision-making arena.<sup>156</sup> However, Murdoch was not able to provide a plausible argument for changing the system that existed. He suggested changes in personnel without giving good reasons for doing so.

Hughes was similarly reluctant to accept the determination of the Australian generals. He believed that the corps and administration should be commanded by different men. In late July, Hughes received a letter from the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Henry Wilson, confirming the appointment of Birdwood to command the Fifth Army and Monash to the command of the Australian Corps. Wilson also observed that given these circumstances Hughes might wish to reconsider the AIF command.<sup>157</sup> This seemed to bolster Hughes resolve to effect change within the AIF structure.

Hughes cabled the Australian Cabinet and recommended they approve him to offer Birdwood a choice between GOC AIF and commander of the Fifth Army.<sup>158</sup> The Cabinet agreed to this request.<sup>159</sup> On August 12 Hughes asked Birdwood to choose between GOC

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<sup>155</sup> Letter White to Wife, 16 June 1918, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>156</sup> Murdoch, 'Rough Notes Upon the Australian Army Changes', n.d., Murdoch Papers, NLA, MS 2833, item 34.

<sup>157</sup> Letter Wilson to Hughes, 27 July 1918, Hughes Papers, MS 1538, item 23/165.

<sup>158</sup> Cable Hughes to Pearce, 1 August 1918, NAA, Series A360, item 8/1/1.

<sup>159</sup> Cable Pearce to Hughes, 9 August 1918, NAA, Series A6006, item 1918/8/7.

AIF and the Fifth Army. He stressed that the administration demanded the 'undivided attention of the best man we can lay our hands on'.<sup>160</sup>

To Hughes' surprise Birdwood decided to remain with the AIF but stated he would have to refer the issue to Haig for approval.<sup>161</sup> Haig agreed that Birdwood should take the AIF position but with the proviso that he stay with the Fifth Army until 30 November 1918 if Hughes agreed.<sup>162</sup>

Writing to his wife, White suggests that Hughes' plan had seriously backfired. White stated:

Well during the week a funny thing has happened. Mr Hughes wrote General Birdwood a most clever congé. Regretted that he could not agree to leaving the fate of the AIF Administration in the hands of a busy Army Commander, etc [sic]. Then went on to say what while he was very grateful to General Birdwood he could not agree to his retention of the command of the AIF if he retained the command of an Army at the same time. He obviously expected General B. to say that he took command of an Army at the dictates of the C-in-C ...and much as it was to be regretted he would have to relinquish the AIF of the of the two alternatives. But General Birdwood is doing no such thing!! With the approval of the C-in-C he is replying to say that he will give up the command of the Army and take the job of the GOC!!! This will give Mr Hughes rather a shock.<sup>163</sup>

Birdwood relayed Haig's decision to Hughes and added that it was his ardent wish to remain with the Australians.<sup>164</sup> Hughes avoided Birdwood and the issue. On 18 October Birdwood informed Pearce that no decision had been made by Hughes.<sup>165</sup> This was confirmed by Monash in a letter to his wife, saying that Hughes was 'studiously avoiding Birdwood'.<sup>166</sup> By the time the war ended on 11 November 1918 Birdwood was still unclear as to Hughes' intentions and his retention of command was not confirmed until 21 November when they met in London.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Letter Hughes to Birdwood, 12 August 1918, Birdwood Papers, NLA, MS 474.

<sup>161</sup> Letter Birdwood to Hughes, 15 August 1918, Birdwood Papers, NLA, MS 474.

<sup>162</sup> Letter Lawrence to Birdwood, 24 August 1918, NAA, Series A5954/1, item 1212/10.

<sup>163</sup> Letter White to Wife, 25 August 1918, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne Victoria.

<sup>164</sup> Letter Birdwood to Hughes, 24 August 1918, Birdwood Papers, NLA, MS 474.

<sup>165</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 18 October 1918, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 26.

<sup>166</sup> Letter Monash to Wife, 3 November 1918, Monash Papers, NLA, MS 1884, item 4/127/938.

<sup>167</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 12 December 1918, Pearce Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2222, item 9/88.

This episode demonstrates the pervasiveness of an organisation's culture. The reorganisation of the AIF was in the interests of the organisation and its key leaders so there was very little, if any, resistance to the changes being initiated. However, when external interests threatened to change, and possibly take over the organisation the members utilised the cultural system to resist and effectively diminish these external efforts. The organisational culture could promote the interests of its members, as in case of Monash and Birdwood. Or it could effectively sanction and remove members who were regarded as ineffective or dangerous to the organisation, as in the case of Legge and M'Cay. Legge and M'Cay were both returned to Australia and this proved to be an effective organisational rite of degradation removing both from any future contention for leadership.

Monash is the most interesting aspect of this cultural affirmation. He was not an original member and had been appointed by Legge. After Gallipoli he had been virtually isolated from the mainstream of the AIF and it was not until late 1917 that he was taken into the fold. When the Murdoch's and Bean's cabal moved against Monash the organisation closed ranks to protect him, or rather the interests of the organisation. But while there was a public show of solidarity for Monash, privately the organisation moved to constrain his position. Historian, and Monash's biographer, Geoffrey Serle, argues that Birdwood and White made the changes to the Corps and Divisional staff over Monash's head. White's friend from the Queensland Military Forces, Thomas Glasgow, and Charles Rosenthal were appointed to replace the British officers Walker and Smythe who commanded the 1st and 2nd Divisions respectively. Monash was content to accept these changes, but expressed some doubt about the appointment of White's friend, John Gellibrand, to command his old 3rd Division. Monash suggested that his friend, Charles Brand, be considered in place of Gellibrand. Birdwood refused Monash's request, but agreed to keep Brand in mind as a standby commander.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Serle, *John Monash*, p. 329; Birdwood's responses see Memorandum, 'Changes in Command', 1 July 1918, AWM 27, file 361/10.

Monash was not the only officer to question Gellibrand's appointment. Elliott wrote to White demanding to know why he had been overlooked and suggested that he would make an appeal directly to Pearce.<sup>169</sup> White replied with a stern rebuttal that clearly put Elliott in an untenable position. White stated:

The British officer to whom evidently you refer is an Austrn born there and now living there. Then as to yourself why all this great assertion? Do you think anyone doubts your courage? No one in the AIF, I assure you. Or yr ability? It is well known; but – you mar it by not keeping your judgment under complete control – your letter is absolute evidence. Finally you actually threaten me with political influence. You have obviously written hurriedly and I am therefore not going to regard your letter as written. But let me say this: if the decision rested with me I should send you off to Australia without the least hesitation if calmly and deliberately you repeated yr assertion to seek political aid – and if you managed to raise a dozen 'polico-military' enquiries I would fight you to a standstill on them!<sup>170</sup>

Elliott decided discretion was the better part of valour and withdrew his demand to appeal to Pearce. However, the issues continued to fester in Elliott for many years.<sup>171</sup>

Neither did Monash have his own way in appointing his corps staff. The most immediate and obvious choice to replace White as BGGS was Thomas Blamey. Blamey had been a staff officer since the beginning of the war and there was no other Australian officer who had his depth of experience. Walker had recently recommended Blamey for promotion to BGGS and Birdwood had considered recommending to GHQ that he be placed within an English corps. However, the changes which Birdwood's move had made necessary created a vacancy within the Australian Corps.<sup>172</sup>

As the principle administrator of the Australian Corp, Birdwood appointed his old friend from the Indian Army, Brigadier-General R. A. Carruthers. Monash objected because he regarded Carruthers as a loafer, and requested his replacement by his closest friend, Julius Bruche. Birdwood was opposed to this idea because of Bruche's German origins. Birdwood thought that his appointment might rekindle undue comment about Monash's German

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<sup>169</sup> Letter Elliot to White, 21 May 1918, Elliot Papers, AWM, 2DRL 513, item 46.

<sup>170</sup> Letter White to Elliot, 22 May 1918, Elliot Papers, AWM, 2DRL 513, item 46.

<sup>171</sup> For a more detailed account see McMullin, *Pompey Elliot*.

<sup>172</sup> Letter Birdwood to Pearce, 31 May 1918, NAA, Series A4719/1, item 63, vol. 12.

Jewish background.<sup>173</sup> Monash was given one other British officer, Brigadier-General L. D. Fraser, who commanded the corps' heavy artillery, and considering that the corps heavy artillery were all British, Monash could not seriously raise any objections.

It seems it was acceptable to promote the friends of White and Birdwood but not those of Monash. Indeed, had Monash been in a position to promote and appoint his friends he would have been in a position to make significant changes to the belief, values and practices of the AIF's organisational culture. The organisational culture of the AIF, shaped as it was by White, not only shaped the structure, symbols and promotions of the AIF, it determined the way the AIF fought the war.

White's involvement in the reorganisation of the AIF and its subsequent development of administrative machinery was further consolidating an organisational culture that conformed to his views of how the Australian forces should be organised and the values it should espouse. As pointed out in the introduction to this thesis founders created an organisations culture when they created the structure and subsequent symbols and beliefs. In creating the AIF and its identifying symbolism (the battalion colour patches) White effectively set the pattern for future development. His importance to the organisation was not lost on the British military hierarchy who increasingly viewed White as the real power in the AIF and recognised that Birdwood's own position relied on White's support.

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<sup>173</sup> Serle, *John Monash*, p. 330.

## Chapter 11

### ‘The Pitiless School of War’:

#### The Western Front

Sans doctrine les textes ne sont rien ...

The British Army ... was not infused with the essential principles of war deduced from history and lacked what General Langlois would call La Doctrine: the leaders, superior and subordinate (had) no mental grasp of the requirements of a modern battle.

German General Staff Writer<sup>1</sup>

In truth the problem of semi-siege warfare and the large concentration of guns necessary for the work had never been studied by the General Staff in peace, nor by any of the leading gunners, or gunnery schools, so we had to learn in the pitiless school of war.

General Noel Birch<sup>2</sup>

When the first units of the AIF arrived in France the warfare on the Western Front had already degenerated into a stalemate. Both sides had a vast number of men and weapons covering the entire Western Front from the North Sea to the Swiss border. This meant that the concept of envelopment was impossible and consequently any assault had to be a frontal one. It became necessary to find new ways to ensure that troops could get across intervening ground and seize the enemy's positions without suffering prohibitive casualties.

The main problem in the development of such tactics were the constraints placed on British military leaders by the main philosophical and professional framework of the day, the *Field Service Regulations*.<sup>3</sup> The *Field Service Regulations* provided two possible approaches to

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<sup>1</sup> The reported comment of a German General Staff writer in ‘The British Army and modern conceptions of war’, reprinted from *The Edinburgh Review* in the *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, Vol. 55, September 1911, p. 1181.

<sup>2</sup> General Noel Birch quoted in Travers, ‘Learning and Decision-Making on the Western Front’, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Field Service Regulations*.

the stalemate. The first approach was to regard the Western Front as a large siege. For this eventuality the regulations suggested 'a series of independent frontal assaults on a well defined and limited frontage'.<sup>4</sup> It was further suggested that the storming party begin the assault a couple of hours before dark. Once a position had been captured, the storming party (which comprised infantry with bayonets and hand grenades) would dig in and fortify the position.<sup>5</sup> The *Field Service Regulations* warned that 'a bombardment should rarely precede the delivery of the assault except when the course of the previous operations has been such that a bombardment will not serve as a warning to the enemy'.<sup>6</sup>

The second approach offered by the *Field Service Regulations* suggested that offensive posture was intrinsically stronger than defensive:

*Decisive success in battle can be gained only by a vigorous offensive... Superior numbers on the battlefield are an undoubted advantage, but skill, better organisation, and training, and above all a firmer determination in all ranks to conquer at any cost, are the chief factors of success. Half hearted measures never attain success in war, and lack of determination is the most fruitful source of defeat.*<sup>7</sup>

On the concept of the offensive the *Field Service Regulations* offer some interesting advice:

To concentrate superior power at the decisive point, a portion of the force must be held in readiness to deliver the decisive attack, while the remainder is employed to develop the attack and to wear down the enemy's power of resistance.<sup>8</sup>

When it came to wearing down the enemy,

The general principle is that the enemy must be engaged in sufficient strength to pin him to his ground, and to wear down his power of resistance while the force allotted to the decisive attack must be as strong as possible. The higher the fighting qualities of the enemy are estimated, the more closely he must be engaged.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 147-8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 107. Emphasis original.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 113-114. Emphasis original.



The offensive failure of the Western Front and the rigid adherence to the philosophical framework of the *Field Service Regulations* has been used by many historians to portray British Generals and Staff Officers as essentially callous and incompetent.<sup>10</sup> This approach ignores the pervasiveness of an organisation's culture and the constraints this places on subsequent learning and decision-making.

Leaders, no matter how powerful, are restricted by the organisational cultures within which they operate. They cannot invent completely new methodologies, new solutions but are constrained by 'the language, the customs, the social mores, the dress codes, and so on with which we all operate'.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, an organisation's culture provides members with strategies for action by presenting previous problems and successful solutions as exemplars. Within the context of the military, the *Field Service Regulations* represents an organisational culture exemplar by providing sets of specific ploys or arrangements that are used to solve battlefield problems and achieve objectives. When dealing with the problems of the Western Front there was an overarching tendency to solve the problems within the traditional philosophical frameworks that had proven so useful during the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Learning and problem solving continue to progress within the parameters set by these exemplars until such time as these sets of beliefs and ideas consistently fail to resolve problems or achieve outcomes. At this point some (generally younger) individuals, with less psychological attachment to these older exemplars, start embracing new paradigms or sets of ideas in order to resolve problems and achieve outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For an example of this 'butchers and bunglers' approach to historiography see Clark, *The Donkeys*; Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers on World War One*; Wolff, *In Flanders Fields*; Winter, *Death's Men*.

<sup>11</sup> Grint, *The Arts of Leadership*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Paddy Griffith argues that warfare on the Western Front was characterised by constant and considerable sociotechnical revolution. However, any paradigm shift is a slow and progressive process. Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed discussion of paradigms and learning processes see Kuhn, *The Structure of the Scientific Revolution*. Placed within the context of the military see Travers, 'Learning and Decision-Making on the Western Front', pp. 92-93.

The Australians who arrived on the Western Front in 1916 were relatively inexperienced, despite having a cadre of Gallipoli veterans in its ranks. Although the senior Australian officers had access to the *Field Service Regulations* they did not establish the same degree of attachment to them as their British cousins. As noted in an earlier chapter, Major General W. T. Bridges memorably described the *Field Service Regulations* as being as useful to most Australian officers as the cuneiform inscription on 'a Babylonian brick'.<sup>14</sup>

Since many Australian officers were citizen soldiers they remained psychologically and professionally distanced from the British tactical exemplars. Even in the case of Australian Permanent officers, some of whom had been trained in British military schools, there is an element of distance that worked to marginalise their acceptance of traditional British military philosophies. White provides a good example of this, having been extensively trained in Britain. White embraced the British concept of the human battlefield which emphasised individual courage and the use of the bayonet.<sup>15</sup> Writing after the war White stated:

... this war proves as conclusively, even more so, as past wars that decisive victory is only attained by the rifleman and the bayonet. Mechanical aids are of great help in that they conserve manpower. But they are only assistants and they cannot, by themselves, attain a decision. As many Australians are aware on the 8 August 1918 and subsequent days tanks played an important part. But great demands were made upon artillery for their support and for the decisions reached, the credit remains with the infantry man.<sup>16</sup>

But White was also prepared to step outside the boundaries of British military thinking and adopt concepts and ideas that were considered heresy by the British military establishment. The plan for the evacuation of Gallipoli was a case in point. Utilising the concept of stealth and deception it broke with all the treasured social mores of the British military classes and

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<sup>14</sup> Colonel W. T. Bridges, 'Report on the Conference of General Staff Officers, 17 – 20 January 1910', p. 53, Bridges Papers, ADFAL, MSS G82.

<sup>15</sup> For more detailed discussion of the human battlefield see Travers, 'The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought'; Travers, 'Technology, Tactics and Morale'; Travers, *The Killing Ground*.

<sup>16</sup> C.B.B. White, 'Some Deductions from the Great War', undated typescript, White Papers. AWM, 3DRL6549, item 66.

offended their sense of morality.<sup>17</sup> The lack of philosophical rigidity provided the AIF with a high level of learning flexibility that allowed lessons to be analysed and very quickly disseminated and applied.

In his recent study of tactics on the Western Front Paddy Griffith similarly points out that cultural, political and institutional separation from the Mother Country provided colonial and dominion forces with a degree of flexibility not afforded to Imperial forces. Accordingly, colonial forces were able to pursue slightly different modes of organisational structure and tactics from those advocated by Haig and his headquarters staff. Consequently, the spirit of criticism and independence that characterised colonial and dominion military institutions allowed for more innovation and creativity in tactical thinking.<sup>18</sup>

There is no doubt the war on the Western front had a profound effect on White and on his tactical thinking. An analysis of every battle is beyond the scope of this current work. Consequently, this chapter will attempt to convey the effects of war on White and White's effect on the tactical development of the AIF by examining Australian operations at Pozières, Bullecourt and Hamel. It will also examine the development of 'Peaceful Penetration' in the later part of the war.

### **Armentieres: A Hell of a Nursery**

When the first units of the AIF began the journey to France on 27 March 1916 their reputation for indiscipline had preceded them. The British authorities in Marseilles, fearful of potential riotous behaviour, arranged that the transfer from the docks to the trains would be conducted as quickly as possible. The process was only briefly slowed by the need to consider one other anxiety, the potential spread of diseases that had otherwise been absent from the Western Front. Before boarding the trains the Australian contingent were

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<sup>17</sup> A discussion of Victorian morality and the military class can be found in Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*. The predominance of feudalistic values in the British Army is discussed in Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*.

<sup>18</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, p. 8.

compulsorily vaccinated and fumigated in order to prevent a possible outbreak of typhus; they were also inspected for venereal disease.<sup>19</sup> The troops were then entrained for their final journey north which took them through Paris and on to the villages of Thienne, Berguette and Lillers on the southern edge of French Flanders.

In spite of British concerns about Australian indiscipline the move was achieved without incident. Indeed the British authorities commented that 'no troops had given them less trouble'.<sup>20</sup> Some months later when II ANZAC Corps moved through Marseilles the British commandant, Colonel G. F. N. Tinley wrote to General M'Cay:

It gives me very great pleasure to be able to tell you that the conduct of your division (the 5th) during the passage through this place has been exemplary. Notwithstanding the many and varied attractions and temptations of this huge seaport, I am glad to say that not a single case of misbehaviour or lack of discipline has been brought to my notice. It is a record, and one the division may be proud of ... The best of good luck to you and your fine division.<sup>21</sup>

On 8 April 1916 the 2nd Australian Division began occupying the Armentières sector just south of the border between France and Belgium. This sector was known as the 'nursery' because both sides used it to train units new to the Western Front. Although having performed well in the Dardanelles it was still necessary for the Australians to acquaint themselves with the tactical methods for holding the Western Front.

The first practical experience of Western Front warfare was delivered by the Germans in two raids conducted on 5 and 30 May 1916. Both raids followed the same pattern of an annihilating bombardment followed by a German entry into the Australian trenches, protected from neighbouring units by a box barrage. In both instances, the Australians suffered large casualties due to the over crowding in the trenches. For this, Birdwood and White were responsible. They had ordered that trenches be manned on the same scale as Gallipoli but the Turks did not have the same artillery resources as the Germans.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>22</sup> BGGS, I ANZAC to GOCs 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Divisions, 1 May 1916, AWM 26/2/50/13.

The first raid by the Germans resulted in the capture of two of the new still-secret Stokes mortars causing considerable embarrassment for the Australians. These weapons were so secret that General Headquarters had issued strict orders that:

... Special care will be taken to prevent any of the 3 inch Stokes mortars being captured by the enemy. When employed in close proximity to the front line, they will be withdrawn to a support line after use.<sup>23</sup>

These orders were circulated to the brigade staffs but for some unknown reason the Brigade Major of the 5th Australian Brigade failed to mention this issue to the Brigade Commander (Brigadier General Holmes), the battalion commanders or the brigade's trench mortar battery. Consequently, when two Stokes mortars were fired from the positions held by the 20th Australian Infantry Battalion on 4 May the mortars were left in the firing line and the mortar crews were withdrawn to the support trenches in the rear. When the Germans attacked the next day they were easily captured and removed.<sup>24</sup>

This raid provided some sharp lessons which White was quick to incorporate in both the general and local defence schemes. These schemes were based on three principles. First, commanders should ensure that front lines and support trenches were only minimally occupied. Second, once the bombardment began garrisons would be temporarily withdrawn to the flanks. Finally, commanders on the immediate flanks of an attack would make immediate preparations to 'counter attack with fury' once the barrage was eased to allow the advance of the raiding force.<sup>25</sup>

During April and most of May White suffered from tiredness and depression. On 18 April 1916 he wrote in his diary, 'My mind is tired ... The things that wear me out trying to think out what is right give [Birdwood] no great trouble'.<sup>26</sup> A month later White was still feeling tired. The pressures of the previous months had taken their toll on him. In addition to the

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<sup>23</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 196.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 196-200.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 208.

<sup>26</sup> Diary Entry, 18 April 1916, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 24.

mammoth task of reorganising the AIF White had maintained his role as principle operations officer for the Anzac Corps. There is no doubt that the experience of war was also preying on his mind. On 25 May 1916 White wrote, 'They say that war in some magical way is ennobling to character. I wish I could think it were ...'<sup>27</sup>

The Battle of the Somme commenced on 1 July 1916. It had been conceived in February 1916, when Haig had committed the British to a summer offensive in the Somme region. A forty kilometre sector of the front between the Somme and Ancre Rivers was chosen as the site for the offensive because it was where the British front joined the French and Joffre, the French commander, believed that he would be able to control British participation if the two allies attacked side by side. Haig had reservations about the area but agreed to the general plan because he realised the virtues of a cooperative offensive on a broad front.<sup>28</sup>

The initial plan was for a joint French and British offensive but the German attack on Verdun in February 1916 absorbed most of the French divisions originally intended for the new offensive on the Somme and turned it into a large-scale British diversionary attack. Haig now took over responsibility for the operation and with the help of General Sir Henry Rawlinson, commander of the British Fourth Army, came up with his own plan of attack. Haig's strategy was for an eight-day preliminary bombardment that he believed would completely destroy the German forward defences.<sup>29</sup>

The AIF was originally supposed to spearhead the attack on the Somme but the reorganisation in Egypt had forced a change of plans and as a result the Australians missed that tragic first day of the Somme.<sup>30</sup> But it was not long before they were drawn into the four month long campaign. For White the first major operation was at Pozières on 23 July 1916 but the Australians had earlier been engaged at Fromelles on 19 July 1916.

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<sup>27</sup> Letter White to Wife, 25 May 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>28</sup> Prior, Churchill's 'World Crisis' as History, p. 215.

<sup>29</sup> 'GHQ letter OAD 12 to General Sir H. Rawlinson, 16 June 1916 stating objectives', in Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium*, Vol. 1, pp. 86-87.

<sup>30</sup> 'Employment of ANZAC in Somme Offensive 1916', AWM45 31/5.

Fromelles was not on the Somme but was situated further north across the Aubers Ridge in front of Neuve Chapelle and Laventie. The Fromelles area was one of the lowest, and flattest, areas of the Western Front. It was a desolate piece of territory scarred by the ravages of war. The rain and naturally high water table filled the myriad shell holes that covered the landscape turning into a sea of putrid water and glutinous mud. Beyond this flat ground, approximately 3000 metres to the south lay the Aubers Ridge. The Germans realised the ridge's strategic value early in the war and turned the area into a fortress of trenches, barbed wire and more than 700 concrete emplacements.<sup>31</sup>

On 19 July 1916 the 5th Australian Division, which had arrived in France only two weeks earlier, and the British 61st Division on their right were ordered to capture the village and the ridge. From their vantage point and on a bright summer day the Germans could see the attack preparing and launched a counter bombardment onto the communication trenches as the men were making their way to the front. Shell after shell burst among the packed columns, cluttering the trench floors with dead and wounded. When men from the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade, on the right flank, emerged from the trenches, they were mown down by the well positioned German machine gun posts. The men of the 8th and 14th Australian Infantry Brigade made it to the German lines, however they were unsupported and throughout the night of the 19/20 July 1916, they bravely fought off the fierce German counter attacks. Eventually, they were forced to retire, with over 400 men taken prisoner, 1,917 dead and 3,146 wounded; a total of 5,533 casualties and all in less than twenty-four hours.<sup>32</sup>

Although White was not personally involved in the planning or conduct of the operation at Fromelles he did express his opposition to this operation to the staff at General headquarters. He told them they had underestimated German intelligence if they believed

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<sup>31</sup> A detailed description of the Fromelles area can be found in Macdonald, *Somme*, p. 162; Charlton, *Pozières 1916*, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 442.

the Germans would take the British attack seriously when they could clearly see that no reserves had been assembled behind it.<sup>33</sup>

Two days before the attack on 17 July 1916 White had told Bean:

I hate these unprepared little shows. What do we do? We may deceive the enemy for two days; and after that he knows perfectly well that it is not a big attack, and that we are not in earnest there. We don't get anything that does us any good – the trenches are hard to keep, and it would mean the breaking up [i.e. the crippling] of two divisions.<sup>34</sup>

White might not have known how prophetic his words were, but two days later, as the ill fated assault on Fromelles was about to begin, he found himself intervening in yet another hurried and ill considered operation.

### Pozières: The Lessons Begin

The British Fourth Army carried out the main British attack on 1 July 1916 when it attempted to secure the Pozières Ridge. This would have allowed General Hubert Gough's Reserve Army to break through to Bapaume and advance up the German line towards Arras.<sup>35</sup>

The Germans opposite the Fourth Army had constructed a series of trench systems. The first line consisted of 'three lines of trench 150 to 200 yards apart, one for sentry groups, the second ... for the front-trench garrison to live in and the third for the local supports'.<sup>36</sup> Included in the front line was a series of fortified villages: Fricourt, la Boisselle, Ovillers, Thiepval and Beaumont Hamel. These were protected by wire as was the second line system situated between 2,000 and 4,000 yards to the rear on a reverse slope.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443.

<sup>34</sup> Bean, Diary Entry 20 July 1916, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606. item 49.

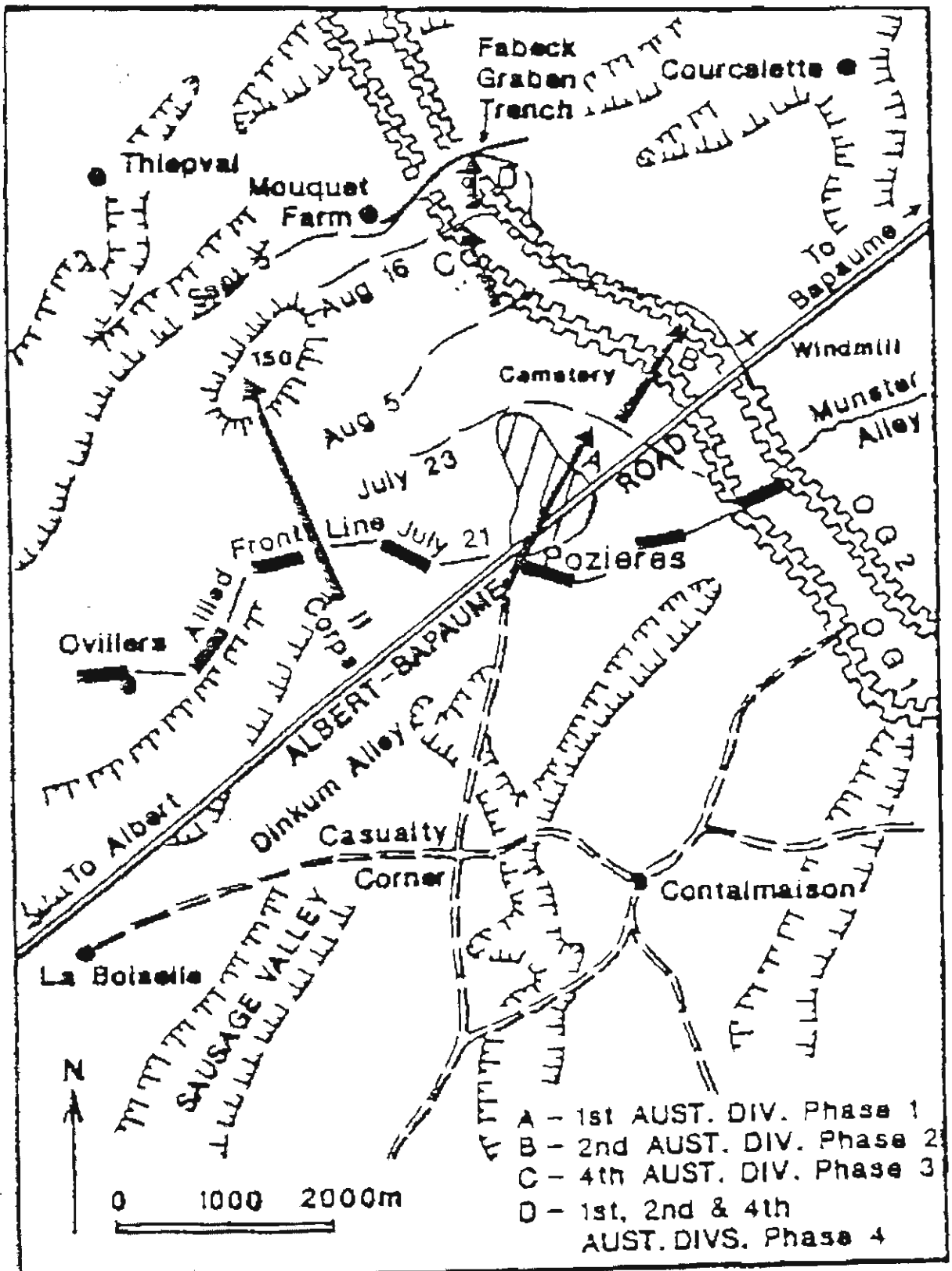
<sup>35</sup> 'GHQ letter OAD 12 to General Sir H. Rawlinson, 16 June 1916 stating objectives', in Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1916*, Vol. 1, pp. 86-87.

<sup>36</sup> Wynne, *If Germany Attacks*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>37</sup> Prior and Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*, pp. 140-141.



Map 2: Pozières



Source: Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 142.

By the time the Australians went into the line later in July, the Germans still held Pozières which was the highest point on the Thiepval-Ginchy Ridge. The Germans stubbornly defended it, thus restricting the forward movement of the Fourth Army's flank which had been charged with attacking the German second line.<sup>38</sup> Rawlinson, and to a lesser extent Gough, believed that Pozières was the key to the area.<sup>39</sup>

Gough's Reserve Army had taken over the northern section of the front and had been given the job of capturing Pozières.<sup>40</sup> On 18 July 1916, Major General Walker, commander of the 1st Australian Division, attended the headquarters of the Reserve Army where he was ordered to prepare plans for the capture of the village.<sup>41</sup> Gough greeted Walker and told him, 'I want you to go into the line and attack Pozières tomorrow night!'<sup>42</sup> At this point in time the staff of I ANZAC Corps was moving headquarters to Contay near Vignacourt some 12 miles from Pozières. Gough was impatient and rather than wait for their arrival decided to conduct the attack with 1st Australian Division under the direction of himself and the staff of the Reserve Army.<sup>43</sup>

Although White had not been given a specific role in the forthcoming battle the Reserve Army staff consulted him as a matter of courtesy. After examining the proposed operational plan White secured several changes in the operational plan. The first, and perhaps the most important of these changes, was a postponement of the attack until the night of 21 July 1916. White was also able to have the objectives of the plan redefined in keeping with the abilities of the Australians. White argued that the impetus of the Australians would quickly take them beyond the trenches, located in front of the village, and well into the streets of Pozières.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Reserve Army Operation Order 13, 21 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/41/60.

<sup>39</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, pp. 454-455.

<sup>40</sup> Gough, *The Fifth Army*, p. 141.

<sup>41</sup> 'Report on the operations of First Australian Division at Pozières', 3 August 1916, AWM 27, item 2/51/27.

<sup>42</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 3, p. 468.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 482.

White, in consultation with Walker, proposed changes in the tactics used and the objectives to be gained.<sup>45</sup> The infantry would attack in waves with each wave having its own objective to capture and consolidate - a process known as 'leap frogging' because the next wave would pass over the one before. The first objective would be the German trenches in front of Pozières; the second, a new trench just on the outskirts of town; the third, the main road through the town itself.<sup>46</sup> Walker issued orders for the first attack to begin at 3.30am on 21 July 1916, with the second attack to begin at 11.30pm the following night.<sup>47</sup>

White was acutely aware of the stresses that war imposed on the men. On 17 July 1916 (the same entry has his prophetic comments on Fromelles) White wrote:

Time was when we used to think our forefathers more courageous than the present generation but when one sees what men go thro' here daily and the smallness of their chances compared to the chances of men in olden day battles, one is amazed at the courage with which death and wounds are faced. The artillery fire and the mortars and bombs are certainly awe inspiring ... There will be such a lot of people at the end of this war who are not normal on account of their life here - and this is even more hateful a prospect than being blotted out ... This trench and siege warfare is a matter of patience, heavy guns and fortitude. Nothing can be done without a colossal expenditure of ammunition and great losses.<sup>48</sup>

With three different staffs coordinating the artillery fire plan and sharing responsibility for the direction of the artillery White was extremely anxious about the possibility that mistakes would be made. Although not officially his function, White examined the artillery plan and on 21 July 1916 discovered that the second barrage would fall on the infantry carrying the right flank. White notified Brigadier General Cuncliffe Owen, the Australian Artillery Commander and arranged for the attack to be postponed for twenty-four hours until the mistakes could be rectified. Consequently, the operation was deferred until the night of 23 July and although Gough fumed at the delays the extra time was well spent

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<sup>45</sup> BGGs I ANZAC Corps, 17 July 1916, AWM 26, item 50/12; GS 1<sup>st</sup> Division GS memorandum No. 54, 14 July 1916, AWM 26, item 51/24.

<sup>46</sup> GS 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 'Tactical Notes', 19 July 1916, AWM 26, item 56/2; GS 1<sup>st</sup> Division Order No. 31, 21 July 1916, AWM 26, item 56/2; 'Report on the operations of First Australian Division at Pozières', 3 August 1916, AWM 27, item 2/51/27.

<sup>47</sup> Charlton, *Pozières 1916*, p. 132.

<sup>48</sup> Letter White to Wife, 17 July 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

preparing for the operation.<sup>49</sup> There can be no doubt that White's diligence saved many Australian lives during the first attack on Pozières.

The attack near Pozières on 23 July 1916 was the first truly successful Australian attack since Lone Pine. All objectives were attained and consolidated and the inevitable German counterattack was beaten off. On 25 July 1916, efforts were made to secure the remainder of Pozières. Throughout the day The Australians faced a sustained bombardment from the Germans, but the village was secured. All of the objectives of the 1st Australian Division had been captured with the exception of the German lines immediately south of the main road.<sup>50</sup>

Writing a short time after the battle Birdwood quite remarkably suggested the capture of Pozières had not been 'such a difficult job'.<sup>51</sup> Considering the 1st Australian Division lost 5,285 officers and men this seems to be a rather thoughtless comment.<sup>52</sup> Birdwood did however, write to Walker and thank him for his division's success in taking Pozières and acknowledged the great strain that Walker's men had endured.<sup>53</sup>

The 2nd Australian Division, commanded by Legge, relieved the 1st Australian Division on 27 July 1916.<sup>54</sup> Once the 2nd Division had moved into position it was ordered to take the Pozières Heights, the high ground north of the town.<sup>55</sup> The old German second lines (called OG1 and OG2) ran along this low crest. The position was a strong one with a garrison in deep dugouts which provided shelter from any bombardment and negated the Australian's skill in bomb fighting. Under pressure from Gough's headquarters Legge prepared for a night attack against this stronghold. Legge was confident his artillery would

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<sup>49</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 485.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 514-516, 532-535.

<sup>51</sup> Letter Birdwood to Lord Derby, 15 August 1916, Birdwood papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 16.

<sup>52</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 593.

<sup>53</sup> Letter Birdwood to Walker, 27 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/51/27.

<sup>54</sup> 1 ANZAC order No. 15, 26 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/50/14.

<sup>55</sup> 1 ANZAC order No. 16, 26 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/50/14.

cut the German wire by 28 July 1916 and ordered his infantry attack to begin shortly after midnight on 29 July.<sup>56</sup>

Before the proposed attack took place, Legge's 5th Australian Infantry Brigade became involved in a protracted bomb fight that had started as a consequence of moves by the British troops on their flank to capture a German trench. British and Australian bombers threw some 15,000 bombs and almost all the brigade's regimental bombers became casualties.<sup>57</sup> At a conference with the British III Corps White criticised this means of capturing trenches arguing that the Germans were equal to, if not better, than his opponents. He recommended the adoption of a British 'egg' grenade, which he believed was more effective than the current British models and which would thereby redress the balance on those occasions when this tactic had to be used.<sup>58</sup> In any case the experiences of 5th Australian Infantry Brigade clearly demonstrated the sheer inefficiency of bombing as a tactic for capturing a trench when the enemy had anything approaching equal numbers.

The 2nd Division's attack on the night of 28 July 1916 was a failure. Much of the German wire was uncut, jumping off trenches had not been dug and German artillery was turned on the infantry while they were crossing No Man's Land.<sup>59</sup> Haig blamed the failure on over confidence and lack of proper preparation. Arriving at the I ANZAC Corps headquarters at Contay Haig informed Birdwood and White, 'You are not fighting Bashi-Bazouks now'.<sup>60</sup> Haig continued 'This is serious, scientific war, and you are up against the most scientific and most military nation in Europe'.<sup>61</sup> Haig then approached a large wall map and pointed out a number of what he regarded as omissions in the planning and preparation.

According to White's daughter, Rosemary Derham, White resented Haig's criticism because he believed Haig's assessment was based on faulty information.<sup>62</sup> White, despite

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<sup>56</sup> 'Summary of operations for week-ending 6pm Friday 4/8/16', AWM 26, item 2/50/15.

<sup>57</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, pp. 607-613.

<sup>58</sup> BGGS I Anzac Corps to British Fourth Army, 21 November 1916, AWM26, item 114/25.

<sup>59</sup> GSO1 2nd Division, 29 July 1916, AWM26, item 56/5.

<sup>60</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 643; Bean, *Two men I Knew*, p. 137.

<sup>61</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 643; Bean, *Two men I Knew*, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, p. 48.

a warning head shake from General Lancelot Kiggell, Haig's Chief of Staff. walked up to the map and pointed these errors out in detail, item by item. 'Forgive me for a moment, Sir', White said with his usual politeness. 'We know there have been defects, but', and pointed to the map. 'Look here, Sir, you said this, and this and this', indicating each point on the map. 'But what actually happened was this, and this, and this', and showed Haig that course of events had been completely different from his original information. In a move that surprised many Haig laid his hand on White's shoulder and said, 'I dare say you are right, young man'.<sup>63</sup> It appears that Haig was very impressed by White and recorded in his diary that 'White seems a very sound capable fellow'.<sup>64</sup>

An interesting aspect to this conversation is that White acknowledged to Bean that even prior to the failed attack he had misgivings about Legge's plan but allowed himself to be swayed by Legge's confidence.<sup>65</sup> Historian Chris Coulthard-Clark describes Bean's comment as a mechanism for removing from White, Bean's hero, any blame in the disaster that befell the 2nd Australian Division.<sup>66</sup> Rather than removing blame from White, Bean's comments stand out as a damning indictment of White and beg the question; why did White not intervene?

We are never likely to be able to adequately answer this question. But White's inaction in this case raises some doubts about White's motives. White had already intervened in the plans and preparations of the 1st Australian Division led by Major General Harold Walker, an officer in whom White had considerable confidence. As noted in earlier chapters, White did not have the same degree of confidence in Legge and their relationship can at best be described as coolly professional. White's action, or rather inaction, was largely shaped by his own ambivalence towards Legge and the knowledge that Legge's operational failure would result in Legge's removal from command. It therefore seems likely that White set Legge up to fail and provide the mechanism for Legge's further marginalisation from the AIF.

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<sup>63</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 644; Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 137.

<sup>64</sup> Blake (ed), *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 619.

<sup>66</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply*, p. 147.

In a re-assessment of Pozières Peter Charlton asks the question: 'what would have happened had White shown to Gough the same kind of independence of thought he had already shown to Haig?'<sup>67</sup> Although the question is a valid one it misses the point that White had already successfully gained Gough's approval to changes in the 1st Australian Division plans that had been conducted earlier in the month. As mentioned in an earlier chapter Gough had been one of White's instructors at the Staff College and respected White. White makes it clear that he saw Gough regularly;

I often see Gen. Gough ... I also meet Gen Kiggell [another member of the instructional staff at Staff College] now Sir L. ... and he always asks after you and solemnly ... desires to be remembered.<sup>68</sup>

If White had voiced his misgivings to Gough, or Kiggell, it is highly likely he could have secured the necessary changes and postponements.

No sooner had the news of the failure reached I ANZAC Corps Headquarters than a conference was organised between Birdwood and White and Legge and his chief of Staff, Colonel Bridges. At this meeting on 29 July 1916 Legge asked Birdwood for permission to make a renewed attempt to take Pozières Heights. According to Bean, 'Legge's pride, and that of his division ... prompted him to urge that his division, though its losses were already over 3,500, should undertake the renewed attempt'.<sup>69</sup> On 30 July 1916 Legge was directed to make another attempt to capture 'by deliberate and systematic attack the German second line trenches'.<sup>70</sup>

According to Bean White wrote out for Legge 'a number of points of advice embodying a thorough preparation for the attack'.<sup>71</sup> This is supported by a memorandum from White to Legge's Headquarters asking for a clear plan showing the defences of Pozières and the

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<sup>67</sup> Charlton, *Pozières 1916*, p. 254.

<sup>68</sup> Letter White to Wife, 27 August 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>69</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 644.

<sup>70</sup> BGGs, I ANZAC to GOC 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division, 30 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/50/15.

<sup>71</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 649.

distribution of Legge's troops in these positions.<sup>72</sup> Legge's Headquarters were also asked to supply plans for both offensive and defensive works, including the provision of communication trenches and cover for supporting troops and reserves, as well as the extent of the protective measures being undertaken to guard against gas attack<sup>73</sup>.

The extent to which Legge accepted the advice and direction of White can be seen in the subsequent measures that Legge introduced. Legge introduced a series of conferences in which the details of the attack were discussed among those involved. An elaborate artillery program was worked out involving working over the German trenches, wire cutting and heavy bombardments that looked like attacks.<sup>74</sup> Legge arranged for patrols to reconnoitre the condition of the enemy wire in order to determine whether it had been sufficiently cut.<sup>75</sup> On the night of 4 August 1916 the attack was delivered and was successful.<sup>76</sup>

After this the 4th Australian Division swept north over the rise to the outskirts of Mouquet Farm, where the wheels fell off the Australian war machine. Over the next weeks each division would return for a second tour of Pozières, but little progress was made in the course of seven attacks on very narrow two or three battalion fronts in a salient where the tactical advantage was in the favour of the German defenders. Some experiments were conducted with the use of much lighter forces in the attack combined with greater artillery support, in the hope of reducing infantry casualties.<sup>77</sup> It was during this phase of operations that White emphasised the principle that it was a waste of time to renew a defeated attack without changing the methodology.<sup>78</sup>

This principle seems to be at odds with the British principles which followed the guidelines of the *Field Service Regulations* and continued to issue orders for positions to be captured

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<sup>72</sup> BGGS, I ANZAC to HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division, 30 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/50/15.

<sup>73</sup> BGGS, I ANZAC to HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division, 30 July 1916, AWM 26, item 2/50/15.

<sup>74</sup> GOC 2nd Division, 'Preparations for the attack of 4/5 August', 14 August 1916, AWM26, item 56/5.

<sup>75</sup> GS 2nd Division, 'Extracts from Patrol Reports 31 July/ 1 August', 2 August 1916, AWM26, item 56/5.

<sup>76</sup> GOC 2nd Division, 'Preparations for the attack of 4/5 August', 14 August 1916, AWM26, item 56/5.

<sup>77</sup> BGGS I Anzac Corps, 10 August 1916, AWM26, item 56/6.

<sup>78</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 807.



‘at all costs.’<sup>79</sup> In one instance, the British Fourth Army repeated an attack on five separate occasions and failed to gain any vital objective.<sup>80</sup> In the Australian case there is little evidence to suggest that, with the exception of the Nek at Gallipoli, any second attack was initiated without a radical change having been effected in the plan or conditions.<sup>81</sup> This combined with the closer support between infantry and artillery laid the grounds for the development of open warfare during 1917.

### A Question of Honour

Over the winter of 1916 and 1917 I Anzac Corps, now consisting of four divisions, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th, languished in the mud of the old Somme battlefield, fighting the cold and trench foot more than the Germans, with whom they conducted informal truces.<sup>82</sup> Elliot described one such truce in a letter to Bean:

When we took over, the 58th Battalion was told by the Guards Division whom they relieved that they had come to a tacit understanding with the enemy not to fire on each other since if they did neither side could get food up. The next day after the relief General Birdwood met a slightly wounded man of the 58th and asked him if he had met any Germans. His reply was he saw dozens of them but was not allowed to shoot at them. Birdwood came to my HQ in a furious rage and asked me how I dared to issue such an order. Of course, I denied doing so and made inquiries which elicited the truth and no more was heard of the complaint. But in consequence of General Birdwood's action the truce was declared off and every Hun seen was fired on. This naturally brought retaliation and we had the worst of the deal owing to the long carry.<sup>83</sup>

In September both Birdwood and White were invited to Haig's headquarters where Haig told Birdwood he was immensely happy with the efforts of the Australians during the past campaign. Haig commented in his diary that White was ‘a sound capable soldier. Birdwood is useful too, though at present he is not much use for directing operations’.<sup>84</sup> Haig went on

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<sup>79</sup> *Field Service Regulations*, p. 116.

<sup>80</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 917.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p. 631.

<sup>82</sup> Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*.

<sup>83</sup> Letter, Brigadier General H.E. Elliott to Captain C.E.W. Bean 15 May 1929, Elliot Papers, AWM 1DRL264, item 1B.

<sup>84</sup> Diary Entry, 2 September 1916, Haig Papers, PRO, WO 256/13/11/2.

to comment that Birdwood's 'taste lies in making speeches to the Australian rank and file and so keeps them contented. He is wonderfully popular with them, but seems rather to do work which his subordinate Generals should perform'.<sup>85</sup>

This criticism was reflected in a letter that White wrote to his wife on 21 September 1916:

The general takes [visitors] here and there and everywhere. He like likes that; the personal touch is the thing that appeals to him and he has very little interest in office routine – which he leaves quite entirely to his staff ... with all his skill he has very little idea of the machinery which gets done all the things he wants. It is of course a great comfort to have a chief who does not concern himself with such things; at the same time it throws considerable labour and responsibility on his staff and makes them the more fearful of letting him in. I find that it necessitates my supervising other branches of the staff to a much greater degree than most other officers in my 'job' have to do ...<sup>86</sup>

In November 1916 the I ANZAC Corps Headquarters was moved to the chateau at Henencourt. Within days of arriving White began drafting policies for the construction of roads, railways and camps that would be necessary for the comfort of the Australian troops during the coming winter. He established Nissan huts at intervals on the way to the front and near it in order that troops could take shelter and rest. He ensured that duckboards were laid on the roads and in trenches to get troops out of the mud. Sheepskin jackets, food heaters and solidified fuel were distributed to the troops in order to improve personal comfort. White also looked at the issue of morale and set up coffee stalls, revived regimental bands and arranged for concerts and a cinema to entertain the troops during rest periods.<sup>87</sup>

White mentioned the coming of the first snows and the effects it had on the men to his wife;

We have had a fall of snow, not very heavy but quite enough to be precious unpleasant to the men sleeping out. I was going round on the day and it went to my heart to see so many of the fellows shrivelled up.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Diary Entry, 2 September 1916, Haig Papers, PRO, WO 256/13/11/2.

<sup>86</sup> Letter White to Wife, 21 September 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>87</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 149.

<sup>88</sup> Letter White to Wife, 19 November 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

During this period Birdwood, who was concerned by the long hours his staff had been working during the previous months, made it known that he wanted the members of the Corps staff to slow down and especially to stop working late into the night. According to Bean the light in White's office was rarely off and

... passers by ... could see him through the window, pipe in mouth, quietly studying reports or drafting memorandum or ... with someone who sought his advice or help. The need for it was never so acute or general as in those terrible months.<sup>89</sup>

It was during this period that White was saddened by the loss of his close friend from Camberley, General Duncan Glasfurd. A shell had wounded Glasfurd during an inspection of the front line, which his brigade was soon to occupy. Glasfurd was stretchered to an advanced dressing station, a journey that lasted ten hours.<sup>90</sup> In a letter to his wife White he wrote:

I am rather disturbed and distressed this morning as I received a message saying that Glasfurd had been seriously wounded. I am waiting now for more news and will then try to go off and see him ... he was hit this morning ... I slipped off to the hospital where [he] had just been brought. They could not tell me tonight what his chances are but they looked a little doubtful ...<sup>91</sup>

The following day White informed his wife, 'Poor Glasfurd died last night while under an operation ... I have been feeling very sad today at the loss'.<sup>92</sup> At the time White was feeling the loss of his friend he discovered that Birdwood had recommended him to receive an honour.

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<sup>89</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 149.

<sup>90</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 3, p. 955.

<sup>91</sup> Letter White to Wife, 12 November 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>92</sup> Letter White to Wife, 13 November 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

White and Birdwood had been working together for twelve months. During this time Birdwood had passed a significant amount of administrative and operational responsibility to White. White believed that he carried Birdwood to and deserved some recognition. The award that White received, however, provoked some resentment towards Birdwood. On 12 November 1916 White wrote to his wife:

We are fairly comfortably quartered here in all that remains of a fine old chateau ... [Henencourt] no longer in a hut ... a compensation as it is gradually getting very much into Winter ... The Commander in Chief [Haig] was in my office the other day and speaking to General Birdwood in front of me said 'Why don't you recommend him for promotion? ... he should be a Lieut. General too, instead of that you recommend him for an honour' which later on the General told me he had done.<sup>93</sup>

Taken together with Haig's earlier comments it appears that Haig had come to the conclusion that Birdwood was holding White back because of his value as Birdwood's Chief of Staff. It seems that White had also come to this conclusion and was resisting a growing resentment against this, and was beginning to express his feelings. In December White informed his wife that he was to get the Montenegrin Gold Medal, 'for Merit':

The other day the General announced that I had been given the Montenegrin Gold Medal, 'for Merit'. It angered me so much ... why I do not know ... he had recently said he had put my name in for the Legion of Honour ... I would have liked that ... I cannot pretend much interest in the Montenegrin Medal except as a curiosity ...<sup>94</sup>

Other letters that he wrote also suggest that he regarded it as significant issue, not only for himself but for others. Writing on 18 March 1917 White stated:

My little chief is not very wise about honours, when I got my CB he said very kindly; I am sorry it was not a CMG because you could then have got the CB later ... this showed no regard to the value of the service rewarded ... You ask me why X got a CB and in doing so put an unsolvable riddle – not only in his case. But all honours are rather a farce. Sir Charles Munro's despatch reads as if he

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<sup>93</sup> Letter White to Wife, 12 November 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>94</sup> Letter White to Wife, 17 December 1916, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

had personally superintended everything [at Gallipoli] whereas he took little interest in anything – and he gets a GCMG which is a really big honour ... I have seen so much bungling over honours.<sup>95</sup>

If White was disappointed by the honours he had received thus far, he was to be even more disappointed when he received notice of the honours awarded in the King's Birthday List in June. White wrote a long letter to his wife stating:

I ought to have enough character, ambition and pluck to realize that however tedious this business may be it will [end] ... and I have the chance of developing character which has been the hope of my life ... If I could only see you I might be able to conquer myself, but alone I do not seem to be able to do it ... You know I am not a great seeker of honours but I confess to an ordinary amount of pride and vanity. It is not so much that I did not get what I expected which hurts, as the thought the General apparently did not consider me worth it ... I was very disappointed to find myself made an ADC to the King in the Birthday List. I know that British officers think such a thing a great honour. But they draw 200 a year extra for it and have a grand uniform and are generally regarded as something. To me it is merely a colonial condescension and brings neither 200 a year or a smart uniform, further the honour was not obtained for me the ordinary way – it was just done privately by the General who is a great friend of some folk near the King ... let me go on. I happen to know that two KCMGs were offered to the General for Australian Officers and he declined them! He actually discussed the matter with me and said it was a pity Legge had not been a success because he could have been given one. Now if he thought Legge might have deserved one he surely might have thought I did – for I have done much more for the AIF than ever Legge did and much more to make General Birdwood than anyone else. I daresay he intends to get me some such thing later but he forgets that I may die or he may die before it is done. As I said a while ago it is not the so much the failure to get it which hurts me as the thought that he would not at once jump at the opportunity and the opportunity was there. I am afraid I showed him my displeasure.

... There is a crooked angry kink somewhere in my nature! I love when I am angry, and I always seem to be angry, to say things I do not mean, to hurt people I do not wish to hurt! I can see you laughing. But I try to conquer it – not always with success.<sup>96</sup>

White's use of the term 'colonial condescension' is interesting. White had always been a supporter of the connections of Empire but like many Australian's he re-evaluated this connection after the Battle of Bullecourt in April 1917. This letter, more than any other, always makes it quite clear that White is aware of his value to Birdwood and the fact that Birdwood's own career was intimately connected with his own. The letter suggests

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<sup>95</sup> Letter White to Wife, 18 March 1917, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>96</sup> Letter White to Wife, 10 June 1917, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

significant resentment of the fact that Birdwood is taking this connection for granted and as a consequence Birdwood was gaining accolades at White's expense.

The bestowal of honours reinforces organisational culture. It forms a public and ceremonious rite of enhancement. Honours reward the individual through public recognition and the increase in personal status and prestige. They encourage and motivate other organisational members to produce similar efforts and allow the organisation to take some credit for individual accomplishments. Honours provide a public acknowledgment that the organisation has chosen its members well and that the beliefs and values that form part of the organisations culture are effective.<sup>97</sup>

### **Bullecourt**

In the early months of 1917 British morale, suffering from the hardships of a winter on the Somme, was given a significant boost by the discovery that the German forces were withdrawing towards the Hindenburg line. This was not the withdrawal of a demoralised and defeated enemy, but a deliberate, planned, fighting withdrawal. Consequently, the pursuit of the German forces was not pursued with vigour but rather tended to be cautious and in some respects timid and reflected the lessons learned from 1916.

This cautiousness was advantageous for the British, and Australian, soldiers. It allowed the implementation of new tactics designed to give the infantryman a greater degree of flexibility and control over the battlefield, and hence greater confidence. Contrary to the popular belief that the British general Staff were total incompetents they had been busy reappraising the lessons of the Somme and issuing new instructions to the men in the field.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For more detail see Trice and Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organisations*, pp. 315-317.

<sup>98</sup> For a more detailed study of tactical innovation see for example Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*.

General Ivor Maxse was especially aggressive in pursuing tactical innovations as a result of his experiences at Trones Wood.<sup>99</sup> Throughout the British and Dominion Armies lectures and training were conducted examining virtually every aspect of trench and semi-open warfare.<sup>100</sup> New ideas and methods of combat were constantly being forwarded to the front-line battalions.

The Australians had a much easier task because the Corp structure was more stable than that in the British corps. In the British corps, divisions were attached and detached frequently whereas the Australian divisions remained with I ANZAC and II ANZAC for the duration. Ease of dissemination of information was also assisted by the formation of the I ANZAC Corps School, which was formed in France on 11 November 1916.<sup>101</sup> The school ran courses on subjects such as bombing, Lewis guns, trench mortars and signalling.

A number of important tactical changes were made during the winter which would affect the infantry. The platoon became the primary tactical unit instead of the company. Each platoon now had a Lewis gun section, a bombing section, a rifle grenade section and a scouting section. This allowed more independence on the battlefield with control being delegated to the platoon leaders.<sup>102</sup>

Another tactical change was initiated during the pursuit of the withdrawing German forces. The use of brigade groups, which consisted of all arms formations of brigade size, had been discussed and practiced before the war but circumstances on the Western Front had not permitted its use.<sup>103</sup> These brigade sized columns were not advance guards in the sense

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<sup>99</sup> Maxse was vigorous in re-educating all of his commanders from division down to platoon level. See Braynes, *Far From a Donkey*, pp. 169-171.

<sup>100</sup> Examples of the type of literature being produced by the General Staff, both Australian and British, see Appendix to I ANZAC General Staff, Circular No 48, and Divisional Headquarters General Staff, Memo No. 2, 'Assaulting Platoon', 11 January 1917, AWM 27, item 310/45. Booklet, 'Instructions for battle', May 1917, AWM 27, item 310/46. Booklet issued January 1918, 'The Training and Employment of Divisions 1918', AWM 27, 310/46.

<sup>101</sup> Mallet, *The Interplay Between Technology, Tactics and Organisation in the First AIF*, p. 91.

<sup>102</sup> BGGs I Anzac Corps, GS Circular No. 38, 'Organisation, Training and Fighting of Infantry Battalions', AWM26, item 114/27.

<sup>103</sup> 'Notes of Corps Commanders' Conference', 26 February 1917, AWM26, item 180/1.

described by the *Field Service Regulations*.<sup>104</sup> The main force was not advancing behind them but was held back, partly in case of a counterattack, but mainly because of the difficulties maintaining larger forces further forward.<sup>105</sup> Gough's decision to use columns to pursue the enemy was in contrast to the more cautious tactics adopted by Rawlinson's Fourth Army, who used only cavalry to keep contact.<sup>106</sup>

The Germans completed their withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line by the end of March but held the villages in front of it as an outpost line. These were systematically attacked. Normally the town was cut off by single or double envelopment followed closely by an assault on the village itself, thus pinning the defenders in place. When the envelopment went ahead swiftly, most of the garrison was captured. Bullecourt was a village that had been incorporated into the Hindenburg Line. Gough hoped he could breach the line on either side of the village using a division of the British V Corps to the west and an Australian division to the east.<sup>107</sup> The line was protected by two belts of heavy and wide wire entanglements designed to break up attacking formations and leave them to the mercy of heavy machine gun fire.<sup>108</sup>

In April Birdwood was ordered to attack the line west of Bullecourt. Birdwood had reservations about Gough's plan because there had been no time allowed to cut the wire.<sup>109</sup> As Birdwood wrote:

We were to be given twelve 'tanks' to assist in the operation, the idea being that they would go successfully through the wire and over the trenches, making roads for us, and knocking out strong points. The 'tanks' were to rendezvous at Noreuil during the night, and lead our advance through the enemy's wire.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Field Service Regulations*, pp. 78-81.

<sup>105</sup> Letter, White to Major Generals J.J.T. Hobbs and N.M. Smythe, 18 March 1917, AWM26, item 152/6.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of Army Commanders' Conference, 24 March 1917, AWM51, item 52, p. 110.

<sup>107</sup> Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p. 328.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> 'Operations by 1st Anzac Corps during the period 17th March to 13th May, 1917', Birdwood Papers, AWM 3DRL 3376, item 76.

<sup>110</sup> 'Operations by 1st Anzac Corps during the period 17th March to 13th May, 1917', Birdwood Papers, AWM 3DRL 3376, item 76.



**Map 3: Bullecourt**

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Source: Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 167.

There is no doubt that Birdwood was opposed to the use of tanks. He objected to Gough's plan because of the strength of the German defence, lack of opportunity to cut the wire and the general unreliability of tanks.<sup>111</sup> White also made it clear that he was opposed to Gough's plans. In his review written on 31 March 1917 White wrote:

Between Queant and Bullecourt the enemy's line forms a re-entrant some 1,500 yards deep ... An attack here would be unwise unless Queant were also attacked.<sup>112</sup>

An attack on such a position would place the Australians in a position similar to the Light Brigade at Balaclava with the enemy able to engage the Australians on three sides. White told Gough at a conference that it would take approximately eight days to adequately cut the wire.<sup>113</sup> Despite this, Gough overruled Birdwood's and White's objections, placing his faith in the tanks to cut the wire.

During the conference in which the proposed attack on Bullecourt was being discussed Gough received a call from Kiggell, Haig's Chief of Staff at General Headquarters. Upon his return to the meeting Gough informed Birdwood and White that he had been speaking to Haig's Chief of Staff and that the attack was to be made in accordance with Haig's wishes.<sup>114</sup> According to Bean White did not believe that Haig had actually been consulted. White told Bean many years later:

I don't think I should have given way even then. I should have let him [Gough] send me back to England first – I don't think he would have gone on with it.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Diary Entry, 9 April 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 29.

<sup>112</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 4, p. 264.

<sup>113</sup> Falls, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1917*, vol. 1, p. 358.

<sup>114</sup> 'Operations by 1st Anzac Corps during the period 17th March to 13th May, 1917', Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 76.

<sup>115</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 154.

A crucial element in Gough's battle plan was the use of tanks to assist the infantry penetration of the German defences. The night of 10 April 1917 found the men of the 4th Australian Division waiting out in the snow for the tanks to arrive. Just after daybreak, word came that the tanks had not arrived and the stunt was off and the diggers got up and walked back across the open ground, shielded from German observation by a snowstorm.<sup>116</sup> Gough ordered the operation to be repeated the next night. This time, the infantry were to attack even if the tanks failed to arrive. On the night of 11 April 1917 the tanks either did not arrive or were out of position. In the event the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade went ahead without the tanks leaving their left flank vulnerable to enfilading fire. The 12th Australian Infantry Brigade waited forty-five minutes for their tanks to arrive and found their progress impeded by the now alert German defenders.<sup>117</sup>

The battle was a total failure. At the end of the day the 12th Brigade suffered 950 casualties and the 4th Brigade suffered 2339 casualties.<sup>118</sup> This represents approximately sixty-six percent of the 4th Australian Division's total strength and it would be months before the Division recovered. As it was, tanks made very little impact on the battle because they were disabled very quickly. The battle had a significant impact on Australian and British relations and even had Anglophiles such as White re-evaluating their loyalties.

In an extraordinary report concerning the attack by the tanks on the 11 April, the war diary of 'D' battalion, 1st tank brigade said:

On the morning of the 11th eleven tanks were in position at 80 yards interval and 800 yards from the Hindenburg line at 4am. At 4.45am the first wave of infantry advanced. Tanks arrived on Hindenburg Line breaking lanes in wire through which the infantry passed through and both front and support trenches of the Hindenburg Line were captured. Two tanks turned eastwards and four Tanks [sic] turned westwards and advanced in the direction of Bullecourt and of these only one reached Bullecourt, the other three receiving direct hits by shells and put out of action. The Tanks still in action went into Bullecourt and cruised about the village shooting all enemy visible. The enemy fled in disorder and our own infantry were unable to keep close up to the tanks.

Two tanks assisted in the capture of Riencourt.

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<sup>116</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 4, pp. 278-284.

<sup>117</sup> 'Operations by 1st Anzac Corps during the period 17th March to 13th May, 1917', Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 76.

<sup>118</sup> 'Operations by 1st Anzac Corps during the period 17th March to 13th May, 1917', Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 76.

Two tanks led the infantry in Hendecourt.<sup>119</sup>

Gough was convinced that the tanks had done all they could to assist the operation, and that 'the failure was due to no fault of theirs'.<sup>120</sup>

The British official historian, Cyril Falls, raises significant questions about the veracity of the Tank Brigade diary and suggests that the episode has become 'a veritable legend and one of the most curious of the war ... Actually no tanks and no infantry reached Reincourt, far less Hendecourt. If the Australian records were not conclusive on this point, the German accounts, which support them, would finally settle the question'.<sup>121</sup>

Captain Albert Jacka, who had won the Victoria Cross at Gallipoli, submitted a scathing report in which he labelled tanks 'worse than useless', roundly criticising the crews' lack of punctuality, reliability, professionalism, organisation, leadership, efficiency and courage. In conclusion, he stated that:

In my opinion, manned by the bravest crews and placed directly under the infantry officers concerned, tanks would be of great help but they should *never* be relied on as the sole means of support.<sup>122</sup>

White recorded in his diary on 11 April 1917: '4th Division attacked Bullecourt, and succeeded but were driven out again. Nasty business'.<sup>123</sup> General Holmes, the commander of the 4th Australian Division which had conducted the operation on 11 April, was of the opinion that had it been carried out under an artillery barrage, even with the wire only partially cut as was the case, the ground covered initially in the attack, could have been held.<sup>124</sup> In a letter to Birdwood, Gough suggested that had Holmes been more aggressive in

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<sup>119</sup> Extracts from War Diary of 'D' battalion, 1st Tank Brigade – co-operating with Vth and I ANZAC Corps in attack on Bullecourt – April 11<sup>th</sup> 1917, Heyes papers, AWM 45, item 24/7.

<sup>120</sup> MGGS, Fifth Army to OC 'D' Battalion, HB, MG Corps, April 1917, Heyes Papers, AWM 45, 24/7.

<sup>121</sup> Falls, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1917*, vol. 1, p. 364.

<sup>122</sup> 'Official Report on Cooperation of Tanks in the Fight of 10/11 April 1917', AWM26, item 182/5 part 2. Emphasis original.

<sup>123</sup> Diary Entry, 11 April 1917, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 25.

<sup>124</sup> 'Report on attack against Hindenburg Line by 4th Australian division, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1917', AWM 26, item 169/37.

bringing up his reserves, they would now hold Riencourt and Hendecourt.<sup>125</sup> Gough's acceptance of the Tank Brigade's version of events as opposed to the Australian version of events reflects the traditional Imperial disdain of colonial and dominion forces. In the minds of the British military hierarchy the Australians were regarded as amateurs and thus not up to the professional standards of the British Army. It was therefore easy for Gough to apportion blame to the amateur Australian troops who provided ready scapegoats for his own tactical failure.<sup>126</sup>

Inevitably, another attack on the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt was ordered. This attack was the subject of very careful preparation, which was in striking contrast with that of the first attack.<sup>127</sup> This time, the infantry were provided with a creeping barrage advancing at a rate of 90 yards in three minutes, and to keep German infantry and machine guns behind the Hindenburg Line at bay, searching fire was laid down. A barrage moved back and forth up to 300 yards from the standing barrage. Despite all efforts, some of the wire was still not cut and the enfilading machine guns were not suppressed, or even targeted, which spelt disaster for troops attacking on the right, nor was the line of approach chosen with due consideration of the ground.<sup>128</sup>

On 7 May 1917 the British 62nd Division met up with Australian troops who had bombed their way down the Hindenburg line to join them and they captured the eastern side of Bullecourt.<sup>129</sup> Bean recorded that in both battles, the Australian casualties amounted to some 10,000; in the first battle, 3,000 casualties, and in the second battle, 7,000 casualties.<sup>130</sup> Bean further noted that Bullecourt more than any other battle, shook the Australian's confidence in the capacity of the British High Command.<sup>131</sup> It is difficult to disagree with the judgment of Eric Andrews and B.G. Jordan who have criticised Gough and the British High Command because 'they created a situation in which the cards were

<sup>125</sup> Letter Gough to Birdwood, 14 April 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3DRL 3376, item 7.

<sup>126</sup> For a more detailed discussion of British attitudes to professionalism and colonial and dominion forces see Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion*.

<sup>127</sup> Falls, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1917*, vol. 1, p. 458.

<sup>128</sup> Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p. 342.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p. 343.

<sup>130</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 4, p. 543.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p. 544.

stacked heavily against the Australian troops'.<sup>132</sup> They assert that the primary error in the second battle was the same as in the first battle: that of attacking in a re-entrant.<sup>133</sup>

The fact that the ANZAC Corps should have been resting at the time of the second battle, but were pulled out to fight, helped to reinforce White's determination never again to agree to Australian Forces being placed under external command. Bean records that during the Second Battle of Bullecourt White informed Major General Sir Neill Malcolm, Major General, General Staff British Fifth Army, that:

... he would never again give his concurrence in the sending overseas of an Australian force unless it had on the staff of the commander-in-chief a representative with the unquestioned right of placing its point of view before the 'chief'.<sup>134</sup>

After these events he devised a plan for Australia's control of its armed forces laying down the principles and directions that were followed in the Second World War. Interestingly, White even shaped the organization of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force in 1939 by giving Major General Bernard Freyberg VC, the commander of the force, advice on the principles of organization. Writing to Freyberg on 21 December 1939 White stated that 'for national and political reasons the identity and individuality of a Dominion Force must be preserved. History has proved this'.<sup>135</sup> White went on to suggest that the Dominion Forces' identity could be preserved by:

- (a) the avoidance, as far as the exigencies of the service allow, of splitting up of formations and units,
- (b) the administration of the force through the resources of the Dominion and responsibility of the Commander in this respect direct to the Dominion Government.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Andrews and Jordan, 'Second Bullecourt revisited', p. 43.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 4, p. 684.

<sup>135</sup> Letter White to Freyberg, 21 December 1939, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

<sup>136</sup> Letter White to Freyberg, 21 December 1939, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

This philosophy set the pattern for all future overseas forces by providing the Force Commander with direct access to the Australian Government.

### **Ninety Minutes to Victory**

After the Second Battle of Bullecourt the Australians were engaged in other important operations and battles during the war, for example, Messines, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde and Passchendaele, Villers Bretonneux, and most importantly at Hamel. A detailed examination of White's role in each of these battles is outside the parameters of this current work but it is worth briefly examining the last mentioned operation at Hamel.

Hamel is frequently regarded as the Australian's, and especially Monash's, finest hour and few are aware of the role White played in this momentous battle. This is no doubt due to the fact that White had transferred to Fifth Army on 29 May 1918, whereas the actual operation was conducted in August with Monash as General Officer Commanding Australian Corps.

The week before Birdwood and White left to take up their new positions at Fifth Army Headquarters they were instructed to draw up a scheme for the recapture of Hamel. It had been captured during the German spring offensive and with that now flagging Haig looked towards a counter attack that would regain the initiative for the British. White immediately objected to the proposed attack, which involved a feint against Hamel, believing it would cost a division for no perceptible advantage.<sup>137</sup>

Rawlinson and his Chief of Staff, Major General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, visited the Australian Corps Headquarters to discuss the plans. Historian John Millar observes that this meeting was 'so secret, that no record exists of it, nor of the plans made ...'<sup>138</sup> This is not quite correct. Rawlinson's diary records the visit on 24 May 1918:


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<sup>137</sup> Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 5, p. 244.

<sup>138</sup> Millar, 'A study in the limitations of command', p. 194.

**Map 4: The Battle of Hamel**

Please see print copy for image

A large, solid gray rectangular area that occupies the central portion of the page. It is intended to represent a map of the Battle of Hamel, but the actual map content is not visible in this digital representation.

Source: Laffin, *The Battle of Hamel*, p. 70.



I visited the corps and discussed with Birdie and White the plans for the Somme offensive which Foch is very keen about – Birdie is not much good at making plans but White is excellent and I have told him to write a paper on the basis of 5th or 6th Divs. They move to V Army on 30th by which time Monash will be in the saddle I hope ...<sup>139</sup>

This not only verifies the meeting was held but is also indicative of White's position. At a critical period in the war the British Generals were not only seeking White's opinions and advice but were taking them on board. At this meeting White was informed of the artillery, tank and air support that would be made available for the operation. He was also informed that Haig wished the attacking formations to thrust deep and leap-frog one another, with one formation passing through and beyond the other.<sup>140</sup>

Bean records that White kept quiet until Rawlinson had finished and then sought permission to comment on the plan. With Birdwood's agreement White then said:

'Well, General, this is a plan about which my General and I do not see quite eye to eye ... I think it would cost a division, and that the result of it seemed to me to be of very little value'.

'Why exactly!?', said Rawlinson. 'I quite agree with you'.

'Then why should we carry it out?', White asked.

'Well the truth is the French have asked us to do it – they will not attack unless we do something of the sort.'

'If we have to carry out a perfectly valueless attack at the cost of a division which it is earnestly desirable not to waste – there seems to me to be something very wrong in our scheme of arrangements', I said.<sup>141</sup>

According to Bean the attack was called off only to be undertaken some six weeks later under different circumstances and under different a commander.<sup>142</sup> In his account of the Battle of Hamel historian, John Laffin, argues that once again White had demonstrated his moral courage in pressing home his objections to a general.<sup>143</sup> In spite of his objections to the operation White completed his plan and delivered it to Montgomery-Massingberd on 28 May 1918.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Verney, 'General Sir Brudnell White', p. 37.

<sup>140</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 174.

<sup>141</sup> Diary Entry, 30 May 1918, Bean Papers, AWM, 3DRL 606, item 109.

<sup>142</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 143.

<sup>143</sup> Laffin, *The Battle of Hamel*, p. 55.

<sup>144</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 174. No copy was made but the handwritten original was preserved in Montgomery-Massingberd's personal papers at the British Staff College at Camberley. Rosemary Derham recounts how historian Guy Verney discovered the plans in a cupboard in the Imperial War Museum in

On 4 July 1918, troops of the Australian Corps, under its recently appointed commander, Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, advanced more than 2,000 yards in the vicinity of the villages of Ville and Hamel on the Somme River in France. In ninety-three minutes more than 1,600 Germans and 176 machine guns were captured. The operation utilised the latest Mark V tanks from the British Tank Corps, supporting aircraft from the British Flying Corps, and employed brigades from a number of Australian divisions and four American rifle companies.<sup>145</sup>

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery suggested that Monash was ‘the best general on the Western Front in Europe’.<sup>146</sup> In his war memoirs, Lloyd George alluded to Monash as “the only soldier thrown up by the British side, who possessed the necessary qualities for the position of commander-in-chief. . . .”<sup>147</sup> However, not everyone has applauded Monash. In her book *The Silent Ruse*, Rosemary Derham suggests that Monash, and Blamey, claimed the credit for the planning of the battle in the full knowledge that the plans had been prepared by White.<sup>148</sup>

Although there are many similarities between White’s plans and those prepared by Monash and Blamey there is no evidence to suggest they had any *apriori* knowledge of the origins of the plans.<sup>149</sup> Examining the plans it is clear that White’s plan provided the basic framework with frontages, the leap-frogging of attacking formations, tanks, artillery and air support elements being maintained. The main changes that occurred were in the size and extent of each element. Monash, being an engineer and proponent of the mechanistic mode of battle, favoured the heavy use of technological aids. His divisional commanders, however, possibly because of their long-term association with White, preferred a more humanistic mode of battle. Major General Sinclair-MacLagen, for example, remembered

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London. The cupboard, which had once been used to store the papers of Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, was a presentation from Camberley. Verney copied these plans and presented a copy to Rosemary Derham.

<sup>145</sup> Silverstone, ‘Originality and Success’, pp. 97-104.

<sup>146</sup> Callinan, *Sir John Monash*, p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>148</sup> Derham, *The Silent Stunt*, p. 77.

<sup>149</sup> Brudenell White, ‘Note on possible offensives on Australian Corps Front’, 28 May 1918, copy in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria. ‘Preliminary Notes re Hamel’, 19 June 1918, Monash Papers, AWM, 3DRL 2316, item 17.

the debacle at Bullecourt and using the recent example of Rosenthal's success on the Somme objected to Monash's heavy reliance on tanks.<sup>150</sup>

This indicates that other AIF commanders shared White's ideas and that his tactical principles were still seen as valid exemplars of the way to conduct war. Monash as a new leader was not able to impose his views on an organization that had a culture that was significantly shaped by White. Indeed, the war would end only a few months later and although Monash achieved fame he was denied the opportunity to make a more lasting impact on Australia's military culture.

More interesting is the notion that Rawlinson and Montgomery-Massingberd deliberately fed Monash's ego and ambition in order to manipulate him to serve Imperial interests. They had little regard for the man himself. In the year after the war Rawlinson was jockeying for an appointment as Commander-in-Chief India. When Rawlinson thought this appointment might be given to a rival, Sir Edwin Montague, Rawlinson wrote to Montgomery-Massingbird and compared him to Monash. 'I read [Montague] as a clever, slippery, creepy crawley jew who will always back you if he thinks you are winning and have no scruples about sticking you in the back if he thinks you look like a loser'. And, he added, 'He is clever and intelligent but his knees knock together when trouble is about. Edwin is not unlike Monash!! We know how to manage his sort'.<sup>151</sup> This letter not only highlights Rawlinson's anti-Semitism but also suggests that Monash was managed or manipulated.

This makes it quite clear that both Rawlinson and Montgomery-Massingberd played on Monash's own ego and ambition in order to achieve the fulfillment of Imperial interests. In order to ensure the continued participation of Australian forces in the last few months they built Monash up into believing he was a tactical genius who was shaping the way the war was being conducted. The reality, however, was very different since most of the decisions

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<sup>150</sup> 'The Artillery Barrage Method' and 'Pros and Cons of Tank Method', 25 June 1918, Australian Corps General Staff Report, AWM 26, item 361/2.

<sup>151</sup> Letter Rawlinson to Montgomery-Massingberd, 8 May 1920, quoted in Pederson, *Monash as Military Commander*, p. 220.

had already been made and these constrained the level of independence that Monash could exercise. It is also interesting that White's and Birdwood's imperial loyalty was acknowledged and that such methods would not have been necessary had they both still been with the Australian Corps.

On 11 November 1918 the Armistice was declared and White began the task of arranging for the repatriation of Australian soldiers. In discussions with Hughes White was led to believe that he would be working with Monash on the Demobilisation Schemes.<sup>152</sup> After meeting with Monash however, things changed rapidly. Bean records that White went into Monash's office:

He came out looking shocked, and when Brigadier General Dodds, commandant at the AIF Headquarters at Horseferry Road, asked him what was to happen next, the reply was a short oath. 'White doesn't swear' Dodds told me, and so he had asked Monash what he had said to White. Monash replied that he had merely suggested that White might wish to go back to Australia and that he himself thought this the best course.<sup>153</sup>

Monash's treatment of White was possibly shaped by the events that led to Monash's appointment as GOC Australian Corps. Monash was well aware of attempts to have White placed in the position and he consequently saw White as a rival. Monash's removal of White was thus an attempt by Monash to maintain his own position and ensure that White was not in a position to gain any further prestige.

White left France on 6 January 1919 and went to London to await transport home. He met the King on 7 April and was knighted for his efforts during the war.<sup>154</sup> White was invited by Admiral Dumaesq, the Commodore of the Australian Fleet, to return home onboard *HMAS Australia*. He left England on 15 April 1919 and arrived back in Australia on Melbourne on 7 June 1919.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Diary Entry, 15 November 1918, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 26.

<sup>153</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 181.

<sup>154</sup> Diary Entry 7 April 1919, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 28.

<sup>155</sup> Diary Entries, April and June 1919, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 28.

White's role in the tactical development of the AIF was important. The various battles of the Western Front produced lessons that White was able to absorb and disseminate as principles upon which the AIF would operate. There can be no doubt that White's attention to detail not only saved lives but also provided important indicators to other organisational members on what was important. In doing so he established methods and ideas upon the various formations which have since become deeply entrenched in Australian military culture. The emphasis on using initiative has become deeply embedded in the mythology of Anzac and continues to be regarded as an Australian military characteristic. White's determination to avoid placing Australian forces under an external commander rather than an independent Australian commander has also become an accepted facet of Australian military culture. All of these facets were implemented by White on the Western Front. As Guy Verney observed there is considerable truth in Menzies' belief that White was 'the most scholarly and technically talented soldier in Australian history'.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Menzies quoted in Verney, 'General Sir Brudenell White: The Staff Officer as Commander', p. 43.

## Epilogue

[White] was my hero ... he was the greatest general of the First World War and he has not yet been fully recognised.

Lord Casey<sup>1</sup>

Looking back over my long time in politics, two men in the Army stood out like beacons to me – the first was Brudenell White. I look back on him with a certain amount of mystique. He was a remarkable man: a great scholar, and a real thinker, and a man of sensitive understanding, and my earliest experiences as a Prime Minister were with him and, therefore, I remember him with great respect and affection.

Sir Robert Menzies<sup>2</sup>

When White returned to Australia he was at the zenith of his military career. For five years he had supervised almost every facet of the Australian Imperial Force's development. He had also been the first Australian to be appointed to the position of Chief of Staff to a British Army, in this case the British 5th Army. The broad depth of his military knowledge and experience was at the time unequalled. It was no surprise then that he was given the task of reorganising Australia's military forces. In so doing he would continue to shape the development of Australian military culture. Even after his retirement in 1923 he would continue to advise on military matters, as well as shape the Australian Public Service and establish himself as a successful businessman.

Even before the war ended deficiencies in the Australian army were becoming apparent. But any reorganisation had to be postponed until the end of the war. The Governor General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, wrote to Birdwood and expressed the opinion; 'What I do hope for at the end of the War is that White and Chauvel will return to Australia incontestably first in rank and achievement [sic] that to them will fall the task of remodelling the army'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, White's level of experience and training made him the

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Casey quoted in Rosemary Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, Melbourne, Cliffe Books, 1998, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Robert Menzies quoted in Rosemary Derham, *The Silent Ruse*, Melbourne, Cliffe Books, 1998, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Letter Munro-Ferguson to Birdwood, 5 March 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM, 3 DRL 3376, item 7.

ideal person to succeed Legge as Chief of the General Staff. He enjoyed the confidence of every senior officer as well as many political figures.

When White returned he was not given a formal position within the military structure but asked to participate in a number of committees examining ways in which the Australian Military Forces could be reorganised. In June 1919 White was appointed to the Swinburne Committee. This committee examined the problems of training the Citizen Army, the establishment of the air service (later the Royal Australian Air Force), and the manufacture of munitions in Australia.<sup>4</sup> The Swinburne Committee recommended the length of service for the Citizen Army be reduced from eight years to four years. It also recommended that the annual training commitment be increased to twenty-one weeks per annum. It was suggested that in the first year a continuous component of thirteen weeks be mandatory. Recognising that this may pose a problem they offered the alternative of a ten-week camp in the first year. The Government adopted this later alternative along with the other recommendations made by the Committee.<sup>5</sup>

In January 1920 White, along with Lieutenant Generals J. Monash, J. W. McCay, J. J. T. Hobbs and J. G. Legge, was appointed to a committee chaired by H. G. Chauvel, to examine the future structure of the army.<sup>6</sup> This Senior Officers Committee emphasised that Australia's safety depended on her membership of the British Empire. The Japanese were, according to their report, 'the only potential and probable enemy'.<sup>7</sup> The report suggested that in the event of a Japanese attack 'Australia for an appreciable and anxious period must rely on her own resources ...'<sup>8</sup> They proposed a field force of two cavalry and four infantry divisions as well as the development of the Air Force establishment.

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<sup>4</sup> For further details see, 'Report on Certain Matters of Defence Policy', 30 June 1919, NAA, A5954, 1209/7.

<sup>5</sup> See for example 'Report on Certain Matters of Defence Policy', 30 June 1919, NAA, A5954, 1209/7. See also letter Chauvel to White, 14 July 1919, NAA, MP367, Series 1, File 549/4/26.

<sup>6</sup> For further details on the Committee see, 'Report on the Military Defence of Australia, by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces', 1920, AWM1, 20/7. See also NAA, MP729/2, file 1856/4/472.

<sup>7</sup> 'Report on the Military Defence of Australia, by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces', 1920, AWM1, 20/7. See also NAA, MP729/2, file 1856/4/472.

<sup>8</sup> 'Report on the Military Defence of Australia, by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces', 1920, AWM1, 20/7. See also NAA, MP729/2, file 1856/4/472.

White certainly believed the Japanese posed a real threat and in a Memorandum dated June 1923 wrote:

The legitimate aspiration of Japan is, as stated by themselves, to hold in the Far East a similar position to that which the British Empire has hitherto occupied in the world.

... the present position in Japan appears to be nearly akin to that in Germany before the late war. One third of the revenue is being spent on armaments and the people in consequence are heavily taxed.

... the probability of a war [between Australia and Japan] cannot be denied, ... Such a war would involve the loss of Hong Kong in the first few weeks ... The first phase of such a war would necessitate our East Indies, China and Australia squadrons using Singapore as a main base, and adopting avoiding and delaying tactics until such time as the main reinforcements arrive from Europe. After their arrival, the fate of Australia depends upon the fleet action which would then take place. If the British forces win, Australia is safe, if they lose, and Japan obtains command of the sea, Australia becomes yellow.

... The probabilities of [American] intervention would appear to be very small. The German-American, the Irish-American and the coloured population are mainly hostile to Great Britain ... In any case, American Naval intervention would be of little avail in the early stages, as they possess no bases on this side of the Pacific from which to operate.<sup>9</sup>

Although Australia's military leaders argued for a policy of rearmament and continued preparation few Australians considered such an approach necessary and the opposition to military spending grew. This was the situation that faced White when he was appointed Chief of the General Staff, or as he always insisted Chief of the Australian Branch of the Imperial General Staff, in June 1920.<sup>10</sup> The position had recently been vacated by Legge, who had been appointed Commandant of the Royal Military College, Duntroon. White's diary entry for 1 June 1920 records the very simple statement, 'Became CGS today'.<sup>11</sup>

White's main task was to reorganise the Australian militia, and recreate a citizen army for Australia. This task was not made easy by the prevailing political climate which viewed economics as the *alta prima* and viewed any military spending with suspicion. The subsequent cuts in defence spending resulted in substantial cuts to manpower and Australia was left without a real army. The government imposed reductions that resulted in 100

<sup>9</sup> Memorandum, 'Remarks Upon Japan and the Position in the Pacific', June 1923, White papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 67.

<sup>10</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 191.

<sup>11</sup> Diary Entry, 1 June 1920, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 29.



officers, 188 warrant officers and 179 ordinary ranks being discharged or retired from the already very small Permanent Force.<sup>12</sup> The economic restrictions were so harsh that it was not possible for any new weaponry to be purchased and the costs of maintaining the Army, which had now diminished to a strength of 38,000, were barely covered.<sup>13</sup>

White's task as Chief of the General Staff was not so much the building of a citizen force in which he believed but to maintain the skeleton of a force that was capable of being expanded as the circumstances demanded. To achieve this White imposed one key principle, the retention of a nucleus within each layer of the army. This allowed for the key people in commands, staff, divisions, brigades, battalions, companies and platoons to be highly trained. These people would then provide the traditions, values and knowledge upon which to base any future expansion of the army.<sup>14</sup> White was obviously drawing on the lessons of 1916 when he doubled the size of the AIF. White later said 'We decided to maintain our war organisation ... and cut horizontally and not vertically'.<sup>15</sup>

In 1923 the Bruce-Page Government replaced that of Hughes and continued to impose restrictions on government spending. White was appointed to a committee, along with Commodore G.F. Hyde and Professor Sir Edgeworth David, to examine the value of the naval and military colleges. In a report 'Reasons for Retention of Duntroon', White wrote:

"Nothing is more necessary for the efficiency of an army", wrote Major General I. Bevan Edwards in January 1890 in a comment on the organisation of the Military Forces in Australia. A similar statement was made by Major General Sir Edward Hutton after Federation. It was not until 1911 however that a college was established.

... The decision followed the teachings of history. Other countries as they attained to nationhood [sic] realised the need of self containment and the development of national spirit. The practice of sending students abroad for instruction was only a means to the end desired by all that in time they should be able to instruct their own.

The Royal Military College has achieved much in the 12 years of its existence – so much indeed that its part in Australian Military history has given it a national status. During the Great War 15% of graduates served their country in the field and 42 of these made the supreme sacrifice, and 5% were wounded. The services of graduates were eagerly sought. It is not an exaggeration to say that the college paid for itself during the Great War.

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<sup>12</sup> Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p. 203.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 192.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p. 192.

The existence of the college has raised the standard of efficiency of the Staff Corps and in the same examinations as those to which the British Army are subjected, the Australian officer has regularly attained a high place.

... The college fulfils national aspirations. It enables the absorption of military knowledge – the necessity of which is ever increasing – with due regard to Australian character and conditions.<sup>16</sup>

The interesting aspect here is that the military college does not merely enable the absorption of military knowledge but maintains the organisational culture but inculcating new organisational members into the organisation culture. It teaches these new members the appropriate values, beliefs and practices of the organisation. It provides a rite of passage that allows new members to become accepted as part of the organisation.

The Government eventually decided to retain Duntroon. This was White's last major undertaking as Chief of the General Staff. On 30 May 1923 the Prime Minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, called White into his office and asked him to take on the Chairmanship of the Commonwealth Public Service.<sup>17</sup>

Bruce proposed to reorganise the Commonwealth Public Service and required an individual with outstanding organisational capabilities. Bruce believed the best man available was Brudenell White. White does not mention his reasons for accepting the appointment. According to Bean White had become increasingly frustrated with the obstacles he faced in order to further his plans for the development of the army.<sup>18</sup> White resigned his appointment as Chief of the General Staff on 13 June 1923 and began his work of reorganising the Public Service on 18 June 1923.<sup>19</sup>

White's activities in reorganising the Commonwealth Public Service and later in reorganising the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited are beyond the province of this current thesis. However it needs to be pointed out that White had

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<sup>16</sup> Typescript, 'Reasons for the Retention of Duntroon', n.d., White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 67.

<sup>17</sup> Diary Entry, 30 May 1923, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 32.

<sup>18</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> Diary Entries 13 and 18 June 1923, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 32.

completed an outstanding volume of organisational work. During his life White completed eight major organisational tasks.

The first task involved the mobilisation plan for Australia's involvement in the First World War. This task included the organisation of the first contingent that formed the nucleus for the AIF. White's second organisational task was to prepare the plans for the evacuation of Gallipoli. This achievement was quickly followed by the third organisational effort, the doubling of the AIF in Egypt and the subsequent planning for the Australian Forces in France.

White's fourth organisational achievement was the system of Australian control that he initiated during the war and was later used as the model of control for the Australian and New Zealand Expeditionary Forces in the Second World War. At the conclusion of the First World War White was then given his fifth organisational task. This involved the reorganisation of Australia's Citizen Army. The sixth organisational achievement was also the first one that White undertook as a civilian. In this task he reorganised the Public Service and laid down the structure that continues to operate within the Commonwealth Public Service today. The seventh task took White into the world of big business and resulted in him reorganising the New Zealand Loan Company. In addition to these achievements White also planned and organised two Royal visits to Australia.<sup>20</sup>

This brings us then to the eighth and final organisational task that White completed, the establishment of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force in 1939. When war was declared on 3 September 1939 White was approaching his sixty-third birthday. As mentioned earlier White had met with the New Zealand General Freyburg and provided the model by which the New Zealand overseas force would be controlled and administered.<sup>21</sup> Blamey had recently been appointed to command the 6th Australian Division which was then being formed. Blamey had served on the AIF Staff in the First World War and was aware of White's role in setting up the principles of control in the AIF. According to Blamey, 'White

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<sup>20</sup> For more detail on these achievements see Bean, *Two Men I Knew*; and Derham, *The Silent Ruse*.

<sup>21</sup> Letter White to Freyberg, 21 December 1939, original in possession of Lady Rosemary Derham, Melbourne, Victoria.

was a very strong determined General'.<sup>22</sup> Blamey now referred to a copy White's Charter that he had acquired from the Australian War Memorial and drew four principles from it. These principles shaped the development of what would eventually become the 2nd AIF:

1. That the AIF should be recognised as an Australian Force under its own commander, who would be responsible to – and have the right to communicate direct with – his own government, and no part of the force was to be detached or employed without his consent.
2. It would be under operational control of the commander-in-chief of the theatre in which it served.
3. The control of supply for it would lie with the local commander-in-chief.
4. The administration of its 'domestic' matters would be the prerogative of its own commander, subject only to general control by the Australian Government.<sup>23</sup>

These preparations were progressing well when they were temporarily disrupted by the sudden death of the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Squires, in March 1940. On 3 March the Minister for the Army, G.A. Street, telephoned White, informed him of Squires death and asked him to take up the position of Chief of the General Staff.<sup>24</sup> White felt he was too old and was only filling the position until a permanent staff officer could assume the position. White took over the position, with the rank of full General (the first Australian to hold the rank in wartime), on 20 March 1940.<sup>25</sup>

On 1 January 1940 Squires had recommended to the Government that a 2nd division be raised to form a corps for overseas service.<sup>26</sup> White, believing that Blamey was the only man to handle the interests of the AIF, recommended him for the command of the newly established Corps. After consulting with White, Street appointed Blamey with Major General Mackay and Major General Lavarack to command the 6th and 7th Divisions respectively.<sup>27</sup>

On 13 August 1940 White flew to Canberra for a Cabinet meeting. Tragically he never made it. The Lockheed Hudson plane on which he was a passenger crashed during a

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<sup>22</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, pp, 134, 155.

<sup>23</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 208.

<sup>24</sup> Diary Entry, 3 March 1940, White Papers, AWM, 3DRL 6549, item 50.

<sup>25</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne), 20 March 1940.

<sup>26</sup> Horner, *High Command*, p.32.

<sup>27</sup> Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, p. 208.

landing attempt killing all ten passengers on board. In addition to White, the crash also claimed the lives of Street, Sir Henry Gullett, and Minister for Air. J.V. Fairbairn.<sup>28</sup>

After a state service at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne. White's body was taken to Baungor, only four miles from his home, and he was interred in the local cemetery. White's wife and family later donated a small bronze shrine to St John's Church of England in Canberra. This shrine commemorates White with the words:

A noble and brilliant servant of Australia and the Empire.  
 Servant of God, well done.  
 Well hast thou fought the better fight.

Perhaps the final word should be given to General Birdwood who paid tribute to White when he wrote 'few could realise how much [White] was responsible for so much that our Corps [ANZAC Corps] accomplished'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1940.

<sup>29</sup> Birdwood, 'General Sir Brudenell White', p. 6.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to reassess White's role in the development of the Australian Imperial Force and the emergence of Australian military culture. The thesis began with an examination of White's family background and then his Colonial and Imperial military experiences. This profile was then used to examine the relationship between White and the development of the Australian Imperial Force's organisational culture.

The thesis begins with an overview of the academic literature on organisational culture. This overview argued that organisational cultures are historical and collective phenomenon. They develop as a result of the social interaction of people who live within the same social environment and share a common pattern of beliefs and values. Organisations do not emerge of their own volition. Rather they are formed by the efforts of one or more individuals with a vision of how certain goals can be accomplished. According to Schein the social processes needed to create and sustain organisational cultures are provided by founder(s) who generate the original set of ideas that gets the organisation started. The original core members are then chosen by the founder(s), frequently on the basis that they share the same values, beliefs and ideas as the founder(s). The founder's responses to organisational problems create new values, beliefs and procedures and become the accepted way of doing things.

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. People are an important resource in any organisation but they do not enter an organisation without some prior form of cultural conditioning. Thus, many important elements of an organisation's culture are imported with the entry of organisational members and the ideas they bring with them from outside the organisation's boundaries. With this in mind the thesis then examined White's social conditioning and

identified the values and ideas that White brought with him to the task of establishing the First AIF.

White was born in Victoria and was the son of an Irish immigrant, Sir John Warren White, Baron D'Albi and Marquis D'Albaville. White's mother had a substantial influence on White's early development. She instilled in White the Victorian aristocratic and upper class views on fair play, good manners, loyalty and service. These were values that White retained all his life and shaped his attitudes towards other people and the issues with which he was forced to deal. But White was not a mere transplanted Irish aristocrat. He attended a state school in Brisbane before receiving further tuition at the Eton Preparatory School at Nundah in Queensland. During this time he embraced certain colonial ideas such as self-confidence, independence and initiative that was contained in the early colonial literature and became known as the 'Coming Man' thesis. White was representative of the middle/upper class 'Australian Briton' and regarded England as 'Home' but still retained an attachment to Australia.

White's early military career in the Australian Permanent Forces was a rather casual affair. The dreary garrison duty on Thursday Island was replaced by service in South Africa. White did not see any major action in the South African War and mainly spent his time patrolling the South African veldt. During the early years of White's military career there were no training schools or colleges in Australia so his development was guided by officers who had served or were serving in the British Army. The most influential of these was Major General Sir Edward Hutton who recommended White for acceptance to the Staff College at Camberley in England. This was a major turning point for White.

White attended the Staff College and was introduced to the current theories of war. More importantly he absorbed the progressive ideas of Colonel Henderson who challenged the traditional views by arguing that good infantry and mobility could overcome the advantages of defensive warfare. Henderson argued that initiative should be encouraged in subordinates rather than blind obedience. These ideas were especially appealing to White because they built on values already embraced as a result of his Colonial upbringing.

White furthered his military knowledge during his attachment to the War Office in London. Here he assisted with the organisation of the Territorial Army and witnessed first hand the benefits of grounding military units in the local communities in which they were recruited. These ideas would later be transplanted on the Australian military landscape when White organised the Australian Imperial Force.

In 1912 White returned to Australia and as Director of Military Operations prepared Australia's contingency plans for the war that many believed was imminent. White created plans to cover Australia's subsequent military mobilisation as well as plans that provided the basic structure for the first contingent.

When the war began in 1914 the task of organising a contingent for overseas service fell upon the shoulders of White. It was White's pre-war contingency plan that provided the basis for the overseas force that became known as the Australian Imperial Force. At this stage White's influence was substantial. He designed the arrangements for the recruiting of the force, designed the structure, and selected key people. In addition he drew up the charter which guided the Australian Imperial Force throughout the rest of the war. These arrangements, structures and principles became the foundations not only for the organisational culture of the Australian Imperial Force, but also for the Australian military culture that would develop as a consequence.

The arrival of the Australian Imperial Force in Egypt effectively marginalised White. The organisation he created was subordinated to the imperatives of a coalition war. White, consequently, found himself unable to control the external influences that now guided the Australian Imperial Force. As a junior officer in the much larger Australian and New Zealand Army Corps it took White's powers of persuasion to create the administrative machinery that underpinned the later push for Australian military self government.

Gallipoli was a turning point for White and created the opportunity for him to become the key leader in the future development of the Australian Imperial Force. He assisted with



planning of the Australian landing and subsequent tactical operations. The most successful of these was the Battle of Lone Pine. After Lone Pine White became Birdwood's Chief of Staff, a position he retained until the end of the war. Birdwood entrusted White with the planning and organisation for the evacuation of Gallipoli. Birdwood's faith was handsomely rewarded when White succeeded in removing the 80,000 men at Anzac and Suvla Bay without loss. This enhanced the reputation not only of Birdwood, but also White. When the Anzacs returned to Egypt White was no longer a marginal figure but was central to the decision making within the Australian Imperial Force and the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

White reorganised the Australian Imperial Force, doubling its size and preparing it for embarkation to France. This massive task was completed in six weeks. More interesting at this point was White's influence in directing senior appointments within the force. When Legge was appointed to command the Australian Imperial Force after Bridges was killed it was White who initiated the action that resulted in him being replaced. This reinforced White's values in the organisation's culture and effectively marginalised an officer whose values differed significantly from the prevailing values then embedded in the organisation. Not long after this White again played a role in re-establishing organisational values by removing Brigadier General Irving, who had been appointed by the Australian Government and replacing him with an officer that White had selected.

When the Australian Imperial Force arrived in France White drew up the plans for the formation of the AIF Headquarters in London. This raised the issue of administrative command. The British commanders favoured separating the administrative command from the operational command. White, however, favoured maintaining both roles under the control of Birdwood. In this White was aware that he could influence Birdwood and direct the development of the Australian Imperial Force. During the remainder of the war it became apparent that Birdwood's position was being maintained because of the knowledge, skills and loyalty of White.

In 1918 when Birdwood was appointed to command the British Fifth Army it was intended that White would remain with Birdwood and Monash would take over operational control.

This did not fit the ideas of the media that reported on Australia's war effort. However, the organisational culture that White had shaped closed ranks to protect itself from the threat of external influence. The status quo was maintained until the end of the war.

White's influence also extended to the operations that Australian forces participated in. At Pozières White challenged British criticisms and demonstrated the weaknesses of British planning. He intervened in the planning of the attack by Walker's 1st Australian Division and undoubtedly saved Australian lives. White allowed the attack by Legge's 2nd Australian Division to go ahead in spite of reservations about Legge's plan. Legge's attack failed and resulted in the subsequent transfer of Legge to Australia. White's failure to intervene suggests that White set Legge up to fail and created the opportunity to remove Legge from the Australian Imperial Force altogether. This was yet another example of the organisational culture being used to marginalise officers who represented a threat to, or who did not fit, the prevailing attitudes or images of the Australian Imperial Force.

At Pozières White emphasised the principle that failed attacks should not be reinitiated without changing the operational plan. This has since become a guiding principle of Australian military thinking. Similarly, White emphasised the reliance on good infantry rather than embracing technology to provide solutions to battlefield problems. This humanistic approach became another tenet of Australian military thinking and is only recently being challenged by the imperatives of electronic warfare.

Unknown to many the plan for the Battle of Hamel was originally White's. At a critical juncture of the war the British military leadership asked White to plan the attack. White did not carry out the plan because it was postponed due to the last German offensive in 1918, and because White transferred to the British 5th Army. It was left to Monash to undertake this operation and ultimately take the credit.

White returned to Australia in 1919 and began the task of reorganising the Australian Military Forces. He used the Australian Imperial Force as his model thereby transplanting the organisational culture of this organisation onto the Australian military landscape and

further shaping the development of Australian military culture. This thesis has made it clear that White was no mere staff officer but was a key figure in the founding and development not only of the Australian Imperial Force and its organisational culture, but he also laid the foundations for the emergence of Australian military culture.

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