

The Original 2/1st Battalion A Quantitative Study of an Australian Fighting Unit

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The Original 2/1st Battalion

A Quantitative Study of an Australian Fighting Unit

Richard Travers

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts by Research



School of Humanities
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

August 2014

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Richard Travers

August 2014

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Abbreviations and Symbols

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 2 nd AIF | Second Australian Imperial Force, the expeditionary force that Australia raised in World War II. |
| AIF and 1 st AIF | Australian Imperial Force, the second of the two expeditionary forces that Australia raised in the Great War. After the birth of the 2 nd AIF on the outbreak of World War II, the AIF came to be known as the 1 st AIF. |
| AN&MEF | Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, the first of the two expeditionary forces that Australia raised in the Great War. |
| Anzac | Although this word began life as an acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, it now has a broader connotation, and is generally used in lower case, as it is here. |
| AWM | This abbreviation, used in the National Archives of Australia indexing system, indicates a file held at the Australian War Memorial. |
| CMF | Citizen Military Forces, Australia's militia. |
| NAA | This abbreviation, used in the National Archives of Australia indexing system, indicates a file held at the National Archives of Australia. |
| RAAF | Royal Australian Air Force. |

Prologue

This study asks the question: what kind of men were the diggers? Before setting out to answer it, I should make a declaration of interest.

My great, great grandfather, Warrant Officer Henry Green, was given the regimental number 1 when the Australian Army was first established in 1871. In the Great War, my great grandfather, General William Holmes, commanded the Australian 4th Division; my grandfathers, Colonel Jack Travers and Colonel Hector Clayton, and my great uncle, Colonel Basil Holmes, served in Gallipoli and France; and my great uncle, Major Harry Clayton, served as a medical officer on Gallipoli throughout the Dardanelles campaign. In World War II, my father, William Travers, was an officer of the 2/1st Battalion; and his brother, Jika, was an officer of the 2/2nd Battalion.

These men saw momentous events, yet those of them that I knew - my grandfathers, my great uncle Basil, my father and his brother - were modest to the point of reticence about their military lives. In that, they were like many returned soldiers. That is partly why it falls to historians to answer the question: what kind of men were the diggers?

I have chosen to study my father's Battalion not only because it was his, but also because its brief and dramatic history makes it an ideal subject for a unit history. I have not attempted to put aside what my father told me about the 2/1st Battalion, but, rather, I have done my best to base my analysis on evidence created by the members of the Battalion, conscious of my father's expectation that I would fairly and accurately portray the men with whom he went to war.

Richard Travers

August 2014

Chapter 1

Introduction

What kind of men were the diggers?

The first report of the landing at Gallipoli appeared in Australian newspapers on 8 May 1915. It told Australians that the landing was the finest feat in the war to date:-

There has been no finer feat in this war than this sudden landing in the dark and the storming of the heights, and above all, the holding on whilst reinforcements were landing. These raw colonial troops in these desperate hours proved worthy to fight side by side with the heroes of Mons, the Aisne, Ypres, and Neuve Chapelle.¹

Twenty five years later, General Thomas Blamey, who went ashore on the first day at Gallipoli, gave an Anzac Day address over ABC radio. He told Australians that the diggers who landed at Gallipoli were the most fervent patriots ever to go into battle:-

What a magnificent body of men. Trained to the minute. Keyed up to so high a standard of spiritual strength that each man felt he carried Australia's reputation in his own hands. Quiet and self-contained, serious in some place, jocular in others, but all with the bearing of high adventure and pride of nation . . . All were uplifted with the greatness of the occasion. Never had men gone into battle with a greater fervour of patriotism – the honour of their distant homeland and of their people was in their hands.²

Prime Minister Keating said that the heroes of the Great War were 'not the generals and the politicians but the soldiers and sailors and nurses – those who taught us to

¹ Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, "Mr Ashmead-Bartlett's Story," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May 1915.

² General Blamey's Anzac Day address 25 April 1940: AWM 80; 1 - 36.

endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together'. His admiration extended to all Australian service men and women, who were part of, 'a democratic tradition, the tradition in which Australians have gone to war ever since'.³ Prime Minister Rudd quoted a description of the diggers at Gallipoli: 'They were at home in hell-fire ... they laughed at it; they sang through it. Their pluck was titanic. They were not men but gods, demons infuriated.' For him, this was, 'all part of what we call Anzac.'⁴

The practice of ascribing noble qualities to the diggers is as old as Anzac itself. Was the landing at Gallipoli really the finest feat in the war to date? Were the men who landed at Gallipoli really the most fervent patriots ever to go into battle? Do our soldiers, sailors and nurses really go to war to vindicate a democratic tradition? Were the men of Gallipoli really gods, or demons infuriated?

When it comes to Anzac commemoration, ascribing noble qualities to the men is not only acceptable, it is the norm - *de mortuis nihil nisi bonum*. It is beside the point that the diggers would struggle to identify themselves in many of the descriptions made of them. Ascribing noble qualities is part of mythologising the deeds of the diggers, of seeking to explain historical events by imbuing mere mortals with superhuman qualities. Paul Fussell argued that mythologising was a way of making sense of events that would otherwise seem calamitous.⁵ Mythologising may be integral to the process of grieving.

It is striking that the qualities that Australian politicians and generals ascribe to the diggers are always qualities to which they would like the nation to aspire.⁶ Another general, the British General Archibald Wavell, had quite a different view of the

³ Eulogy delivered at the funeral service of the Unknown Soldier, 11 November 1993, available on the website of the Australian War Memorial: www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/keating.asp accessed on 9 June 2014.

⁴ Anzac Day address 25 April 2010, available on the website of the Australian War Memorial: www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac/2010_speech_rudd.asp accessed on 9 June 2014.

⁵ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 25th anniversary ed. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.

⁶ Richard White, *Inventing Australia : Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Australian Experience (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 125 - 30, especially 29.

diggers. When the men of the 2nd AIF arrived in Egypt early in 1940, he warned them to show Egyptians that 'their notions of Australians as rough, wild, undisciplined people given to strong drink are incorrect.'⁷ Many diggers would recognise a kernel of truth in General Wavell's description of the 1st AIF, but it would be quite out of place at an Australian Anzac Day ceremony.

Questions about the qualities of the diggers may be answered differently depending on the circumstances in which they are asked. Lawyers are familiar with this concept. They proceed on the footing that 'answers to questions of causation [of past events] will differ according to the purpose for which the question is asked'.⁸ Post-modernists recognise it as well. They argue that there are many ways of looking at past events, contending that historians have no better claim to understand or explain them than artists, playwrights, novelists or film-makers.⁹

The proliferation of views that would follow from accepting this concept has troubled some historians. They have claimed that the mythologising of Anzac threatens an understanding of history.¹⁰ In *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds went so far as to argue that, 'in transforming Anzac Day into a sacred myth, we have forgotten our rich and diverse history of nation-making and distorted the history of Gallipoli and

⁷ Gavin Long, *To Benghazi*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 Series 1, Army (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952), 79. See also: Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters : Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Millers Point, N.S.W.: Pier 9, 2010). Richard White, "Sun, Sand and Syphilis: Australian Soldiers and the Orient, Egypt 1914," *Australian Cultural History* 9 (1990).

⁸ *Barnes v Hay* (1988) 12 NSWLR 337, Mahoney JA at 353; *Environment Agency v Empress Car Co (Arbortillery) Ltd* [1999] 2 AC 22, Lord Hoffman at 29; *Chappel v Hart* (1998) 195 CLR 232, Gummow J at 256; and *Henville v Walker* (2001) 206 CLR 459, McHugh J at [98] – [100].

⁹ The views of the post-modernists are discussed in greater detail on page 13 below.

¹⁰ See, for example: Jane Ross and Australia. Army., *The Myth of the Digger : The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985); Robin Gerster, *Big-Noting : The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing*, 1st. pbk. ed. (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1992); Craig Stockings, *Anzac's Dirty Dozen : Twelve Myths of Australian Military History* (Kensington, N.S.W.: New South Publishing, 2012); *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010); Marilyn Lake et al., *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: New South, 2010).; James Brown, *Anzac's Long Shadow : The Cost of Our National Obsession*, Redbacks.; Patricia Grimshaw and Curtin University of Technology. API Network., *Creating a Nation*, Rev. ed., Australian Scholarly Classics (Perth: API Network, Curtin University of Technology, Australian Research Institute, 2006).

its Imperial context and consequences.’¹¹ The claim that there exists a ‘history of Gallipoli’ that may be ‘distorted’ by the expression of different views implies a view that historians are better equipped than others to answer questions about the diggers and the Anzac tradition.

This study addresses the historian’s question: what kind of men were the diggers? It concentrates on a single Australian battalion of World War II – the 2/1st Infantry Battalion. The study asks: what was special about the 2/1st Battalion? What was its character and composition? What defined it as a social entity? What influenced the way the Battalion carried itself, the way it behaved? Social military historians would collapse all of these questions into one: what was the culture of the 2/1st Battalion?

Accepting that many forms of answers to such questions are possible, the study aims to answer them by the evaluation of evidence – evidence that was created by the members of the Battalion themselves when they answered a standard questionnaire on enlistment.¹² The rationale for this approach is simple: the historian’s claim to give a better answer to the question than the myth-makers has no substance unless the historian’s answer rests on evidence. Or, to put it another way, if the historian’s answer does not rest on evidence, it is nothing more than myth-making.

¹¹ Lake et al., *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, vii.

¹² Among the many approaches that may be taken to the assessment of unit culture are: the standard Australian unit narrative history, examples of which abound, but include, for example, the 2/1st Battalion unit history, E. C. Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment* (Earlwood, N.S.W.: Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee, 1987). and the 2/3rd Battalion unit history, Ken Clift, *War Dance : A Story of the 2/3 Aust. Inf. Battalion A.I.F* (Kingsgrove, N.S.W.: P.M. Fowler & 2/3rd Battalion Association, 1980).; American narrative unit histories, of which Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers : E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001). is an example; campaign histories, of which Craig A. J. Stockings, *Bardia : Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac* (Sydney, N.S.W.: UNSW Press, 2009). is an example; individual accounts, such as Bob Holt et al., *From Ingleburn to Aitape : The Trials and Tribulations of a Four Figure Man* (Lakemba, N.S.W.: R. Holt, 1981). and H. B. Gullett, *Not as a Duty Only : An Infantryman's War* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1984).; and command studies, including D. M. Horner and Australian War Memorial., *High Command : Australia and Allied Strategy, 1939-1945* (Canberra; Sydney ; Boston: Australian War Memorial ; Allen & Unwin, 1982). and Garth Pratten, *Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War*, Australian Army History Series (Cambridge England ; Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The decision to examine the culture of the original 2/1st Battalion by reference to the evidence of the attestation forms implies no criticism of the value of studies that seek to examine the culture of military units using other forms of evidence.

Finally, in addressing the question: what kind of men were the diggers? in the context of a single Australian fighting unit, this study challenges the notion that there is such a thing as a stereotypical digger, or a single Anzac myth. To the extent that there is an identifiable Anzac tradition, it is the synthesis of the experiences of individual diggers fighting in different units, at different times and in different conflicts. The conclusions that this study draws from the evidence of the enlistment papers of some members of a single Australian infantry battalion hold good for the men of that battalion only. The potential to extrapolate the results of this study to other diggers or to other Australian fighting units, if it exists at all, is strictly limited.

The 2/1st Battalion

The 2/1st Battalion was formed on 16 October 1939 as part of the Second Australian Imperial Force.¹³ By 8 November 1939, 23 officers and 914 other ranks - all volunteers - had joined the Battalion at Ingleburn Army Camp.¹⁴ Two months later, the new Battalion left Sydney Harbour bound for Palestine, where it completed its training.¹⁵ In September 1940, the 2/1st Battalion moved to Egypt, where it continued to train for a role in the Western Desert, fighting the Italians.¹⁶

On 20 December 1940, the 2/1st Battalion crossed the border into Libya.¹⁷ On 3 January 1941, it led the attack on Bardia. This was the first Australian engagement of the war. The battle was a spectacular success.¹⁸ Two weeks later, the Battalion played a central part in taking the port of Tobruk. Thousands of Italian prisoners and a rich supply of enemy equipment were captured in both battles, yet doubts remained about the calibre of the victories. If the Italians had proven to be weak

¹³ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 1," (AWM52-8-3-1-001). Entry for 16 October 1939.

¹⁴ Ibid. Entries for 2 - 8 November 1939.

¹⁵ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 3," (AWM52-8-3-1-003); "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 4," (AWM52-8-3-1-004); "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 5," (AWM52-8-3-1-005); "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 6," (AWM52-8-3-1-006); "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 7," (AWM52-8-3-1-007).

¹⁶ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 7." Entry for 1 September 1940 and following entries.

¹⁷ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 11 ", (AWM52-8-3-1-011). Entry for 20 December 1940.

¹⁸ Long, *To Benghazi*, 163ff. Stockings, *Bardia : Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac*.

adversaries, things would be different when General Rommel and the Afrika Korps arrived in the Western Desert late in March 1941.¹⁹

By that time, however, the 2/1st Battalion was in the mountains of northern Greece. There, in April 1941, the Battalion met the combined force of the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe.²⁰ When the Germans unexpectedly attacked through Yugoslavia, the Allied flank was turned, precipitating a scrambling retreat to Athens.²¹ On 25 April 1941, after a series of rear-guard actions, the 2/1st Battalion was evacuated from mainland Greece to the island of Crete.²² The Germans had, indeed, proven to be a more powerful enemy than the Italians.

The 2/1st Battalion encountered the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe again in the defence of Crete. Together with the 2/11th Battalion and a scratch force of Greeks, the 2/1st Battalion had the task of defending the airstrip at Retimo against the German 2nd Parachute Regiment.²³ With no means of withdrawal from the island, retreat was not an option. In a hard-fought battle, the Allied defenders killed around 700 German paratroopers, captured Oberst Sturm, the German commanding officer, and most of his remaining men. It was a resounding victory for the Australians.²⁴

Although the 2nd Parachute Regiment was defeated at Retimo, the Germans won the battle for Crete. After they succeeded in taking the airstrip at Maleme, the Germans sent an overwhelming force to Retimo on 30 May 1941. Oberst Sturm and his men

¹⁹ Gavin Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 Series 1, Army (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1953), 37.

²⁰ The Wehrmacht is the German Army, the Luftwaffe the German Air Force. "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 13 ", (AWM52-8-3-1-013). Entry for 26 March 1941 and following entries.

²¹ Ibid. Entry for 12 April 1941 and following entries.

²² Ibid. Entries for 25 and 26 April 1941.

²³ The German unit is identified in the Official History: *Greece, Crete and Syria*, 229. "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 13 ". Entry for 20 May 1941 and following entries.

²⁴ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 13 ". Lt-Colonel Campbell's account of the battle, written whilst a prisoner of war, and added to the Battalion's war diary after his release.

were released from captivity, and the defenders took their place in the prisoners' cage.²⁵

Eighteen months after it was raised, the 2/1st Battalion surrendered. Its surviving members were taken into German prisoner of war camps, where they spent the rest of the war. The 2/1st Battalion was rebuilt from a nucleus of men who had missed the campaign in Greece. They were joined by 100 men transferred from each of the 2/2nd and 2/3rd Battalions and by reinforcements from Australia. The reconstituted Battalion fought with distinction in Syria and in New Guinea. The 2/1st Battalion was disbanded in December 1945.²⁶

This study

The subjects of this study are the 649 men of the 2/1st Battalion who were killed in battle in Libya, Greece and Crete or who were captured on Crete.²⁷ To distinguish them from other members of the 2/1st Battalion, they are called the 'original 2/1st Battalion' in this study. The study aims to develop an evidence-based approach to identifying the qualities of those men. The main source of evidence is the answer that each man gave to a standard questionnaire he completed on enlistment. The questions were:-

1. What is your name?
2. Where were you born?
3. Are you a natural born or naturalized British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced.
4. What is your age and date of birth?
5. What is your trade or occupation?

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ For a detailed account of the activities of the battalion, see: Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*.

²⁷ One hundred and two men died. Five hundred and forty seven survived the war.

6. Are you married, single or a widower?
7. Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm?
8. Who is your actual next of kin?
9. What is your permanent address?
10. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so)²⁸

The answers of all 649 men have been collated.

The study has four objectives:-

1. to gather, collate and present the evidence;
2. to use the evidence to describe the social demographics, background and experience of the men of the 2/1st Battalion;
3. to identify the qualities that the men of the 2/1st Battalion shared and, thereby, to attempt to identify and understand the culture of the Battalion; and
4. to assess whether and, if so, how the analysis of the evidence can be extended beyond the original 2/1st Battalion to throw light on broader questions about the myths and legends that have come to surround the Australian soldier and the Anzac tradition.

²⁸ For an example of a completed attestation form, including the questionnaire see: Figures 1 and 2.

Chapter 2

Historiography

Unit histories, culture and the quest for the stereotypical soldier

This study takes the form of a study of a single fighting unit. Unit histories boast a long and diverse tradition. An early unit history, the *Iliad*, took the form of an epic poem. The *Bayeux Tapestry* recorded the deeds of the Norman force that conquered Britain in 1066 in a woven image. In *Henry V*, Shakespeare glorified the 'band of brothers' who fought with King Harry at Agincourt.²⁹ Stephen Ambrose copied the title for his *Band of Brothers*, an historical account of an American unit that landed in Normandy on D-Day.³⁰ Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg kept the title when they adapted the book for television.³¹ Evelyn Waugh's novel, *Officers and Gentlemen*, described the exploits of a commando force in the Battle of Crete.³²

The 2/1st Battalion has its own unit history, *The First At War: The story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939 – 1945 The City of Sydney Regiment*, which, like many unit histories, was written and published by a committee of unit members.³³ My choice to write an account of the 2/1st Battalion as a unit history and not, for example, as a poem, in a play, a novel or a film, raises issues of technique and methodology that will bear ultimately on the objectivity of the account I write. For some, writing

²⁹ *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene III.

³⁰ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers : E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne : From Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

³¹ Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, *Band of Brothers* (Home Box Office in association with Dreamworks and Playtone, 2006).

³² Evelyn Waugh, *Sword of Honour. A Final Version of the Novels Men at Arms (1952), Officers and Gentlemen (1955) and Unconditional Surrender (1961)* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965).

³³ Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*.

as a historian means interacting with historical facts in the manner that EH Carr described in his lectures series *What is History?*:-

The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one another. The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless. My first answer therefore to the question, What is History?, is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.³⁴

Post-modernists have criticised this approach, arguing that, when traditional historians interact with the facts, they distort the 'truth', producing 'constructed artefacts no different in cognitive origin than any made thing or "fiction"'.³⁵ If historical facts only come to life through the interpretation of historians, then history cannot 'be distinguished from literary study, and the "past" [dissolves] into literature'.³⁶ In short, post-modernists argue that historians have no better claim to understand or explain historical 'truth' than artists, playwrights, novelists or film-makers.

These criticisms of the interactive techniques of traditional historians raise the question whether other techniques are available that are more transparent, more objective and less susceptible to the influence of personal bias than traditional techniques. Rather surprisingly, American military historians (few of whom would claim to be post-modernists) have been exploring 'new' techniques since the 1940s. While traditional American military history emphasised battles, strategy, generals and statesmen, these historians turned their attention to social and cultural issues, examining the impact of war on common men and women. In 1991, the American historian, John Whiteclay Chambers II, wrote that:-

³⁴ Edward Hallett Carr and Richard J. Evans, *What Is History?*, 40th Anniversary ed. ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 24.

³⁵ Nancy F Partner, quoted in Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997), 80.

³⁶ Gabrielle Spiegel quoted in *ibid.*, 96.

. . . the 'new' military history provided a larger social and historical context that was lacking in the old style, operational, headquarters-oriented accounts . . . [It] represented a change in emphasis – from narrower focus on tactics and commanders to a broader and often interdisciplinary focus on the interaction of war with society, technology, economics, politics, and culture – the 'new' military history.³⁷

Traditional military history relied on interactive analysis of the letters, diaries and published accounts of the soldiers themselves, and on unit diaries and records.³⁸ Seeing limitations in the traditional approach, 'new' military historians turned to other methodologies and different forms of evidence. Chambers continued:-

. . . the 'new' military history is bringing to bear many of the methodologies and concerns of the social sciences and humanities, and is providing the context missing from the narrow operational focus of much of the 'old' military history. Quantitative analysis [is] much in evidence. So [is] the application of insights from psychology, anthropology, political science, and the new social history. In [my] opinion, it is in the movement towards an even broader context – of relating war, peace, and the military to society and culture as well as to economics, politics, and international history – that offers the most intellectually challenging and exciting direction in the scholarship in the field today.³⁹

Bell Irvin Wiley was a pioneer in the field. He published *The Life of Johnny Reb The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* in 1943. It was followed by a companion volume, *The Life of Billy Yank The Common Soldier of the Union*, in 1952.⁴⁰ Wiley wrote the books to redress the bias that, 'in the flood of history and near history published during the past half century, the doings of common soldiers have usually served as a hastily sketched backdrop for dramas featuring campaigns and leaders.' His work

³⁷ John Whiteclay Chambers, "The New Military History: Myth and Reality," *The Journal of Military History* 55 (1991): 397 - 98.

³⁸ See, for example: Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years : Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1981); Peter Stanley, "'Our Big World': The Social History of the Light Horse Regiment, 1916 - 1918," *Sabretache* XXXIX (1998).

³⁹ Chambers, "The New Military History: Myth and Reality," 406. American military historians concentrated on the Civil War. The Civil War has a good claim to be the most studied war of all time. David Blight, Professor of History at Yale University, claims that more books have been written about the Civil War than there have been days since the war ended.

⁴⁰ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank; the Common Soldier of the Union*, 1st ed. (Indianapolis,: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952); *The Life of Johnny Reb : The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, Updated ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

was, 'an attempt to give the man of the ranks, who after all was the army, something of his rightful measure of consideration.'⁴¹ The books were pure social history. Neither described a battle. They drew on primary sources, chiefly, letters and diaries to describe experiences that soldiers shared - the excitement of the outbreak of war, the routines of military service, poor rations, past-times outside times of battle, wives and girlfriends, heroism and cowardice.

Johnny Reb had a chapter called 'What Manner of Men'. *Billy Yank* had a chapter called 'The Men who wore the Blue'. The chapters were devoted to the demographics of the armies, but they told quite different stories. The *Johnny Reb* chapter began:-

The men who marched under the Stars and Bars were impressively diverse in character. The full range of their variation can never be known, however, because one of the most fruitful sources of information – the original muster and descriptive rolls – is so incomplete. For some companies such rolls were not even prepared; for many, only a part of the required data was given; and for hundreds of others the records were lost or destroyed. But from the records that are extant ... a general idea of the South's soldiery may be obtained.⁴²

Despite the limitations of the evidence, Wiley was able to give a sound demographic description of the Confederate army covering such issues as age (discussing the prevalence of under-age and over-age enlistment), occupation, place of birth and race (discussing the roles played by soldiers of Negro and American Indian backgrounds).

If Wiley was starved for evidence on the Confederate side, he had a wealth of information on the Union side. Benjamin A Gould, an actuary with the United States Sanitary Commission, compiled vital statistics for no less than 1,012,273 Union volunteers. His report gave Wiley a mine of information on the northern army. Gould worked in such detail that he not only described headline items like age,

⁴¹ *The Life of Johnny Reb : The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, 13.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 322.

occupation, place of birth, height and weight, but also hair colour, pulmonary capacity, vision, pulse, dental health and even baldness.⁴³ Gould went so far as to give a State by State breakdown of volunteers compared to conscripts according to the colour of their eyes!⁴⁴

In these books, Wiley answered the question: what kind of men fought in the Civil War? He based his answers on the evidence of traditional sources – letters and diaries – and on a new form of evidence - demographic analysis. His conclusions were muted, making a marked contrast with those of the mythologists of the Anzacs. This was his view of the Confederates:-

What I have read since 1943 [it was 1978 – Wiley was writing the preface to a new edition of *Johnny Reb*] has enhanced considerably my admiration of the common soldiers [of the Confederacy] and the sturdy yeomanry to which most of them belonged. This is not to state that such folk were without blemish, for this class has its sprinkling of rogues, villains, croakers, and cowards. But in the great crisis of the 1860s, the ‘lowly’ people gave a better account of themselves than did the more privileged members of Southern society ... Generally speaking they were not the drab, improvident, depraved, ignoramuses depicted in *Tobacco Road* and other fictional works. Many of them were deeply religious; most of those who had families repeatedly manifested concern for the education of their children; the overwhelming majority were generous in their impulses, wholesome in their reactions, and stalwart in their adversity.⁴⁵

Thanks to the Actuary Gould, Wiley’s conclusions about the Northern soldiers rested on firmer ground than his conclusions about the Confederates. This was how he dealt with the age of the Northern army:-

On the basis of Gould’s estimate it may be stated that in the first year of the conflict the largest single age group among the men who wore the blue was the eighteen-year olds (even with due allowance for lying); that the next largest category was the twenty-one-year-olds; and that beyond twenty-one, as a general rule, age groups became progressively smaller.

⁴³ Benjamin Apthorp Gould, *Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers*, Facsimile Edition ed. (New York: Sabin Americana, 1979).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 194 - 95.

⁴⁵ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb : The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, 11.

The average age of the men increased slightly with the progress of the war ... Gould estimates the average age of the army to have been 25.10 years in July 1862; 25.76 in July 1863; 26.06 in July 1864; and 26.32 in May 1856.⁴⁶

Many historians followed Wiley's lead,⁴⁷ but not all of them were blessed with sources as fertile as Gould. Writers contending with poorer sources resorted to census data to describe the background and experience of soldiers. Because the information in the census did not relate directly to any military unit, the attempt to rely on it alone was unconvincing. The analysis tended to rest on doubtful inferences and on over-interpretation of the data.⁴⁸ Their work showed that the 'new' military history, like all history, was only as good as the available evidence. Writing in 2007, Wayne E. Lee was able to report that the 'war and society' approach to military history had boomed:-

The now old new history has focused on the more humanistic side of war: Who was in the military, and what happened to them while they were there? The tremendous success in answering those basic questions about the composition of military organizations and the experience of their members has begun to open up newer and more complex questions about values, motivations, and expectations.⁴⁹

This passage reflects the transition between the second, third and fourth objectives of this study - between answering basic demographic questions about the men of the Battalion and using the evidence to answer questions about the culture of the Battalion and, by extension, about the broader Anzac tradition. Lee characterised

⁴⁶ *The Life of Billy Yank; the Common Soldier of the Union*, 303.

⁴⁷ Examples include: John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine; a Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia,: Lippincott, 1957); Alan T. Nolan, *The Iron Brigade; a Military History* (New York,: Macmillan, 1961); Michael Barton, *Goodmen, the Character of Civil War Soldiers* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981); James I. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 1st ed., American Military History (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking, 1988).

⁴⁸ Maris Vinovskis, *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War : Exploratory Essays* (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Chapters 1 and 2. The information in the census forms had been provided for civilian purposes unrelated to the Civil War. The attempt to use the information as a basis for understanding Civil War soldiers seemed laboured, as if the authors were stretching the information to fit a use for which it was never intended.

⁴⁹ Wayne E. Lee, "Mind and Matter - Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (2007): 1117.

these broader questions as going to values, motivations and expectations – qualities that are not readily measured by quantitative methods.

Lee was imprecise about the nature of the transition from basic demographics to broader questions of culture. He described it variously as taking ‘the so-called cultural or linguistic turn’; as tending ‘to incorporate the lessons of the new military history and occasionally even the newer forms of cultural analysis’; and as ‘injecting humanity into the story, and . . . using that humanity to *explain*.’⁵⁰ It is fair to conclude that Lee advocated caution in using evidence obtained from quantitative methodologies to support cultural analysis. Consistently, the third and fourth objectives of this study – those going to cultural analysis of the 2/1st Battalion and, more broadly, to the Anzac myths and legends - are framed in rather tentative terms.

For Lee, culture was a set of shared assumptions, beliefs and influences that affected the way in which a military unit behaved. Culture might be ‘visible’, in the sense that participants were conscious that it was influencing their decisions, or ‘invisible’ in the sense that it operated at a subconscious, almost instinctive, level.⁵¹ He argued that culture was capable of affecting strategy. Analysing strategy through a cultural lens would shift the question from ‘Who won and why?’ to ‘Why did they try to win that way?’ Analysing strategy through a cultural lens would open new horizons, for example, making possible the view that there was an American way of war that could be discerned in the strategies followed in the Civil War, the Great War, World War II and during the Cold War.⁵²

Culture could mould the behaviour of individual unit members. It could, for example, shape the motivation of soldiers to enlist, serve and fight. It could affect

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1117, 40 and 41.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1117 - 18.

⁵² Ibid., 1120ff. This begs the question: is there an Australian way of war? Cf. Huntington’s theoretical framework of civil-military relations: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge,; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957).

their behaviour in the field.⁵³ Being pervasive, it could mould the behaviour of entire military units.⁵⁴ Culture of this type was transmitted by operation of community memory:-

And, as historians are increasingly aware, memory is a highly subjective construction of experience, and as memory is constructed, it in turn reshapes sense of self, sense of nation, and preparation for the next war. Modern historiography has made clear that not only is individual identity malleable, but the nation is an imagined community, and war has often served as an occasion to reshape identity or to reimagine the community.⁵⁵

Lee argued that American memories of World War Two centred on the 'multiethnic combat squad, a cliché of literature and film'. The *Band of Brothers*, in book and film form, was an example of the genre.⁵⁶

Robert Fogel gave a better explanation of the way in which quantitative evidence might impact on broader questions of culture. Fogel and Stanley Engerman wrote an economic analysis of American Negro slavery, called *Time on the Cross*.⁵⁷ It relied heavily on quantitative methods – counting, as Fogel called it. He claimed that the experience of writing *Time on the Cross* had demonstrated 'the dramatic change in interpretation that may result merely by moving from an impression to an actual count.'⁵⁸ In response to traditional arguments that young slave women were promiscuous, Fogel and Engerman undertook a search of archival material that produced a distribution of the ages of slave mothers at the birth of their first child. It showed that more than half of all slave women were over twenty years of age at the birth of their first surviving child. Fogel described how, 'this "mere" act of counting

⁵³ Lee, "Mind and Matter - Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," 1127ff.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1134ff.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1135 - 36. Cf. Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London ; New York: Verso, 2006). Donald Horne, *The Public Culture : The Triumph of Industrialism* (London: Pluto, 1986), 8 - 16.

⁵⁶ Lee, "Mind and Matter - Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," 1136. It would be easy to trawl through the war film genre, multiplying examples.

⁵⁷ Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross; the Economics of American Negro Slavery*, 1st ed. (Boston,: Little, 1974).

⁵⁸ Robert William Fogel, "The Limits of Quantitative Methods in History," *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (1975): 337.

... threw into doubt the entire structure of traditional assumptions about the sexual behaviour of slaves.⁵⁹ The relatively old birth ages of the mothers were inconsistent with claims of promiscuity. In this way, evidence about something quantifiable - the birth age of mothers - changed the debate about something as unquantifiable and value-laden as promiscuity.⁶⁰

John Whiteclay Chambers II and Wayne E. Lee agreed that 'old' American military history had a narrow operational focus and paid little heed to the culture of military organizations and the experience of their members. The same was not true of 'old' Australian military history. The flagship work of 'old' Australian military history was the Official History of the Great War. The principal author, CEW Bean, was acutely aware that the Great War, and the way it was remembered, would shape Australia's identity. In the last paragraphs of his narrative, he described the history of the Australian Imperial Force as a national possession:-

But the Australian Imperial Force is not dead. That famous army of generous men marches still down the long lane of its country's history ...

What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and the smallness of their story will stand. Whatever glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mist of ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession for ever.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ If Fogel saw the debate as one between the traditional and innumerate, on the one hand, and the modern and numerate, he also saw its amusing side. He gave as exemplifying the views contrary to his own a reference to the statement of the famous Democrat historian, Arthur J Schlesinger, Jr - 'There is much ... which we must leave, whether we like it or not, not just to historians but to poets, novelists, painters, musicians, philosophers, theologians, even politicians, even saints - in short, to one form or another of humanist. For an indefinite future, I suspect, humanism will continue to yield truths about both individual and social experience which quantitative social research by itself could never reach': Arthur J Jr Schlesinger, "The Humanist Looks at Empirical Social Research," *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 6 (1962): 771. Perhaps, Fogel knew how much a statement like Schlesinger's would inflame the post-modernists. Fogel's reference to Schlesinger is found at: Fogel, "The Limits of Quantitative Methods in History," 333.

⁶¹ C. E. W. Bean and Australian War Memorial., *The Australian Imperial Force in France : During the Allied Offensive, 1918*, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942), 1096.

Bean made the character of the digger a central theme of the Official History. He devoted pages to describing the 'great-hearted men' of the AIF, always in heroic terms. He wrote that the diggers displayed 'qualities of independence, originality, the faculty of rising to an occasion, and loyalty to a "mate", [that] became recognizable as parts of the national character.'⁶² These qualities were nowhere more evident than in the Australian bushman: 'The bush still sets the standard of personal efficiency even in the Australian cities. The bushman is the hero of the Australian boy; the arts of the bush life are his ambition.'⁶³

Bean's assessment of the diggers was cultural analysis pure and simple. It was what Lee would call 'a highly subjective construction of experience,' 'malleable,' and apt to be reshaped and reimagined.⁶⁴ It contained more than a hint of mythologising. Could Bean's assessment be reshaped at the hands of 'new' military historians?

In his 1973 paper, *The Origin and Character of the First AIF, 1914 – 1918: Some statistical evidence*,⁶⁵ Lloyd Robson attempted to do just that. The title suggested that the paper was a standard work of 'new' military history aimed at answering basic questions about the composition of the AIF and the experience of its members. But the title was misleading. In fact, the paper was the vehicle for challenging Bean's view that the Australian bushman was the stereotype of the 1st AIF.⁶⁶

Robson derived his statistical evidence from the personnel records of the 1st AIF. As part of the enlistment process, each soldier completed an attestation form answering a similar questionnaire to that answered by recruits in World War II. Rather than analyse the records of every soldier (there were around 417,000 of them), Robson

⁶² C. E. W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac : From the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, 13th ed. Ibid. (Angus & Robertson), 7.

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁴ Lee, "Mind and Matter - Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," 1135 - 36.

⁶⁵ L. L. Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–1918: Some Statistical Evidence," *Historical Studies* 15, no. 61 (1973). A similar sample is found in: John Williams, *The Quarantined Culture : Australian Reactions to Modernism, 1913-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 248ff.

⁶⁶ Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–1918: Some Statistical Evidence," 741ff.

analysed a sample of records and extrapolated the results to the whole.⁶⁷ He examined the records of approximately 0.5% of 417,000 members of the 1st AIF. This equated to around 2,000 soldiers – a relatively modest sample.⁶⁸ Robson's analysis provided basic demographic information including occupation on enlistment, date of enlistment, State of enlistment, birthplace, religion, marital status, age and rank.⁶⁹ He also relied on data from the Australian census taken in 1911.⁷⁰

After briefly summarising the results of his demographic analysis, Robson turned his sights on Bean's assertion of the bush stereotype. Where Bean had emphasised 'the rural origins of some members of the AIF', Robson used his results to demonstrate that 'those engaged in primary production formed only a small part of the AIF'.⁷¹ Where Bean had claimed that the Tasmanian population comprised mainly sheep farmers, fruit-growers and miners, Robson used data from the census to prove that that less than one-third of the male population of Tasmania was so employed.⁷² Robson also used census data to demonstrate that Bean was wrong to claim that Queenslanders were largely engaged in raising cattle. Less than a third of Queenslanders were primary producers.⁷³

Robson's analysis, therefore, provided a basis to argue that evidence to support Bean's bush stereotype was lacking. Robson did not, however, rest with pointing out the lack of evidence. He went on to attack Bean's broader argument, entering a debate that was all about culture:-

The Official Historian had a semi-mystical view that the hard conditions of pioneering life were purifying; he held that Australia owed more to its

⁶⁷ Robson first used the methodology in a study of convicts sent to Australia, first published in 1965: *The Convict Settlers of Australia*, 2nd ed. (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1994). Robson describes his statistical methodology in Appendix II of his book.

⁶⁸ D. M. Horner et al., *The Australian Centenary History of Defence* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 107. Volume 6

⁶⁹ Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–1918: Some Statistical Evidence," 738 - 39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 745.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

droughts and the conditions they created and the demands they made, than to the blue skies and soft airs, sea beaches and gardens and fruits, short toil and long pleasure and leisure . . . Bean's assessment, to the extent that it almost completely disregards urban life and values, is essentially anti-cultural, because 'culture' in the Arnoldian sense emerged from the Australian bush only to the extent that it has ever emerged from primitive conditions. The role of the bourgeoisie and that great section of Australian urban society which sought to develop European capitalistic and middle-class values finds no place in his analysis. No wonder; the values which Bean commemorates and holds up for emulation are the simple values of a simple element of society.⁷⁴

Having set out to chastise Bean for making assertions unsupported by evidence, Robson himself made assertions without evidence. He had some evidence about the occupations of his sample, but he had no evidence to support the claim that those in urban society were seeking to develop capitalistic or middle-class values. In his enthusiasm to accuse Bean of hyperbole, Robson engaged in hyperbole of his own.

Robson's article demonstrated that quantitative methods were capable of producing evidence about the composition of a military force and the experience of its members that was relevant and valuable in debates about culture and national identity, but his attack on Bean went farther than his evidence justified. His evidence supported only part of his attack.

Peter Charlton's *The Thirty-Niners*, written in 1981, was a study of early enlistees in the 2nd AIF. Charlton drew on the Official History of World War II, on letters, diaries, war diaries, interviews and on responses to a questionnaire.⁷⁵ Interviews and questionnaires were examples of 'new' techniques, if on a small scale – Charlton had only 200 responses to his questionnaire. Charlton combined the evidence from these sources with evidence derived from traditional sources.

Charlton's use of the Official History of World War II is noteworthy. Gavin Long, the principal author of the Official History of World War II, continued the tradition

⁷⁴ Ibid., 744 - 45.

⁷⁵ Peter Charlton, *The Thirty-Niners* (South Melbourne, Vic.: Macmillan, 1981).

established by CEW Bean. Thanks largely to the efforts of Bean and Long, the Australian Official Histories have achieved a status as standard references not shared by the official histories of some countries.⁷⁶ As Robson proved, later historians may not always agree with the Official Histories, but they cannot ignore them. Not least, the Official Histories contain a great deal of reliable background information, including some statistical and quantitative material of interest to social historians using the 'new' techniques.⁷⁷ A case in point is Volume III of the Official History of *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914 – 1918* by Colonel AG Butler, which included a section on war statistics. Tucked away among almost 150 pages of medical statistics are two tables: one devoted to the social composition of the AIF; and the other to the ages of its members.⁷⁸ If Robson had only known it, those tables included virtually all of the information he went to such pains to establish by his sampling technique, without any of the problems that the sampling technique might have introduced.⁷⁹

John Barrett's *We Were There: Australian Soldiers of World War II Tell Their Stories*, published in 1987, was based on answers to 180 questions given by 3,700 respondents.⁸⁰ Although Barrett had a large sample, and his respondents provided a wealth of material, he made no claim that his sample was representative, or that his analysis was statistically rigorous. To the contrary, he boasted that his study was not a standard academic analysis, but a collection of anecdotes. He claimed that those who expected a dry academic study would be disappointed to find none of the normal trappings of an academic publication – no correlations, no footnotes and no

⁷⁶ For an account of the influence that Churchill exercised over the British histories of the Second World War, see: David Reynolds, *In Command of History : Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2005).

⁷⁷ See, for example: Ernest Sir Scott, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918 Australia During the War*, XII vols., vol. XI (Sydney : Angus & Robertson, 1938-), 866ff. Gavin Long, "The Final Campaigns. [with Plates and Maps.]," (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963), 633ff.

⁷⁸ A. G. Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Melbourne ;: Canberra : Australian War Memorial, 1938), 890 and 98 - 99. Volume III.

⁷⁹ There were no sampling issues because Butler's statistics came from a 100% sample.

⁸⁰ John Barrett, *We Were There : Australian Soldiers of World War Two Tell Their Stories* (Ringwood, Vic.: Viking, 1987), 18 - 19.

academic jargon. The book, said Barrett, 'was always intended to be a compilation of the experiences and attitudes of some Australian soldiers, described – with a little help – by the men themselves.'⁸¹

Barrett was a poor advocate for the use of 'new' techniques. Indeed, his ambivalence about the use of statistics led him to apologise in advance for using them:-

To take the simplest example, it is going to be repeatedly said that there were, say, 40 per cent of the respondents in one category, 30 per cent in the next, and 20 per cent in the third. (And it will often have to be taken for granted that the remaining 10 per cent did not answer, left it unclear or were oddball.) Such figures should not be seen as boring. They should be welcomed as being much more helpful than the vagueness of terms like 'a few', 'some', 'others', 'many', and 'a significant number'.⁸²

Not once did Barrett use a graph or a chart to summarise his data. He adhered rigidly to a narrative format, turning his back on the opportunity to display his statistical evidence in new and imaginative ways. Rather than use graphs, charts and maps to present his data in attractive and interesting formats, he disguised his results in an old-style narrative format. For those expecting to see 'new' techniques used to full advantage, Barrett's book was a disappointment.

Robson agreed with Barrett on the question of displaying statistical evidence. He believed that the use of new formats would alienate readers: 'what satisfies the mathematically-minded baffles another reader who is unaccustomed to judging tabular data and rendered uneasy by the scientific style and lack of subjective judgments and speculation . . . in statistical analysis.'⁸³ Like Barrett, Robson presented his statistical data in narrative format.

⁸¹ Ibid., 33 - 34.

⁸² Ibid., 26.

⁸³ Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–1918: Some Statistical Evidence," 738.

In *The Civilians Who Joined Up, 1939 – 45*, Mark Johnston set out to describe the ‘typical Australian recruit destined for front-line service’ in World War II.⁸⁴ Johnston based his study on quantitative analysis, but he began by describing the enlistment protocols. This was a sound approach. The enlistment protocols set minimum and maximum ages; imposed height restrictions; gave preference to single men; excluded men who were not natural born British subjects or naturalised; excluded full-blooded Aborigines; fixed medical standards; and forbade the recruitment of men in a broad range of protected occupations.⁸⁵ The enlistment protocols, therefore, dictated many of the qualities that ‘typical’ Australian recruits would share. The protocols might, for example, operate to prevent the enlistment of a married man in his thirties who had risen to a position in middle management, but they would not prevent the enlistment of an unmarried, unemployed twenty-year-old.

Johnston took his statistical data from Government files. In 1942 and 1943, the Army took a Census of Army Personnel. The census covered men serving in the Middle East, elsewhere overseas and in Australia. The census was thorough, covering about 90% of the serving number of the Army.⁸⁶ Each man was required to fill out a census card under supervised conditions. In addition to personal information, the men were required to disclose their usual civil occupations, their educational background, their occupational intentions after the war and their blood type. Some of the information would be used for wartime purposes, but much of it was intended for post-war planning. Some of the information duplicated data on the men’s attestation forms, but large parts of it – especially going to their educational background – were new. Not only had the Army collected this information, but the Commonwealth Statistician had tabulated the data from a sample of 42,350 men in

⁸⁴ Mark Johnston, "The Civilians Who Joined up, 1939 - 45," *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 29 (1996).

⁸⁵ Military Board Instructions for the Second Australian Imperial Force, 6th Division and Ancillary Troops 18 October 1939: MP729/7; 37/421/97.

⁸⁶ Census of Army Personnel: NAA: MP729/6; 58/401/485.

charts that Johnston could readily incorporate into his analysis.⁸⁷ Like Wiley with Actuary Gould, Johnston had the good fortune of finding a large sample already collated and analysed by a reputable authority. In addition to this, Johnston drew on traditional sources, including the Official History, published memoirs, unit histories and a few unpublished personal accounts.

Johnston asked the question: 'Who was the typical Australian recruit?', but he did not make the mistake of attempting to answer it. Instead, he listed qualities that typical Australian fighting soldiers shared. Hence, typical Australian recruits shared most of the following characteristics: they were white; aged in their 20s; healthy; medium to tall in height; they left school aged 14; and they were wage-earning, manual workers.⁸⁸ By limiting himself to identifying qualities that the recruits shared, Johnston avoided straying too far from his hard evidence – the statistical data. Johnston's conclusions were drawn fairly and validly from that evidence. However, Johnston went further. He added that typical Australian soldiers 'enlisted largely because they believed that the war was morally right and because it offered them the prospect of an exciting adventure with the promise of legendary status.'⁸⁹ This last conclusion was not supported by statistical evidence. It rested on inferences drawn from traditional sources. This is not to suggest that Johnston's conclusion about enlistment motivation was necessarily wrong, only that he might have emphasised more strongly that it was supported by different evidence than his other conclusions.

Graham Seal's *Inventing Anzac The Digger and National Mythology*, endorsed Robson's results 'as a guide to the social composition of the First AIF.'⁹⁰ Seal accepted that Robson's sample was sufficiently broad for his findings to be representative of the entire force. Not content with that, he argued that it was 'reasonable to conclude

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Johnston, "The Civilians Who Joined up, 1939 - 45," paragraph 35

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Graham Seal and Richard Nile, *Inventing Anzac : The Digger and National Mythology* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 173.

that the social composition of the 1st AIF was a representative cross-section of the adult (mostly) male population of Australia.⁹¹ The notion that the traits of Robson's sample of around 2,000 soldiers could be extrapolated to the entire male population of Australia was contentious. Most of the members of the 1st AIF were less than 40 years of age. The 1911 census recorded 39.40% of Australian men as Church of England. This compared to 49.22% of the men who embarked with the 1st AIF being members of the Church of England.⁹² Without closer analysis, these points of difference from the broader population cast doubt on the validity of the extrapolation. It was one thing to argue that those who joined the 1st AIF shared traits in common. It was quite another to contend that the entire community shared the same traits, particularly in the absence of any evidence of the qualities of the non-joiners.

The studies so far discussed attempted to identify qualities shared by the diggers of the two World Wars. There were more than 400,000 men in the 1st AIF.⁹³ More than 725,000 Australians served in World War II.⁹⁴ The attempt to identify qualities that fairly represent such large numbers of men involves generalising on a grand scale – perhaps on too grand a scale. Generalising is part of the historian's stock in trade, but, as Richard Evans warned, the broader the generalisations, 'the further removed they will become from hard evidence which can be cited in their support.'⁹⁵ Moreover, generalisations can conceal points of difference that it is useful to highlight. Identifying a single, 'standard' digger potentially conceals differences between, for example, men who volunteered early in the war and later volunteers; single men and family men; bush men and city dwellers; or Roman Catholics and Protestants.

⁹¹ Ibid., 175 - 76.

⁹² Ibid., 175.

⁹³ Scott, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918 Australia During the War*, XI, 874.

⁹⁴ Long combined the 2nd AIF with the militia to give a single number of men who served overseas in the Second World War: 557,799: Long, "The Final Campaigns. [with Plates and Maps.]," 635.

⁹⁵ Evans, *In Defence of History*, 60.

This is an area in which unit studies may offer an advantage. Unit studies would make it possible, for example, to compare units recruited early in a war with units recruited later; to compare volunteer units with conscript units; to compare units State by State; and to compare country units with city units (if units were recruited on a territorial basis). The evidence derived from comparisons like these might cast an interesting light on the search for a stereotypical soldier.

However, Australian social historians have been reluctant to study individual units, causing Peter Stanley, an influential military historian, to accuse them of lack of enterprise:-

Though accounts of particular infantry battalions ... have formed a staple of military history, these units have been little studied as military and social entities, particularly in Australia ... Australian military historians have largely taken for granted the composition and character of military units, perhaps accepting a homogeneity not borne out by closer scrutiny, and overlooking a diversity known to contemporaries.⁹⁶

North American researchers, following in Wiley's footsteps, have produced many demographic studies of individual units. These have not only revealed differences between units but also differences within the same unit over time.⁹⁷ A fine example is Douglas Hale's profile of the Third Texas Cavalry which combined unit records with county records to produce a socioeconomic study of the roughly 1,000 members of the Third Texas Cavalry.⁹⁸ A year into the war, the men conducted fresh elections for officers, in consequence of a fundamental change in the command structure of

⁹⁶ Stanley, "'Our Big World': The Social History of the Light Horse Regiment, 1916 - 1918," 3.

⁹⁷ Examples include: GW Ball, "Soldier Boys of Texas: The Seventh Texas Infantry in World War I" (University of North Texas, 2010); M A Dluger, "A Regimental Community: The Men of the 82nd Illinois Infantry before, During and after the American Civil War" (Loyola University, 2009); A Iarocci, "The 'Mad Fourth': The 4th Canadian Infantry Battalion at War, 1914 - 1916" (University of Western Ontario, 2001); S D Parker, "'The Best Stuff Which the State Affords' a Portrait of the Fourteenth Texas Infantry in the Civil War 1862 - 1865" (University of North Texas, 1998); R D Williams, "A Social and Military History of the 1/8th Battalion, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, in the Great War" (The University of Birmingham, 1999); G E Otott, "Antebellum Social Characteristics of the Officers and Men in the First Texas Infantry, Confederate States Army" (California State University, Fullerton, 2003); G E Robbins, "A History of the 19th Texas Voluntary Infantry, Csa" (Lamar University, 2006); B R Hamaker, "Making a Good Soldier: A Historical and Quantitative Study of the 15th Texas Infantry, C.S.A." (University of North Texas, 1998).

⁹⁸ Douglas Hale, "The Third Texas Cavalry: A Socioeconomic Profile of a Confederate Regiment," *Military History of the Southwest* 19, no. No 1 (1989).

the regiment. Hale's evidence about the background of the men of the regiment was so detailed that it allowed him to conclude that:-

While the original officers represented households with an average wealth of \$14,814, about twice the state mean, their successors in command came from families owning more than four times the state average in property (\$26,805). Though demonstrated competence in camp and field doubtless explains why some men were chosen for promotion over others, it would appear that affiliation with the economic elite of east Texas enhanced a man's chance to become an officer.⁹⁹

Hale's study demonstrated what a unit study can achieve when good military and civil records are available.

The failure of Australian historians to inquire into the character and composition of infantry battalions has left a surprising gap in the literature. The failure to study infantry battalions is all the more surprising given that Australian infantry battalions, typically with an establishment of fewer than 800 men, are an ideal size for demographic study.

Against this, however, the difficulty of accessing the relevant records makes it difficult to study Australian battalions. The National Archives of Australia holds the records of each Australian soldier in individual personnel files. Approximately one third of the personnel files used for this study were available on-line, but the remaining files had to be accessed in paper format one file at a time. The files were held in Canberra, except for the files of soldiers who served in the Army after World War II, whose files were held in Melbourne. No file could be released for inspection without first being checked. Budgetary constraints meant that the Archive officials could check only a few files at a time. It took over twelve months and as many visits to Canberra (plus one visit to Melbourne) to collect the attestation forms of the 300-odd members of the original 2/1st Battalion whose files were not available on-line. There are also difficulties as far as individual civil records are concerned. New

⁹⁹ Ibid., 24 - 25.

South Wales restricts research access to its records of births for a 100 year period. The Australian Commonwealth government does not maintain records of the assets of individuals that are accessible to researchers, although the 1933 census (the last census before World War II), alone among all the Australian censuses, included population data about income.¹⁰⁰

One historian who did study an Australian infantry battalion was Dale Blair. He applied the 'new' techniques to the 1st Battalion of the 1st AIF.¹⁰¹ Blair's study is germane to this study. The 2nd AIF was raised 'with the object of perpetuating the traditions of the original Australian Imperial Force.'¹⁰² In pursuit of that objective, the 1st Battalion of the 1st AIF was designated as the 'parent' battalion of the 2/1st Battalion. The policy was taken to the point that units of the 2nd AIF were 'recruited on the same territorial basis as that approved for the 1st Division, Australian Imperial Force, in 1914'.¹⁰³ In pursuit of that objective, the 2/1st Battalion was recruited from the same territory as the 1st Battalion. Most men in both battalions came from suburban Sydney. The battalions should make an interesting comparison.

Blair analysed information from the attestation forms of 982 out of 1,030 1st Battalion members. Blair's analysis indicated that more than half of the officers of the 1st Battalion were drawn from professional or clerical occupations, whilst only 16% of the entire Battalion came from those backgrounds. Blair concluded that a bias was evident in the occupational background of the officers.¹⁰⁴ He also reported that only one of 184 Catholics in the Battalion was an officer. Blair concluded that 'a deliberate

¹⁰⁰ The 1933 census publications are available on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website: www.abs.gov.au.

¹⁰¹ D J Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.," *Sabretache* XXXIX, no. March, 1998 (1998).

¹⁰² Orders establishing the Second Australian Imperial Force, 6th Division and Ancillary Troops, 3 October 1939: AWM54:721/2/4.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.," 22.

bias existed in preventing Catholics entering into the commissioned ranks.’ Both of Blair’s conclusions rested fairly on the evidence quoted to support them.¹⁰⁵

As an overall conclusion drawn from his research, Blair contended that a distinct ‘officer-type’ could be identified in the 1st Battalion:-

Officers of the 1st Battalion were likely to be tall, Anglo-Celtic, educated at a private school or university and/or from the professional classes residing in the more affluent suburbs of Sydney.¹⁰⁶

Here, Blair’s analysis overreached his evidence. With no data about educational background or about the affluence of Sydney suburbs, this contention lacked an evidentiary foundation. His next assertion was likewise unsupported:-

In effect the Australian officer-type embodied the very characteristics of class and education synonymous with the stereotypical British officer. This similarity is little considered in descriptions of the AIF officer corps which, in the main, are based around the premise that most AIF officers rose through the ranks and were therefore more egalitarian.¹⁰⁷

Blair cited no evidence about British officers or about the characteristics of men who were promoted to be officers later in the war. His evidence offered no support for the conclusions he expressed on those subjects.

Blair’s study illustrated, at once, the good and the bad sides of analysis based on the ‘new’ techniques. His analysis of the evidence drawn from the attestation forms of the 1st Battalion provided a basis for interesting and apparently valid observations about the demographics of the Battalion when it embarked for service overseas, especially on the subjects of occupation and religion. It provided no basis for assertions about typical British officers, about the affluence of Sydney suburbs or

¹⁰⁵ The sole Catholic was Geoffrey Street, who, as Brigadier Street, rose to become Minister for Defence in the first Menzies government. Ibid., 24 - 25.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

about the characteristics of the men who became officers of the 1st Battalion as the war progressed.

Blair reported the results of his study only briefly and in a general-interest publication. That format gave him little chance to develop the detail of his results, or to place them in their historiographical context. His results touched on questions as diverse as sectarianism, class and religious barriers to promotion and egalitarianism. Those subjects are as relevant for this study as they were for Blair's.

Turning first to sectarianism, Patrick O'Farrell, who wrote extensively on the Roman Catholic Church and Catholicism in Australia, was careful to distinguish between the sectarianism broadly defined, and the narrower sense in which the term is commonly used in Australia - to connote a framework of Protestant-Catholic hostility. O'Farrell argued that Protestant-Catholic hostility, although once a feature of Australian society, had ceased to be easily accepted or even recognised when Australia became 'religiously reconciled' in the 1970s.¹⁰⁸ Even in its heyday, sectarianism did not divide Catholic Australia from Protestant Australia. Rather, O'Farrell saw it as a force that played itself out:-

. . . under the umbrella of the development of the Western cultural tradition – the rule of law, political democracy and individual freedom, the secular state, toleration of diversity, economic capitalism, change and modernity. There was, in Catholic and Protestant, Irish and English, Australia, a basic broad agreement on the practices and institutions embodying these principles. Sectarian conflict was within implicit boundaries, about ways of sharing, controlling, operating, prioritizing generally accepted organizational and behavioural propositions, not about what such basic institutions and values actually were.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Patrick O'Farrell, "Imagination's Stain: Historical Reflections on Sectarian Australia," ed. Clare O'Farrell (www.patrickofarrell.com2002), 5 and 4. Accessed on 16 August 2014

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 3.

Sectarianism could be narrowly-focused, as in the case of divisions between the Orange and the Green imported from Ireland, or more broadly-focused, as in the stereotyping of supposed traits of Protestants and Catholics:-

So, on a popular estimate, Anglicanism betokened old wealth and superior social position and cache. Protestant dissent suggests trade, blue collars, and middle class respectability and wowserism. Catholicism was a tribal allegiance of the Irish lower orders, rough, tough, grubby labourers and drunken roustabouts.¹¹⁰

In the Great War, sectarianism came to the surface in the debates over conscription. The Catholic Church, with Archbishop Mannix at the forefront, opposed the conscription referenda. The rhetoric on both sides became increasingly bitter as the question of conscription became intertwined with that of Home Rule for Ireland. Archbishop Mannix accused Prime Minister Hughes of wanting to conscript Australian men to fight on the Western Front to free up British troops to suppress the revolt in Ireland. Prime Minister Hughes accused Mannix of disloyalty.¹¹¹ The debates generated such fury as to test O'Farrell's claim that they took place 'within implicit boundaries', but the sectarian battles of the Great War finally resolved into a peace that lasted until the 1950s, even though, according to O'Farrell, it was 'in the main the peace of exhaustion.'¹¹²

Sectarian battles were also fought in the workplace. Some employers were reputed to discriminate against Catholics, others against Protestants. O'Farrell instanced claims that banks and commercial firms would not hire Catholics; that some firms would employ Irish, but never promote them; that the Victorian railways were Catholic, but the trams were Protestant. Although there was substance in some of the claims, O'Farrell thought many of them were exaggerated: 'In such an employment atmosphere, hiring, firing and promotion were open to continuous

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 13 and 27.

¹¹¹ Partick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia : A Short History : 1788-1967* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 225 and 29. Scott, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918 Australia During the War*, XI, 344 - 47; 415 - 23.

¹¹² O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia : A Short History : 1788-1967*, 242.

sectarian or racial interpretations, and incompetent, lazy or dishonest employees were always willing to suggest such discrimination as being behind their termination. The area is shadowy and uncertain, full of assumptions and undocumented assertion, but the general drift is clear: the Irish believed they were discriminated against, and to some extent they were.¹¹³

Blair's finding of religious bias in the 1st Battalion is significant because it documents a case of discrimination that cannot be put down to the complaints of disgruntled employees, and seems, rather, to be the product of a systematic bias. This study, looking at events 25 years later, will provide a test for O'Farrell's thesis that sectarian bias of that type declined after the Great War.

On the question of class barriers to promotion, Blair concluded his article with the following passage:-

In effect the Australian 'officer-type' embodied the very characteristics of class and education synonymous with the stereotypical British officer. This similarity is little considered in descriptions of the AIF officer corps which, in the main, are based around the premise that most AIF officers rose through the ranks and were therefore more egalitarian.¹¹⁴

The notion of a stereotypical officer of the Great War – be he British or Australian – is fraught with difficulties. The huge casualty count of that war was felt most severely in the ranks of the junior officers. If there was a stereotypical officer at the start of the war, it was unlikely that the stereotype was the same at the end of it. Blair himself made the point that Australian officers rose through the ranks, and cited evidence from CEW Bean and from General Sir John Monash, the commander of the Australian Corps, to that effect.¹¹⁵ The process was completely different in the British Army. There, when so many young regular Army officers were killed in the

¹¹³ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia : 1788 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), 160.

¹¹⁴ Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.," 27.

¹¹⁵ John Gen Sir Monash and F. M. Cutlack, *War Letters of General Monash* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1935), 233. Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, 4th ed. (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961), 537.

first few years of the war, they were replaced by temporary officers trained in Officer Cadet Battalions. These temporary officers – called ‘Temporary Gentlemen’ – were regarded as something of a joke.¹¹⁶ There was no question of their fitting the stereotype of a British officer. In his discussion of temporary officers, Martin Petter described how Duff Cooper, who later served as a Minister in the Chamberlain and Churchill governments, ‘discovered in July 1917 that his fellow cadets in the Household Guards OCB included a shoemaker, a window dresser from Sheffield, and a bank clerk with a cockney accent’.¹¹⁷ Cooper, who was every inch a patrician (to stereotype him), wrote that, ‘Part of my distress during the first days of my training at [the OCB] was due to finding myself in a room with six companions whose habits, interests and subjects of conversation differed so entirely from my own. This was really no very great hardship, but it was one to which I was not used’.¹¹⁸

Keith Simpson gave a thoughtful analysis of the changes that the Great War brought to the British officer class.¹¹⁹ Using a sociological approach, he gathered data that cast doubt on the attempt to stereotype the officers of the Great War. He found that the British officer class expanded from 28,060 to over 229,316 during the war.¹²⁰ The traditional sources – the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich¹²¹ and the English public schools – could not supply enough men to fill those positions. In consequence, ‘no less than 41 per cent of all permanent commissions in the regular army were awarded to NCOs during the war,’ compared

¹¹⁶ Martin Petter, “‘Temporary Gentlemen’ in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,” *The Historical Journal* 37, no. 1 (2009).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹¹⁸ Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget; the Autobiography of Duff Cooper (Viscount Norwich)*, 1st American ed. (New York,: Dutton, 1954), 66.

¹¹⁹ I. F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson, *A Nation in Arms : A Social History of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹²¹ The Royal Military Academy, Woolwich was originally formed to train cadets for commissions in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers. The Royal Military College, Sandhurst trained cadets for commissions in the infantry and cavalry. The two were merged in 1947 to form the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst: http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/24487.aspx accessed 21 August 2014.

to 2% of officers who came from the ranks before the war.¹²² Simpson added that the change was not as dramatic as the figures might suggest because 'many of the wartime NCOs were volunteers with middle-class backgrounds.'¹²³ But that, again, was breaking the stereotype – the Great War forced huge numbers of men into service as officers and NCOs who would never have found their way into similar positions in the pre-war Army.

The issue of British officers gives a good illustration of the broader problem with stereotypes. Was the stereotypical British officer of the Great War a patrician or a cockney, a Colonel Blimp or a temporary gentleman? If there was a stereotypical British officer before the war, there was virtually no chance of perpetuating that stereotype when the war brought an influx of more than 200,000 new officers, increasing the officer corps more than ten-fold. The same comment can be made of the search for the stereotypical digger – if it is difficult to find a stereotype for 229,316 British officers of the Great War, the case will be *a fortiori* for the more than 720,000 Australian servicemen and women of World War II.¹²⁴

Finally, Blair's claim that 'most AIF officers rose through the ranks and were therefore more egalitarian'¹²⁵ is open to doubt. Blair quoted a 1918 letter in which General Monash said that he had, indeed, promoted the great majority of Australian officers from the ranks, but Monash added that the men he promoted represented, 'the cream of our professional and educated classes, young engineers, architects, medicals, accountants, pastoralists, public-school boys.'¹²⁶ The promotion of these men was hardly an exercise in egalitarianism.

¹²² Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms : A Social History of the British Army in the First World War*, 70 - 71. Paradoxically, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for most of World War I, Field Marshal Robertson, rose from the ranks. He was reputed to have held every rank in the British Army: Sir William Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen 1914-18* (London: Cassell, 1926).

¹²³ Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms : A Social History of the British Army in the First World War*.

¹²⁴ This is the number given by Long in: Long, "The Final Campaigns. [with Plates and Maps.]," 633.

¹²⁵ Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.," 27.

¹²⁶ Monash and Cutlack, *War Letters of General Monash*.

Chapter 3

The Attestation Forms

The attestation forms as evidence

Before embarking on a study relying on the evidence of attestation forms completed by Battalion members, it is relevant to ask: how reliable is that evidence? A sample of the standard 2nd AIF attestation form - that completed by Private George Anderson – is seen at Figures 1 and 2. The questionnaire is on the front page of the form. The form stated that the questions were, ‘to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment’. The answers constituted the evidence on which the recruitment authorities accepted or rejected the recruit’s application to enlist. There is, therefore, nice symmetry in using the attestation forms as evidence in this study – the forms began their lives as evidence.


At the bottom of the front page, the instruction was given to warn the applicant: ‘that should he give false answers to any of the questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.’ Once warned, the applicant had to sign a ‘solemn’ declaration that ‘the above answers made by me to the above questions are true.’ Despite this, some men lied.

According to the enlistment protocols, only men between 20 and 35 years of age could enlist as private soldiers, unless there were extraordinary circumstances, in which case men up to the age of 40 could enlist. Men aged 20 could only enlist with the consent of both parents. Young men who lied about their age claimed to be 21 -

the age at which they could enlist without parental consent. Older men lied as well, adjusting their age in the opposite direction. As Jack Barber, a member of the 2/17th Battalion, put it, 'Old World War I diggers were all 38 again and young teenagers were suddenly 21 or over.'¹²⁷

| CHECKED | DATE | INIT |
|-------------|------|------|
| D. 1 | | |
| M. 1. 2 | 22 | 5 |
| M. 1. 3 | 10 | |
| B. 103 | | |
| B. 103 Copy | 17 | 5 |
| Index Card | | |

A.A. Form A200.



AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

ATTESTATION FORM

FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.

Army No. NX2571

Surname ANDERSON Other Names George Ernest Armstrong
(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Unit 2/1 BN 6 DIVISION

Enlisted for service at MILLER'S POINT SYDNEY, (Place)
N.S.W. (State) 28 OCT 1939 (Date)

A

Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment.*

- What is your name? ... 1. Surname ANDERSON
(BLOCK LETTERS)
 Other names George Ernest Armstrong
- Where were you born? ... 2. In or near the town of Bury
 in the state or country of England
- Are you a natural born or a naturalized British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced. ... 3. Yes
- What is your age and date of birth? ... 4. Age 27
 Date of Birth 17-11-1911
- What is your trade or occupation? ... 5. Left Power
- Are you married, single or widower? ... 6. Single
- Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm? ... 7. No
- Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship: wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister) ... 8. Name Alexandra Anderson
 Address 11 Roberts St, Greenwich
 Relationship Mother
- What is your permanent address? ... 9. 12 O'Connell St, City
- What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so) ... 10. C/E

I, George Ernest Armstrong Anderson do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to serve in the Australian Military Forces within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

Witnessed by CP Singer Capt J Anderson
(Signature of Attesting or Witnessing Officer) Signature

* The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.

E.3.10/9.39.—0.13571.—1004

¹²⁷ Jack Barber, *The War, the Whores and the Afrika Korps* (East Roseville, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1997), 26.

Figure 1: Private Anderson's attestation form - front page.

B

MEDICAL EXAMINATION

I have made full and careful examination of the abovenamed person in accordance with the instructions contained in the Standing Orders for Australian Army Medical Services. In my opinion he is—*

1. Fit for Class I.
2. Temporarily unfit for Class I †
3. Unfit for military service †

Place MILLER'S POINT SYDNEY Date 10 OCT 1939

Signature of Examining Medical Officer [Signature]

* Classifications which are inapplicable to be struck out. † Reasons for unfitness to be stated.

C

OATH OF ENLISTMENT †

3. George Ernest Anderson swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord, the King, in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia until the cessation of the present time of war and twelve months thereafter or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed, and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So Help Me God!

Signature of Person Enlisted [Signature]

Subscribed at MILLER'S POINT SYDNEY in the State of N.S.W.

this Twentieth day of October 1939

Before me—

Signature of Attesting Officer [Signature]

† Persons who object to take an oath may make an affirmation in accordance with the Third Schedule of the Defence Act. In such case the above form will be amended accordingly and initialed by the Attesting Officer.

D. 7049. T. KISS, Government Printer, Melbourne.

Figure 2: Private Anderson's attestation form - back page.

The enlistment protocols also forbade the enlistment of men working in a long list of reserved occupations.¹²⁸ Ken Clift, a member of 6th Division signals, claimed that some men claimed to be unemployed to avoid the manpower restrictions. He went

¹²⁸ Special Force Recruiting Procedures: AWM54; 834/3/8.

to Victoria Barracks to enlist the day after war was declared, only to find that the Army was not ready to take him that day:-

Eventually we filled in roughly roneoed forms after being told that we would have to be unemployed if we were to be accepted – tradesmen would be required at home. I was a qualified draftsman but showed ‘unemployed’ on the form and many of the other recruits with much greater qualifications, did the same.¹²⁹

The accounts of witnesses like Jack Barber and Ken Clift establish that some 6th Division men lied when they answered the following questions in the questionnaire:-

4. What is your age and date of birth?
5. What is your trade or occupation?

There is nothing unusual or unexpected in this. As Richard Evans wrote, ‘Documents are always written from somebody’s point of view, with a specific purpose and audience in mind, and unless we can find all that out, we may be misled.’¹³⁰ In the case of a volunteer unit like the 2/1st Battalion, the questionnaires were answered from the recruit’s point of view, with the specific purpose in mind of achieving enlistment.¹³¹ Historians, properly sceptical of their sources, would expect some men to lie to achieve that result. They would, however, go deeper in their analysis. Men who already satisfied the recruitment criteria would not improve their chances of being accepted by lying, so there is no reason to question the truth of their answers. Men who were too young or too old, or who worked in reserved occupations, did have an incentive to lie, but only about their age or employment status. There is no reason to question the truth of any of their other answers. To the

¹²⁹ Ken Clift, *The Saga of a Sig : The Wartime Memories of Six Years Service in the Second A.I.F* (Randwick, N.S.W.: K.C.D. Publications, 1972), 1 - 2. Clift may have shown himself as unemployed on the roneoed form (which does not survive in his file), but he did not claim to be unemployed when he filled out his attestation form (which does survive).

¹³⁰ Evans, *In Defence of History*, 80.

¹³¹ The dynamic would be quite different in the case of a conscript unit. There, potential conscripts might give false information to avoid conscription. This could be relevant later in Second World War Australia, when the government came to conscript men to serve in the militia.

extent that there is a problem of inaccuracy, it is limited to the answers that some men gave to questions 4 or 5.

These are obvious and expected biases. It is the function of the historian to identify such biases and, where possible, to correct for them. Techniques are available to help in those tasks. For example, if men lied about their ages, this should show up as anomalous spikes in the young and old age cohorts; if men falsely claimed to be unemployed, this should show up in the unit having a higher rate of unemployment than the community at large. These techniques are used later in this study to assess the extent to which the answers to questions 4 and 5 were false and to make any necessary adjustments.

The lies, however, have a broader evidentiary significance. Evidence of a fact is that which tends to prove it.¹³² That definition distinguishes two types of fact: the ultimate fact (the fact to be proved); and probative facts (the facts which tend to prove the ultimate fact).¹³³ The evidence of the answers to question 4 may be analysed with that distinction in mind.

On one view of the evidence, the ultimate fact to which question 4 is relevant is the average age of the men of the Battalion. The answers to question 4 would be probative facts tending to prove that ultimate fact. On that view, the fact that some answers were lies would be problematic because the lies would distort the calculation of the average age. On a broader view of the evidence, however, the ultimate fact to which question 4 is relevant might be the enthusiasm and motivation of the men. The answers to question 4 would again be probative facts tending to prove that ultimate fact. On that view, the fact that men were prepared to lie in

¹³² Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: 'that which tends to prove or disprove any conclusion'; Macquarie Dictionary: 'that which tends to prove or disprove something'.

¹³³ Lawyers use this definition: J. D. Heydon and Rupert Cross, *Cross on Evidence*, 7th Australian ed. (Sydney: LexisNexis Butterworths, 2004), par [1001]. But they translate the terms into Latin: as the *factum probandum* and the *facta probantia*.

order to enlist is no problem at all. To the contrary, the lies are compelling evidence of the enthusiasm and motivation of the volunteers.

In summary, anecdotal accounts suggest that some men lied in answer to questions 4 and 5. This is exactly what would be expected. Like all historical records, the answers to the questionnaires in the attestation forms contain falsehoods and biases. To the extent that lies may skew analysis of the evidence, techniques exist to detect and adjust for them. On the other hand, the fact that men were prepared to lie in order to achieve enlistment is itself evidence - of their enthusiasm and motivation. This study aims to identify the falsehoods and biases and, where necessary, to adjust for them, whilst still giving the answers, and all of the evidence they contain, their full voice.

The Official Historian, Gavin Long, had no trouble dealing with the reliability of age data in a footnote to the first volume of the Official History of World War II. He was addressing the same question that this study addresses: what kind of men enlisted?¹³⁴ Specifically, Long asked:-

Were they adventurers, or those brought up in an ardent loyalty to England now threatened by an old enemy, or men bored by humdrum lives, or (as was soon to be charged against them) the unemployed and unskilled in search of occupation – or some of each of these?¹³⁵

Long gave a long answer to this question using traditional, impressionistic evidence. Incidentally to that answer, he devoted a footnote to statistical evidence. The statistics related to a sample 'of 14,953 6th Division men chosen at random from among those who enlisted in 1939'.¹³⁶ The sample must have been taken some time after 1939 because a number of the respondents admitted that they were under age on enlistment. They would not have done this if they were still under age – the

¹³⁴ Long, *To Benghazi*, 56ff.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 58n.

admission would have led to their being discharged from the Army. Table 1 gives the distribution of the sample into age cohorts.

| Age cohort | 18 – 19 | 20 – 24 | 25 – 29 | 30 – 34 | 35 – 49 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number | 116 | 6,457 | 3,851 | 3,797 | 732 |

Table 1: Age cohorts of Long's sample of 14,953 men

Long's comment was: 'It is probable that a considerable number of youths of 19 and under gave their ages as 20; recruits in the 20 group were more numerous than those in each of the years 21 to 24. Similarly the 30 – 34 age group probably includes many who were older'.¹³⁷ This was a situation in which quantitative analysis was valuable. The lies of the younger men showed up as an anomalous spike in the 20 year-old age cohort, as Long noted. There was no similar spike in the 34 year-old cohort, suggesting that hard evidence to support the claim that older men reduced their ages may have been lacking. Nothing in Long's analysis suggests that he found it difficult to identify biases in the age data, or to correct for them.

Long was not so adept at dealing with unemployment data in the same sample. There had been a keen political debate about the level of unemployment among 6th Division recruits. The pay for men in the 6th Division was 5 shillings a day. In Parliament, Group Captain Sir Thomas White, a conservative (UAP) politician, claimed that the pay was so low that it would attract only the unskilled and the unemployed. Eddie Ward, a leading light of the pacifist and socialist wings of the Labor Party, went further, claiming that, 'so long as the dole for unemployed single men was 8s 6d a week, men would enlist for the sake of 5s a day with food and quarters. It was a form of "economic conscription"'.¹³⁸

If White or Ward was correct, there should have been a higher percentage of unemployed men in the 6th Division than there were in the population at large. In

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 64.

1939, approximately 12½% of Australian male wage earners were unemployed.¹³⁹ Applying the same rate of unemployment to the random sample of 14,953 recruits, around 1,870 of them should have been unemployed. According to Long, that was not the case: 'Exactly 200 of the 14,953 men stated they were unemployed'.¹⁴⁰ This was a striking anomaly, with far fewer unemployed men in the sample than the national average (1.3% vs 12.5%).

How did Long deal with this surprising result? He did not mention it at all in his coverage of the economic conscription debate. Rather, he relegated it to a footnote elsewhere in his book, and downplayed its importance. Long said that the 200 figure was 'probably not significant' for two reasons: 'men in lucrative employment are known to have said that they were unemployed to avoid manpower restrictions, and some who were unemployed are likely to have stated their usual occupations.'¹⁴¹ The reasons made little sense. Far from explaining a low number of unemployed, the first reason - that employed men claimed to be unemployed - should have served to increase the unemployed number. If many of the 200 men claiming to be unemployed were, in fact, employed, the rate of unemployment in the 14,539 sample was negligible, and the claims of Group Captain White and Eddie Ward were wildly wrong. The second reason - that unemployed men were 'likely' to have stated their normal occupations - was pure conjecture. Long made no claim to know what they had actually done.

There are many reasons why Long's treatment of the 14,539 sample was disappointing. Long did not say who performed the study. He did not identify the information on which the study was based. He did not explain the methodology that was applied. He did not claim to have checked the statistical data or their source. Indeed, he did not even say that the analysis of the sample was based on

¹³⁹ Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 Series 4, Civil (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952), 198n.

¹⁴⁰ Long, *To Benghazi*, 58n.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

attestation records. He did not make the comparison between the national unemployment rate and the rate of unemployment in the 14,539 sample. If he had made that comparison, Long might have recognised that there was a problem with the 200 number that called for more rigorous analysis of the sample. Unfortunately, because Long did not identify the study or who had carried it out, it has not been possible to check more closely the analysis of the sample, or to attempt to replicate it.¹⁴²

It seems fair to conclude that Long regarded the study as an aside of limited interest, worth a footnote, but not important enough to include in the narrative proper. He did not treat the unemployment number as a surprise. He did not highlight it as contradicting White or Ward. On the contrary, he said that the unemployment number was probably insignificant. Long made no complaint that the recruitment employment records were unreliable. Such is the authority of the Official History, however, that the unemployment number has achieved a notoriety that it did not deserve simply by being mentioned in it.¹⁴³

It was Michael McKernan who claimed that the unemployment records were unreliable. In *All In! Fighting the War at Home*,¹⁴⁴ McKernan claimed that 'a high percentage' of 6th Division recruits were unemployed, but he did not say what the percentage was:-

¹⁴² Long's failure to identify the study is all the more frustrating as there is a good reason to believe that it was an official study. The sample of 14,539 men represented 76% of all 1939 recruits: AIF Gross Monthly Recruiting Figures – Sep 1939 to Dec 1942: AWM54; 834/4/4. It is difficult to imagine that anyone except the Army itself would have had the resources, the capacity and the opportunity to access such an extensive sample of the 1939 recruits. It is highly likely that Long's data came from the Census of Army Personnel, mentioned above. The Census was based on fresh information given by each soldier, and not on attestation records. The Census recorded the age of each soldier, his 'usual civil occupation' but not his pre-war employment status. Although the employment categories recorded in the Census included a category for men who were 'not gainfully employed', in a sample of 42,350 cards (10% of the total), only 232 men (< 0.005%) fell within that category: Census of Army Personnel MP729/6; 58/401/485.

¹⁴³ For an example where the statistics were accepted on the authority of their inclusion in the Official History, see: Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, Studies in Australian History (Cambridge, England ; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 145. Grey's comment that, 'The official history is the obvious starting point,' (at 160) is telling.

¹⁴⁴ Michael McKernan, *All In! : Fighting the War at Home* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1995). McKernan was writing well after the 'new' historians had come on the scene.

It is very difficult to determine how many men were recruited from the ranks of the unemployed. Attestation papers showed a high percentage and rumours confirmed these bare statistics. But the attestation papers cannot be taken as a reliable guide. On the one hand, many men, holding good jobs, described themselves as unemployed because they belonged to a reserved occupation which, had it been revealed, would have prevented them enlisting. On the other hand, many a genuinely unemployed man entered a previous job on his papers, unwilling to have the stigma of 'economic conscript' attached to him throughout his service. In any case, the actual number of unemployed amongst the first recruits is not important here. What is important is that later the myth grew up that Australia's forces were flooded, not with adventurers and men with a passionate attachment to Empire, but rather with economic conscripts.¹⁴⁵

The passage was hardly satisfactory, consisting, as Evans would say, of generalisations far removed from any hard evidence that could be cited in their support.¹⁴⁶ For example, McKernan claimed that the attestation papers were unreliable without saying which of them, or how many of them, he had inspected and without saying what qualities of the attestation papers led him to conclude that they were unreliable. He fell into the trap of saying that the attestation papers 'showed a high percentage' of recruits were unemployed without saying what the percentage was. Was it 30%? Or 20%? Or 10%? This was the vice that Barrett had in mind when he argued that readers would find accurate statistical data more helpful than the vagueness of terms like 'a few', 'some', 'others', 'many', and 'a significant number'.¹⁴⁷ McKernan only made things worse when he added that the unidentified percentage was confirmed by rumours. Curiously, McKernan borrowed Long's two reasons why the 200 unemployment number was probably insignificant to support his claim that the attestation papers were unreliable. The reasons no more supported McKernan's claim than they did Long's. By asserting that the myth of unemployment was more important than the reality, McKernan

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴⁶ Evans, *In Defence of History*, 60.

¹⁴⁷ Barrett, *We Were There : Australian Soldiers of World War Two Tell Their Stories*, 26.

closed the door on the very factual inquiry that might have proved or disproved the supposed myth.

If McKernan knew what percentage of unemployment the attestation papers showed, he should have given the percentage. If he knew how many of the first recruits were, or claimed to be, unemployed, he should have given the number. Without these details, the passage lacked the transparency that the 'new' techniques demand. In the absence of hard evidence, McKernan skirted the issue on no more evidence than the unsubstantiated assertion that the attestation papers showed a 'high percentage' of unemployment and the claim that the attestation forms were unreliable. The passage was a poor advertisement for the traditional approach.¹⁴⁸

In *Far Above Battle*, Margaret Barter examined the attestation forms of 1,500 members of the 2/2nd Battalion.¹⁴⁹ The results of Barter's study are relevant and important to this study because the 2/2nd Battalion was raised in Sydney at the same time as the 2/1st Battalion.

Barter did not explain the methodology she used to analyse the attestation forms, nor did she describe what she gleaned from her examination of them. Instead, she stated her conclusion bluntly and shortly. There were, she said: '13.5 per cent unemployed among the 2/2's original recruits.'¹⁵⁰ For all her bluntness, there was a lot to be said for Barter's conclusion. She reached it by examining 1,500 attestation forms. Her unemployment figure was consistent with the national figure. By contrast, Long did not examine any source documents and his unemployment figure was at odds with the national figure. Although Barter had a good case that her

¹⁴⁸ McKernan covered the economic conscript debate more recently in: Michael McKernan, *The Strength of a Nation : Six Years of Australians Fighting for the Nation and Defending the Homefront in Wwii* (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2008). In that book, he did not mention the attestation forms, nor the percentage of unemployed, but limited himself to the comment that it was: 'Best to pretend you came from the ranks of the unemployed to ensure you did win a spot in the AIF, which all these potential recruits so dearly wanted': 41 – 42.

¹⁴⁹ Margaret Barter, *Far above Battle : The Experience and Memory of Australian Soldiers in War 1939-1945* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 289.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 12. See also 247.

unemployment figure was more accurate than Long's, she failed to press it. Instead, and for no apparent reason, she complained about the employment data: 'As far back as 1952,' she wrote, 'Gavin Long warned of the unreliability of attestation statistics.'¹⁵¹ Long had given no such warning. Barter continued:-

In the absence of similar data from other 6th Division units the question of the proportion of unemployed in the 6th Division as a whole remains a topic for future research. However, the findings of this study not only support Long's wariness towards attestation statistics but also refute more recent claims [viz. McKernan's] that 'attestation papers showed a high percentage' of unemployed in the early 2nd AIF.¹⁵²

It is difficult to follow the logic of this passage. If Barter performed her analysis accurately, the only possible basis for being wary about the employment information in the attestation forms would have been that they showed a rate of unemployment markedly at odds with the national rate. Barter suggested no other reason to distrust the evidence of the forms. The rate of unemployment that Barter found - 13.5% - was in line with the national unemployment percentage.¹⁵³ Moreover, far from refuting McKernan's high percentage claim, Barter's findings supported it (accepting the proposition that 12.5% or above represents a high percentage of unemployment).¹⁵⁴ Finally, Barter attributed to Long a wariness towards attestation statistics that Long himself never expressed. For reasons that she did not explain, Barter was not prepared to take the results of her own study at face value.

In *Australia's War 1939-45*, Joan Beaumont followed Barter's lead, quoting her work to support the claim that, 'Official data on the occupations of the early volunteers is unreliable.'¹⁵⁵ Beaumont wrote that: 'Barter found that 13.5% of the 2/2nd Battalion were unemployed; whereas the official historian, Gavin Long, sampled some 14,953

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ The concept of statistical significance, mentioned here, is discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

¹⁵⁴ According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the national unemployment rate in February 2014 was 6%: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0 accessed on 23 March 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War, 1939-45* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 8 and 23.

recruits, and found that only 1.3 per cent declared themselves “unemployed”¹⁵⁶. This demonstrated a lack of understanding of Long’s work. Long had done no statistical analysis. He had merely reported the findings of an unidentified third party. Beaumont added that ‘the stigma of unemployment and the desire to escape from reserved occupations probably led many volunteers to falsify their occupations on the attestation forms they filled out on enlistment.’¹⁵⁷ This, again, was pure conjecture.

In the result, this group of studies produced little hard evidence to question the usefulness of the attestation form data going to age and employment status. Long was readily able to recognise the bias in the age records and to correct for it. After an unedifying debate about the employment records, the only hard evidence that might call in question the data on the employment status of the early volunteers is Long’s 200 unemployed figure which, being out of step with the national unemployment rate, appears to be anomalous.

In summary, the attestation forms have the hallmarks of valuable historical evidence. The questionnaires on the forms were completed as part of a formal process. The men were under threat of prosecution if they gave wrong answers. There is no reason to doubt the answers given to eight out of the ten questions, but suspicions attach to the answers that some men gave to the questions on age and employment. As to the age question, there is good evidence that some men increased their ages and others reduced theirs in order to achieve enlistment. The analysis of the answers to the age question should demonstrate the extent of the lying. It should also correct for the lies. Long had no trouble doing that. As to the employment question, there is some evidence that men lied about their employment status. That evidence requires closer analysis. The evidence that Long had on unemployment not only appeared to be anomalous, it also generated confusion

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

among later historians who have commented on it. Without giving away too much of what is to come, this study will confirm that Long's 200 unemployed figure was anomalous. It will reveal evidence that the rate of unemployment in the 2/1st Battalion was similar to the rate which Barter found in the 2/2nd Battalion. Apart from these two contentious questions, the answers in the attestation forms contain evidence of such fundamental factors as date of birth, religion, marital status, and address and occupation on enlistment, all of which combined to influence the character of the original 2/1st Battalion and the way the men of the Battalion behaved. The study will conclude that the attestation forms are a reliable source of evidence.

Methodology

Recognising the good sense of the approach taken by Johnston, and as a prelude to the analysis of the evidence of the attestation forms, the first step taken in this study was to identify and explain the process by which prospective recruits were enlisted. The enlistment protocols set standards that dictated many of the qualities that the men of the Battalion shared. The recruitment process is described in Chapter 2. The description of the process is based mainly on the evidence of the recruiting orders.

The subjects of the study were men of the 2/1st Battalion who were killed in battle in Libya, Greece and Crete, or who were captured on Crete.¹⁵⁸ One hundred and two Battalion members died, some in captivity, whilst 547 men survived the war. The subjects of the study were, therefore, front line troops who fought in the campaigns in Libya, Greece and Crete.

¹⁵⁸ Illness prevented Lt-Colonel Eather, the original commanding officer of the 2/1st Battalion, from taking part in the campaigns in Greece and Crete: Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, 131. The Battalion history mentions, but does not identify, other Battalion members who did not take part in those campaigns: *ibid.*, 208. As all the Battalion members who missed the campaign in Greece and Crete cannot be identified, the statistical study is limited to men who were killed in battle in Libya, Greece and Crete, or who were captured in Crete.

It is germane to explain the choice of this data set.¹⁵⁹ The original 2/1st Battalion was chosen as the subject of this study was because it was a body men who volunteered together, trained together and fought together during the first eighteen months of World War II. Their shared experience marked out this group of men as an identifiable fighting unit.

A second reason why the original 2/1st Battalion was chosen as the subject of this study was that its numbers were small enough to be manageable in a study with limited resources. The population of most military units increases as the war in which they are involved drags on. The example of the entire 2/1st Battalion is a case in point. Some members of the 2/1st Battalion who enlisted in 1939 and 1940 did not take part in the campaigns in Libya, Greece and Crete. After most Battalion members were captured in Crete, the Battalion was re-formed from a nucleus of men who had missed the campaigns in Greece and Crete. They were joined by 100 men transferred from each of the 2/2nd and 2/3rd Battalions and by reinforcements from Australia. The reconstituted Battalion fought with distinction in Syria and in New Guinea until it was disbanded in December 1945. Whilst the nominal strength of an infantry battalion at any given time is about 800 men, over the six years of World War II no fewer than 3,491 men served in the 2/1st Battalion.¹⁶⁰ It was an onerous task to obtain the attestation records of the 649 men of the original 2/1st Battalion. It would have been beyond the resources of a study of this size to obtain the attestation records of all 3,491 men of the entire 2/1st Battalion.

The choice of the data set has obvious implications. This is not a study of an Army. It is not a study of a Division. It is not even a study of a whole Battalion. It is a study of a group of men who formed part of a Battalion over a short part of a long war. They were early volunteers who became front line troops. A select group, they

¹⁵⁹ Roderick Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1973), 16 - 17.

¹⁶⁰ Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, Nominal Roll, 424 - 47.

could not be considered as representative of the 2nd AIF, still less of diggers generally. They were *sui generis*.

The men were identified from the Battalion history, which also gave their Army numbers.¹⁶¹ The names and Army numbers were used to gain online access to the entries for all subjects in the World War II nominal roll.¹⁶² The nominal roll gave the final military rank of the subjects, confirmed that the men had been prisoners of war and established the dates of death of the men who had died.¹⁶³

With this information, it was possible to retrieve the attestation form of each man from the National Archives of Australia. The difficulties of the retrieval process have already been described. The attestation forms of all 649 men were obtained, giving the study a 100% sample of the original 2/1st Battalion as defined. To enable the analysis of the data from the attestation forms, the following information for each man was recorded in an Excel spread sheet:-

1. name;
2. service number;
3. rank;
4. place of enlistment;
5. date of enlistment;
6. place of birth;

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 424ff.

¹⁶² The World War II nominal rolls are available online at a website maintained by the Commonwealth government: www.ww2roll.gov.au accessed on many different occasions in 2013 and 2014.

¹⁶³ Men recorded in the World War II nominal rolls as holding the ranks of Craftsman, Sapper, Signaller, Driver and Gunner were treated as Privates. This change affected Craftsman Bullivant, Sapper Bollard, Signallmen Riley and Donald, Driver Rattenbury and Gunner Camden.

7. nationality;
8. age on enlistment;
9. date of birth;
10. occupation;
11. marital status;
12. previous active service;
13. suburb of residence on enlistment;
14. religion;
15. military decorations;
16. whether a reinforcement;
17. whether wounded; and
18. whether killed and, if so, the date of death.

The men were classified according to whether they joined the Battalion in 1939, or as later reinforcements. This was done by cross-checking their enlistment dates against the list of reinforcements in the Battalion's War Diary.¹⁶⁴

The men were also classified according to their place of residence on enlistment. Under this heading, men were first classified according to whether they lived in metropolitan Sydney, in country New South Wales or interstate. The men who lived in metropolitan Sydney were then classified according to their local government area

¹⁶⁴ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 7." Entry for 30 August 1940.

– either to the City of Sydney or to one of the 49 Sydney municipalities from which the men of the Battalion were drawn.

Finally, the men were classified by industry group, having regard to the occupation they gave in the attestation forms.

Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the information. Excel makes possible analysis of single variables - for example, of religion or occupation or place of residence in the Battalion as a whole. It also allows analysis of multiple variables – for example, of the religion of officers, or of the rate of unemployment among the early enlisters, or of the marital status of Protestants. This, in turn, makes possible comparisons – for example, between officers and men, between early enlisters and late enlisters and between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Finally, Excel offers the facility to display the results of analysis in the form of graphs, charts and tables.

There are more sophisticated programs than Excel that could have been used to analyse the data. The other programs, like SPSS and SAS, are statistically more powerful, and offer technical advantages over Excel, but they are more expensive, can be more difficult for an amateur user to master and their advanced statistical capability is largely wasted on a small data set like the one in this study.¹⁶⁵

It is not entirely clear what methodology Robson, Hale, Blair and Barter used to analyse the data they collected. If they used a computer program for their analysis, they did not identify it. Given the publication dates of their studies – Robson's 1973, Hale's 1989, Barter's 1994 and Blair's 1998 – it must be acknowledged that this study

¹⁶⁵ For SPSS, visit the IBM website: <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/au/analytics/spss/>. For SAS, visit the SAS Institute Inc website: http://www.sas.com/en_us/home.html. For comparisons of the various programs that are available, visit: http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/mult_pkg/compare_packages.htm and <http://brenocon.com/blog/2009/02/comparison-of-data-analysis-packages-r-matlab-scipy-excel-sas-spss-stata/>. The textbooks express no particular preference for one computer program over another. See, for example: C. H. Feinstein and Mark Thomas, *Making History Count : A Primer in Quantitative Methods for Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

has had the advantage of access to programs that were more powerful and more easily used than whatever was available to those authors.

Drawing on this analysis, Chapter 3 describes the social demographics, background and experience of the men of the Battalion. The men were analysed according to:-

1. their status as British subjects;
2. their age;
3. their employment status;
4. their occupation;
5. their religion;
6. their marital status;
7. their previous militia service;
8. whether they enlisted in 1939 or 1940;
9. their place of residence on enlistment; and
10. the affluence of their place of residence on enlistment.

Comparisons were drawn between the married men and the single; between the younger men and the older men; between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics; between the country men and the city men; and between the officers and the other ranks.

The results were compared with (i) the results of similar studies, including those of Robson, Blair and Wiley; (ii) the results reported in Volume III of the *Medical Official History* of the Great War; (iii) the results of the Commonwealth Statistician's analysis

of the Personal Data sheets of 2nd AIF personnel and of the Census of Army Personnel conducted by the Army in 1942 and 1943. Comparisons were also made with the results of the 1933 census.

The 1933 Census Municipal Income Index

One aspect of the methodology of the study that needs explanation is the approach taken to establishing the affluence of parts of metropolitan Sydney where the men of the Battalion lived on enlistment. This aspect of the study was prompted by Blair's claim that officers of the 1st Battalion tended to come from more affluent parts of Sydney than the other ranks. It was a criticism of Blair's study that he had no evidence of the affluence of Sydney suburbs at the time of the Great War on which to base his claim. What evidence was available to establish the affluence of Sydney suburbs at the time of World War II?

It is not uncommon to compare the affluence of different parts of a city or to compare the affluence of a suburb today with its affluence (or lack of it) in the past. In Sydney today, observations that Vacluse is more affluent than Homebush or that Paddington was once a working class neighbourhood but is now prosperous might pass without question, yet those who made the comparisons might struggle to give evidence to support them. The comparisons often rest on impressions. Is the place prosperous, or down at heel? Are the people who live there wage-earners or professionals? Do the local shops sell expensive brands, or do they cater for the discount end of the market?¹⁶⁶ The comparisons may, equally, rest on things that are more readily measured - property values or per capita income would be examples. Impressions of the affluence of suburbs today are unlikely to be helpful when comparing the affluence of different parts of Sydney almost 75 years ago, as this study aims to do. Indeed, they may be positively misleading. Paddington is a

¹⁶⁶ Athol Congalton, "Status Ranking of Sydney Suburbs," School of Sociology (The University of New South Wales, 1961), 1 - 3. Athol Alexander Congalton, *Status and Prestige in Australia* ([Melbourne:] CHeshire, 1969).

case in point. Talk of the ‘gentrification’ of Paddington implies that it was once a working class suburb but is now one of some prosperity.

An evidentiary basis was needed to make possible comparisons of the affluence of different parts of Sydney in the 1930s. The 1933 census provides that evidence. It was the only Australian census that asked respondents to declare their income.¹⁶⁷ For each local government area, the census results recorded the annual income of males in employment in six income bands. This information was used to create an index approximating the *per capita* income of the males in employment in each local government area.

The starting point for calculating the index was the census data. Table 2 shows the census results for the Sydney municipality of Alexandria, giving the number of men in the municipality falling into in each of the six income bands.

| Under £52 | £52 to £103 | £104 to £155 | £156 to £207 | £208 to £259 | £260 or over |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 783 | 507 | 354 | 407 | 259 | 97 |

Table 2: Income bands, municipality of Alexandria

The census results also identified the number of men who did not state their income. These men were ignored in calculating the index. The results also identified the number of men in each local government area who were ‘breadwinners’ but had no income. These were the unemployed. The unemployed men were ignored in calculating the index, but they were used to test the reliability of the index.

The number of men in each municipality who fell within each income band was multiplied by the income number at the top end of their band (except for the highest income band, where the multiplier 360 was used). The totals were added to arrive at a grand total which was divided by the total number of men in work in the

¹⁶⁷ Commonwealth Statistician Roland Wilson, "Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 30th June 1933," ed. Treasury (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1933), 141 - 45. Part I

municipality. This gave a single index figure for each municipality. The index figure reflects broadly the *per capita* income of the working men of each local government area. The local government areas in metropolitan Sydney were the City of Sydney and the 49 municipalities from which the men of the original 2/1st Battalion were drawn. An index figure was calculated for each local government area.

Table 3 shows the index calculation for the municipality of Alexandria.

| | Men | | £ | | |
|---------------------|---------|---|-------|---|---------|
| Under £52 | 783 | x | 52 | = | 40,716 |
| £52 to £103 | 507 | x | 103 | = | 52,221 |
| £104 to £155 | 354 | x | 155 | = | 54,870 |
| £156 to £207 | 407 | x | 207 | = | 84,249 |
| £208 to £259 | 259 | x | 259 | = | 67,081 |
| £260 or over | 97 | x | 360 | = | 34,920 |
| Totals | 2407 | | | | 334,057 |
| Average | 334,057 | ÷ | 2,407 | = | 138.79 |
| Index figure | | | | | 139 |

Table 3: Sample index calculation for the municipality of Alexandria

The resulting index, the 1933 Census Municipal Income Index, is shown in Table 4, on the next page.

With the exception of Vacluse, which sat at the top of the scale 32 points clear of its nearest rival, the remaining municipalities were spread fairly evenly along the scale. There was no 'bell curve' cluster around a median or average figure. Figure 3, on the following page, shows the index in graphical form. It suggests that Vacluse, Mosman, Ku-Ring-Gai, Strathfield and Woollahra were powerhouse municipalities. Figure 3 shows them, appropriately, in the purple. A second group of municipalities, coloured red in Figure 3, registered solidly. The 18 municipalities in the first two groups stood in contrast to the third group, coloured blue in Figure 3. This lowest group, consisting of the City of Sydney, inner city municipalities and municipalities in the western and southern suburbs, tailed off quite quickly towards the bottom end of the scale.

| Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Cabramatta | 120 | Marrickville | 173 |
| Liverpool | 123 | Petersham | 175 |
| Darlington | 126 | Rockdale | 175 |
| Fairfield | 133 | Ryde | 176 |
| Erskineville | 137 | Kogarah | 180 |
| Alexandria | 139 | Enfield | 181 |
| Redfern | 139 | Canterbury | 183 |
| Balmain | 145 | North Sydney | 196 |
| Holroyd | 146 | Randwick | 197 |
| Newtown | 147 | Waverley | 198 |
| Paddington | 147 | Ashfield | 200 |
| Glebe | 149 | Drummoyne | 200 |
| Bankstown | 150 | Hunters Hill | 200 |
| City of Sydney | 153 | Dundas | 201 |
| Leichhardt | 154 | Homebush | 201 |
| St Peters | 154 | Willoughby | 202 |
| Granville | 156 | Burwood | 208 |
| Annandale | 157 | Concord | 208 |
| Waterloo | 157 | Manly | 210 |
| Eastwood | 161 | Lane Cove | 214 |
| Auburn | 163 | Strathfield | 225 |
| Botany | 167 | Woollahra | 225 |
| Mascot | 167 | Ku-ring-gai | 228 |
| Parramatta | 167 | Mosman | 230 |
| Hurstville | 170 | Vaucluse | 252 |

Table 4: The 1933 Census Municipal Income Index

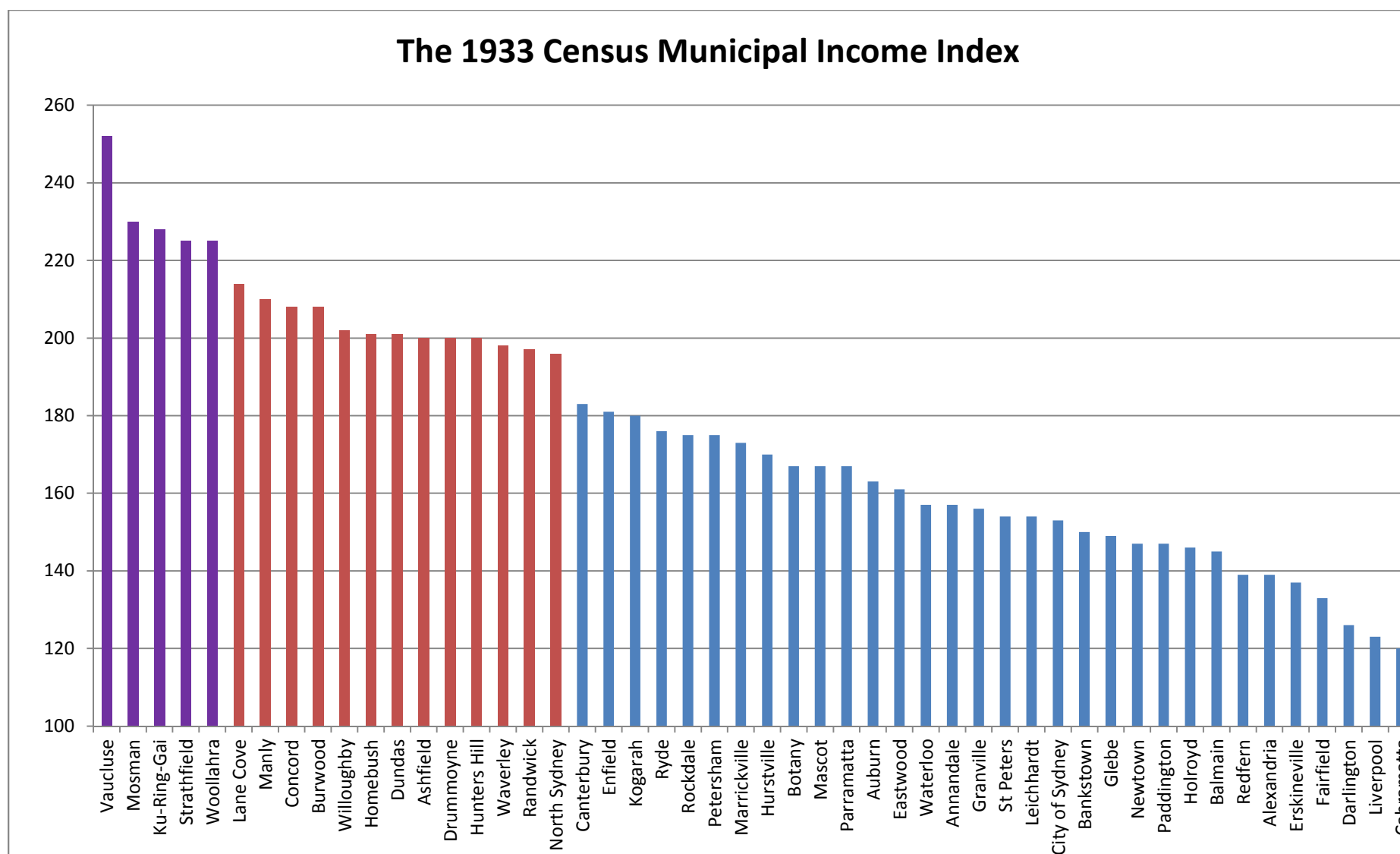


Figure 3: The 1933 Census Municipal Income Index

Although the unemployed were ignored in calculating the index, they were used as a means of checking whether the index accurately reflected affluence of each municipality. The 1933 census was taken at the height of the Great Depression. Unemployment was at extremely high levels. In those circumstances, it would be a reasonable hypothesis that unemployment would be higher in less affluent areas than in affluent areas. Given the format of the census results, it was possible to calculate what percentage the unemployed men were of the men in employment. On the hypothesis just stated, that percentage should be higher in less affluent areas and lower in more affluent areas. The results are shown in Table 5.

| Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Unemployed men as a % of employed men | Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Unemployed men as a % of employed men |
|---------------------|---|--|---------------------|---|--|
| Vaucluse | 252 | 9 | Marrickville | 173 | 18 |
| Mosman | 230 | 10 | Hurstville | 170 | 22 |
| Ku-ring-gai | 228 | 9 | Botany | 167 | 13 |
| Strathfield | 225 | 12 | Mascot | 167 | 21 |
| Woollahra | 225 | 14 | Auburn | 163 | 23 |
| Lane Cove | 214 | 13 | Eastwood | 161 | 16 |
| Manly | 210 | 14 | Annandale | 157 | 25 |
| Burwood | 208 | 16 | Waterloo | 157 | 29 |
| Concord | 208 | 17 | Granville | 156 | 28 |
| Willoughby | 202 | 14 | Leichhardt | 154 | 21 |
| Dundas | 201 | 9 | St Peters | 154 | 27 |
| Homebush | 201 | 14 | City of Sydney | 153 | 34 |
| Ashfield | 200 | 16 | Bankstown | 150 | 30 |
| Drummoyne | 200 | 15 | Glebe | 149 | 30 |
| Hunters Hill | 200 | 17 | Newtown | 147 | 35 |
| Waverley | 198 | 16 | Paddington | 147 | 31 |
| Randwick | 197 | 18 | Holroyd | 146 | 21 |
| North Sydney | 196 | 16 | Balmain | 145 | 30 |
| Canterbury | 183 | 20 | Alexandria | 139 | 35 |

| Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Unemployed men as a % of employed men | Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Unemployed men as a % of employed men |
|---------------------|---|--|---------------------|---|--|
| Enfield | 181 | 21 | Redfern | 139 | 43 |
| Kogarah | 180 | 15 | Ersrineville | 137 | 44 |
| Ryde | 176 | 16 | Fairfield | 133 | 33 |
| Parramatta | 167 | 16 | Darlington | 126 | 38 |
| Petersham | 175 | 21 | Liverpool | 123 | 33 |
| Rockdale | 175 | 16 | Cabramatta | 120 | 23 |

Table 5: 1933 Census Municipal Income Index showing unemployment levels

The results in Table 5 support the hypothesis. With very few exceptions, unemployment was higher in municipalities that the index treats as less affluent and lower in municipalities that it treats as more affluent. This suggests that the 1933 Census Municipal Income Index is a sound indicator of the relative affluence of the municipalities of metropolitan Sydney.¹⁶⁸ Accepting *per capita* income as an indicator of affluence, this study uses the 1933 Census Municipal Income Index as an evidentiary basis to compare the affluence of the municipalities of metropolitan Sydney, enabling comparisons between the 501 Battalion members who lived in metropolitan Sydney on enlistment.

The 1933 Census Income Index paints a picture of relative prosperity in the eastern suburbs, the northern suburbs and in a band of central-western suburbs, including Strathfield, Concord, Burwood, Homebush, Dundas and Ashfield. In the 1930s, the

¹⁶⁸ Poulsen and Spearritt used comparable methodology to create an index of the prosperity of Sydney local government areas (LGAs) in 1976. They interpreted their index as demonstrating whether an LGA was 'more middle class' or 'more working class': Michael Poulsen and Peter Spearritt, "Sydney, a Social and Political Atlas," (Sydney ; Boston: Allen & Unwin., 1981), 10. Although their index reflected observations made 44 years after the observations underlying the 1933 Census Income Index, the similarities between the two indices are more striking than the differences. Most LGAs have similar rankings on both scales, but there three noteworthy differences: (i) Woollahra, which, by 1976, had amalgamated with Paddington and Vaucluse, slipped from 4th place in 1933 to 14th place in 1976; (ii) four suburban LGAs - Fairfield, Holroyd, Hurstville and Ryde – rose in ranking; and (iii) four LGAs – Manly, Ashfield, Burwood and Strathfield – fell. Three of the falling LGAs – Ashfield, Burwood and Strathfield – were in the central-west. Contrast Congalton, "Status Ranking of Sydney Suburbs." - a survey-based study in 1961, that gives a similar ranking. ; Congalton, *Status and Prestige in Australia*.

higher income earners of Sydney did not necessarily congregate on the shores of Sydney Harbour. At the bottom of the scale sat three far western municipalities, Fairfield, Liverpool and Cabramatta. Close to the bottom were Paddington, Balmain and Glebe, all of which would claim to be higher on the scale nowadays. The City of Sydney, with an index number of 153, was also low on the scale. Figure 4 is a map of the City's boundaries as they stood when the census was taken.

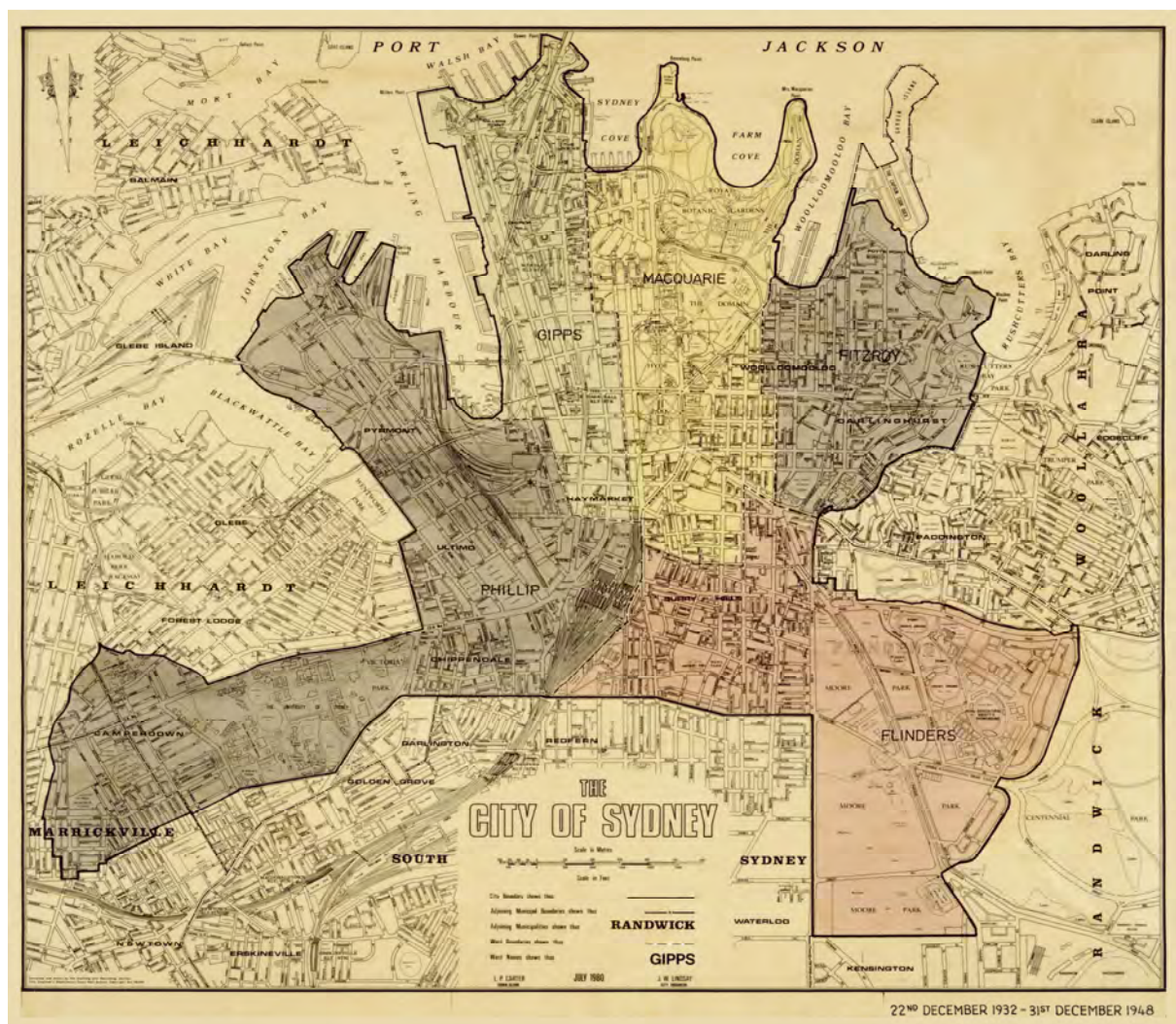


Figure 4: City of Sydney boundaries 1932 - 1948

Figure 4 demonstrates the City of Sydney was an unusual local government area, covering a diverse range of neighbourhoods. In addition to the CBD, it included Marrickville, Camperdown, Chippendale, Surry Hills, East Sydney, Moore Park, Darlinghurst, Kings Cross, Elizabeth Bay, Potts Point, Woolloomooloo, Millers Point,

Haymarket, Ultimo and Pyrmont. The census did not distinguish between the incomes of the men of these different localities. If some parts of the City of Sydney – Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point, perhaps – were more prosperous than others, the census data obscured their relative prosperity. The evidence of the census provides no basis to treat them differently from other parts of the City.

Technically, it would be possible to extend the comparison of municipal affluence to the local government areas of the 132 Battalion members who lived in non-metropolitan New South Wales and to the 14 Battalion members who lived interstate on enlistment. That was not attempted. It is one thing to compare the incomes of men living in different municipalities of the same city. It is more remote to compare the incomes of men living in city municipalities with the incomes of men living in the rural shires of New South Wales,¹⁶⁹ and more remote still to compare them with the incomes of men living in other States.

This chapter has described the techniques that will be used to analyse the evidence of the attestation forms that the men of the 2/1st Battalion completed. The next chapter will describe the circumstances in which the Battalion came to be raised.

¹⁶⁹ The findings of this study support this approach. The members of the original 2/1st Battalion who lived in country NSW were employed in a different spread of occupations than the members of the Battalion who lived in metropolitan Sydney: see Figures 18 and 19.

OUTBREAK OF WAR

It is hereby notified for general information that war has broken out between Great Britain and Germany.

Dated this third day of September, 1939.

ROBERT G. MENZIES,
Prime Minister¹⁷⁰

SECOND AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

His Excellency the Governor-General in Council has approved of a Military Force, designated 'The Second Australian Imperial Force, 6th Division and Ancillary Troops', being raised for war service and being composed of persons who voluntarily agree to serve within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth. – (Ex. Min. No. 313.)

G. A. STREET,
Minister for Defence¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Proclamation published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette edition of 3 September 1939.

¹⁷¹ Proclamation published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette edition of 12 October 1939.

Chapter 4

The Second Australian Imperial Force

War of Empire

Great Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. The same day, Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced to the people of Australia that Great Britain had declared war and, 'as a result, Australia is also at war.'¹⁷² Australians were no strangers to the wars of Empire. New South Wales sent a contingent of 30 officers and 740 men to the Sudanese war of 1885.¹⁷³ More than 16,000 Australians fought in the Boer War, serving in State-based contingents.¹⁷⁴ In the Great War, 331,781 men served overseas in the Australian Army.¹⁷⁵

Every Australian who served overseas in these wars of Empire was a volunteer. Australians did not approve of conscription. The overarching principle of the *Defence Act*, 1903 was that, 'the Defence Force [should] be raised and kept up by voluntary enlistment only.'¹⁷⁶ Men who had joined the Army could not be ordered to serve outside Australia unless they 'voluntarily agreed' to do so.¹⁷⁷ The only exception to the voluntary principle was that, in time of war, all men aged between

¹⁷² W. J. Hudson et al., *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49* (Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1975), Vol II, 221.

¹⁷³ Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 49ff.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁷⁵ C. E. W. Bean and Australian War Memorial., *Anzac to Amiens : A Shorter History of the Australian Fighting Services in the First World War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1946), 532. A total of 416,809 men enlisted: *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Defence Act*, s35.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, s49. When the Air Force was established, a similar provision was included in its legislation: *Air Force Act*, s4. For obvious reasons, the legislation governing the Navy required sailors to serve 'beyond the limits of the Commonwealth': *Naval Defence Act*, s33. There was no way the Navy could confine itself to operating within Australia's territorial waters.

18 and 60 were liable to serve in the citizen forces.¹⁷⁸ While this was a form of conscription, it was conscription for home defence only.¹⁷⁹

If the government wanted to send a force to fight overseas, the *Defence Act* 1903 empowered it to raise an expeditionary force.¹⁸⁰ Australia had raised two such forces in the Great War. The first was the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, which invaded German New Guinea in August 1914.¹⁸¹ The second force was sent to the Middle East. General Bridges, who commanded the Middle East force, refused to use the word 'expeditionary' in its name because, he insisted, the men were not going on an expedition. Instead, he gave the force the name by which it became famous: the 'Australian Imperial Force' – the AIF, for short.¹⁸²

The 2nd AIF

On 15 September 1939, Prime Minister Menzies announced that the government had decided to raise an expeditionary force:-

We propose to enlist forthwith an Infantry Division with its ancillary units, or a total of approximately 20,000 men. This force will be specially enlisted for service at home or abroad, as circumstances may permit or require.¹⁸³

Menzies likened this new force to the 1st AIF: 'As with the AIF, there will be one Brigade Group raised in New South Wales, one in Victoria, and the remainder will

¹⁷⁸ *Defence Act*, Part IV, particularly s59. The *Defence Act* had imposed an obligation on men and boys aged between 12 and 25 to undergo military training in the cadets and the citizen forces: Part XII, particularly s125. A newly-elected Labor Government suspended this obligation in 1929: Long, *To Benghazi*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ In the dark days of 1942 and 1943, Prime Minister Curtin's government did accept that militia conscripts should serve in parts of the south-west Pacific outside Australia: Gavin Long and Australian War Memorial, *The Six Years War : A Concise History of Australia in the 1939-45 War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973), 295 - 96.

¹⁸⁰ *Defence Act*, s31(2)(b).

¹⁸¹ Seaforth Simpson Mackenzie, *The Australians at Rabaul : The Capture and Administration of the German Possessions in the Southern Pacific*, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1927).

¹⁸² C. E. W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac : From the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, 13th ed. Ibid. (1942), 36.

¹⁸³ John Robertson and John McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy, 1939-1945 : A Documentary History* (St. Lucia ; New York: University of Queensland Press, 1985), 29.

be distributed between the other States.’¹⁸⁴ It was the first of many parallels drawn between the two forces.

General Squires, the Chief of the General Staff, was quick to name the new force the Second Australian Imperial Force, which would be abbreviated to: 2nd AIF. He ordered that individual battalions in the 2nd AIF be given the same numbers as corresponding battalions in the 1st AIF, with the addition of the prefix ‘2nd’.¹⁸⁵ The Military Board explained that:-

The title of the force and the designation of its component Units have been adopted with the object of perpetuating the traditions of the original Australian Imperial Force and also, as far as practicable, Units will be recruited on the same territorial basis as that approved for the 1st Division, Australian Imperial Force, in 1914.¹⁸⁶

This was how the 2/1st Battalion came to ‘inherit’ the traditions of the 1st Battalion of the 1st AIF, and to be recruited from the same territory as the 1st Battalion. Like the 2/1st Battalion, each other battalion in the new division was linked to a battalion in the 1st AIF.

A different system was used to name divisions and brigades. The existing Australian Army consisted of five divisions and fifteen infantry brigades, all of which were known by their numbers. Continuing that system, the new division became the 6th Division and its three infantry brigades the 16th, 17th and 18th Brigades.

On 12 October 1939, the Governor-General issued a formal proclamation that he had ‘approved of a Military Force, designated ‘The Second Australian Imperial Force, 6th Division and Ancillary Troops’, being raised for war service and being composed of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Raising of Special Force for service in Australia or overseas: NAA: MP729/7; 37/421/97.

¹⁸⁶ Second Australian Imperial Force, 6th Division and Ancillary Troops, Organisation, Composition, Distribution and Authority for Raising: AWM54:721/2/4.

persons who voluntarily agree to serve within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.¹⁸⁷ Recruiting began before the proclamation was issued.¹⁸⁸

The 2nd AIF was a white army of the British Empire. This came about partly by operation of the *Defence Act* 1903 and partly as a result of government policy.

Section 61 of the *Defence Act* 1903 exempted from war service all persons who were not 'substantially of European origin or descent'.¹⁸⁹ This provision was designed to exclude all non-Europeans, including Australian Aborigines. Distasteful questions about when men of mixed backgrounds could be judged to be 'substantially of European origin or descent' were left to the 'medical authorities' who, presumably, had to decide them when they carried out the medical examination of each potential recruit.¹⁹⁰

Beyond that, the *Defence Act* specified who was liable to be conscripted for service in the militia - conscripts had to be male; inhabitants of Australia for at least 6 months; British subjects; and aged between 18 and 60 - but it said nothing about who could serve in an expeditionary force. This was dictated by government policy. The policy was that only natural born or naturalized British subjects could enlist in the 2nd AIF. Question 3 in the attestation form asked:-

3. Are you a natural born or a naturalized British subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced.

The question reflected Australia's position within the British Empire. Before the enactment of the *Australian Citizenship Act* 1948, there was no concept of Australian citizenship. The *Australian Constitution* referred, instead, to 'subjects of the King,' a term which entailed a connection with the King, but none necessarily with

¹⁸⁷ Proclamation published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette edition of 12 October 1939.

¹⁸⁸ The first members of the original 2/1st Battalion to enlist were Private Howard Jennens and Corporal Kenneth Bishop, who enlisted on 6 October 1939.

¹⁸⁹ *Defence Act*, s61(1)(h).

¹⁹⁰ *Defence Act*: s59.

Australia.¹⁹¹ In order to understand question 3, it was necessary to look to a British statute, the *British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914*, which provided that ‘any person born within His Majesty’s dominions and allegiance’ was a ‘natural-born British subject’. The Act extended the meaning of the term ‘British subject’ to include a clutch of people born outside His Majesty’s dominions if they could claim a special connection with the Crown.¹⁹² In this lexicon, people who were not British subjects were called ‘aliens’. Aliens who were prepared to give their allegiance to the King could be naturalized as British subjects,¹⁹³ but there was no room for dual nationality. British subjects who chose to be naturalized in a foreign state (including friendly states, like the United States) ceased to be British subjects.¹⁹⁴

In February 1940, a pilot who was an American citizen volunteered to join the RAAF. As a pilot, he was a valuable recruit, but he was not a British subject. The matter came to the War Cabinet, which had to decide whether an alien – an American citizen - could be permitted to join the Australian Defence Force. It was a question of allegiance. The War Cabinet decided:-

That the admission of aliens or of British subjects of non-European origin or descent to the Australian Defence Forces is undesirable in principle, but that a departure from this principle is justified in order to provide for the special needs of any of the services during the war.¹⁹⁵

The War Cabinet added that the admission of aliens or of British subjects of non-European origin or descent for service in the Navy and the Army was ‘neither necessary nor desirable’, but that the RAAF could admit them at the discretion of the Air Board.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*. The term was used, for example, in ss345 and 117. The failure of the Constitution to recognise Australian citizenship is but one reason why Australia remained a colony after Federation.

¹⁹² *British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act*, s1.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, s2.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, s13.

¹⁹⁵ War Cabinet Minute of 29 February 1940: NAA A5954: 803/2.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Recruiting

On 18 October 1939, the Military Board published formal orders for recruiting the 2nd AIF.¹⁹⁷ The orders provided:-

1. Private soldiers and non-commissioned officers had to be between 20 and 35 years of age on enlistment. In exceptional cases, this could be extended to 40 years for warrant officers and non-commissioned officers.¹⁹⁸ Different age restrictions applied to officers. Lieutenants had to be under 30; captains under 35; majors under 40; and lieutenant-colonels under 45.¹⁹⁹ Brigadier AS 'Tubby' Allen, the commander of the 16th Brigade (of which the 2/1st Battalion was part) was 45 when he enlisted in the 2nd AIF. General Blamey, who commanded the 2nd AIF, was 55.²⁰⁰
2. The new force was recruited on a quota, with 50% to be current members of the permanent army or the militia, 25% to be men with previous military service; and 25% men with no previous service.²⁰¹
3. Preference was given to single men.²⁰²
4. Men employed in 'essential key industries' designated in a list of reserved occupations could not enlist. There was a manpower officer at each recruiting depot man to enforce this requirement.²⁰³
5. All recruits would be medically examined. Only those classified in Class 1 would be accepted for service.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Raising of Special Force for service in Australia or overseas: NAA: MP729/7; 37/421/97.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., par 6.

¹⁹⁹ Long, *To Benghazi*, 39.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 43 - 44.

²⁰¹ Ibid., par 7.

²⁰² Ibid., par 8.

²⁰³ Ibid., par 8.

6. Recruits had to be at least 5 feet 6 inches tall. There was discretion to enlist 'special cases' if they were at least 5 feet 5 inches tall, and a register was kept of otherwise eligible men who were at least 5 feet 4 inches tall in case they were needed later.²⁰⁵
7. Recruiting was by voluntary enlistment for service in Australia or abroad.²⁰⁶
8. Enlistment was for the duration of the war plus 12 months, 'unless sooner lawfully discharged.'²⁰⁷
9. The procedure on enlistment began with all men completing an initial application to enlist. If the applicant was aged 20, both his parents had to consent to his enlistment by signing this form.²⁰⁸
10. Those shown to be ineligible would be given a notice setting out the reasons why they were rejected (age, height and so on).²⁰⁹
11. Apparently eligible applicants would undergo an interview and a medical examination. The men who passed would be notified of their acceptance and required to complete a medical history sheet and to answer all the questions on the attestation form, but they would not take the oath of enlistment. Instead, they would be sent away with instructions to return on one week's notice. On their return, a doctor would re-examine them to confirm their fitness and to prevent impersonation. Those who passed the second medical would swear the oath of attestation and march into camp. Those rejected as unfit would be given a notice setting out the reasons why they were rejected. Notices of rejection given to men who worked in reserved occupations had to

²⁰⁴ Ibid., par 9, which indicated that the classification was as set out in separate instructions for medical examination on mobilization.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., par 10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., par 11.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., par 11.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., par 15.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., par 16.

be signed by the enlisting officer, the manpower officer and by the man himself.²¹⁰ This harked back to the Great War. It was intended to help apparently fit men to explain why they were not in uniform.

12. On attestation, each man was given his army number. In New South Wales, the numbers began with NX1 and ran upwards. N signified New South Wales and X signified the 2nd AIF.²¹¹

Brigadier Allen's number was NX2. Lt-Colonel Kenneth Eather, a militia soldier who became the first commanding officer of the 2/1st Battalion, was NX3. Major Ian Campbell, a regular soldier who was to become the second commanding officer of the 2/1st Battalion, enlisted in Victoria. His number was VX21.²¹² Most members of the Battalion were 'thirty-niners' – men who volunteered for service in 1939.²¹³ Many members of the Battalion were 'four figure men' – men who were among the first 9,999 men of their State to volunteer for the 2nd AIF.²¹⁴

The recruitment protocols were not a recent invention. The plan to recruit the 2nd AIF had been on the shelf at Army Headquarters since at least 1922, ready to be deployed 'should it be decided to raise troops for active service abroad'.²¹⁵ Called Overseas Plan 401, the plan was the distillation of what the Army had learned in raising and equipping the 1st AIF. Under the plan, each Australian Military District was required to draft, 'All preliminary orders necessary under [Plan 401] . . . ready for issue without delay should the necessity arise.'²¹⁶

²¹⁰ Ibid., pars 14 – 21.

²¹¹ Ibid., par 23.

²¹² NX1 was held by a Brigadier RGH Irving. He had the prestigious number despite the facts that he was then only a major, and that he was a Victorian. He was the GSOII of the 6th Division.

²¹³ Peter Charlton named his book after them: Charlton, *The Thirty-Niners*.

²¹⁴ Holt et al., *From Ingleburn to Aitape : The Trials and Tribulations of a Four Figure Man*.

²¹⁵ Letter dated 28 September 1922 from Brigadier General Foot to Headquarters, 2nd Military District: AWM193; 345 Part 3. See also AWM193; 347 Part 1; and AWM51; 179 (the 1932 amendment to Plan 401).

²¹⁶ Letter dated 28 September 1922 from Brigadier General Foot to Headquarters, 2nd Military District: AWM193; 345 Part 3.

The object of the plan was to recruit good soldiers. Good soldiers are not necessarily good men. General Wavell made this point in a book on the subject.²¹⁷ He rated toughness and endurance as the prime requirements for a good soldier:-

The less civilised man has a natural advantage in war, his wants are simple, he is accustomed to hardship and frugality, often, too, his life is so laborious that he rates it comparatively lightly. When the Spartans were at the height of their military fame and glory, they sent a deputation to the oracle at Delphi and demanded arrogantly: 'Can anything harm Sparta?' The answer came: 'Yes, luxury.'²¹⁸

Next after toughness and endurance, General Wavell rated skill at arms, followed by 'the valour of discipline with some pungency of independence.'²¹⁹ He claimed to prefer soldiers with a 'seasoning of devilry'. While other judges thought the ideal infantryman would be 'athlete, marksman, stalker', Wavell's ideal infantryman was 'cat-burglar, gunman, poacher.'²²⁰ The importance of Wavell's definition of a good soldier was that it not only included physical qualities that would be valuable in a good soldier – toughness, endurance and skill at arms - it also included mental and spiritual qualities that would be equally valuable in a good soldier - discipline, independence, guile and cunning.

The recruitment orders envisaged that 75% of the 2nd AIF would be men with previous military experience and that 50% would be currently serving in the permanent army or the militia. Men serving in the militia who thought they could transfer to the 2nd AIF with their current rank and privileges were mostly disappointed. Officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers in the permanent army who were posted to the 2nd AIF generally retained their rank, but it was different for the militia. Militia officers who were 'eligible for selection [and] desirous of being considered for appointment' to the 2nd AIF had to apply in writing

²¹⁷ Archibald Percival Wavell, *The Good Soldier*, Macmillan's Overseas Library (London: Macmillan, 1948).

²¹⁸ Ibid., 42 - 43.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 48.

²²⁰ Ibid., 47. Holding that view, it is surprising that Wavell did not get along with the Australians far better than he did!

and take their chances in an interview.²²¹ Militia soldiers from the other ranks were 'required to enlist in the rank of Private.'²²²

The first members of the original 2/1st Battalion to enlist were Private Howard Jennens and Corporal Kenneth Bishop, whose attestation forms are dated 6 October 1939. Lance Sergeant Harold Horton was next on 8 October 1939. He was followed by 14 men on 9 October 1939; 53 on 10 October 1939; and 10 on 11 October 1939.

The aim of the initial recruiting drive was to raise a special force of one division, or around 20,000 men. This was effectively achieved by Christmas 1939. Table 6 shows the gross recruitment figures for the 2nd AIF to the end of December 1939.²²³

| Month | Men recruited |
|--------------|---------------|
| September | 0 |
| October | 7,853 |
| November | 9,991 |
| December | 1,810 |
| Total | 19,654 |

Table 6: 2nd AIF gross monthly recruitment figures 1939

In 1939, it was envisaged that the 6th Division would consist of three Brigades, each of four Battalions, with the Battalions drawn from more or less discrete areas. Table 7 shows the structure then envisaged.²²⁴

²²¹ Australian Military Forces 2nd Division Warning Order dated 21 September 1939: AWM54:495/1/9.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ AIF Gross Monthly Recruiting Figures September 1939 to December 1942: AWM54; 834/4/4.

²²⁴ Table 7 is adapted from: Mark Johnston, *The Proud 6th : An Illustrated History of the 6th Australian Division, 1939-45*, Australian Army History Series (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3. and from *The Silent 7th : An Illustrated History of the 7th Australian Division 1940-46* (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2005), xi. Early in 1940, the 2nd AIF was reorganised along lines consistent with the British Army, with three Battalions per Brigade.

| 6th Division | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Brigade | Battalion | Drawn from |
| 16th Brigade | 2/1 st Battalion | Sydney/NSW |
| | 2/2 nd Battalion | Sydney/Northern Rivers NSW |
| | 2/3 rd Battalion | West and south-west NSW |
| | 2/4 th Battalion | Sydney/NSW |
| 17th Brigade | 2/5 th Battalion | Melbourne/Victoria |
| | 2/6 th Battalion | Melbourne/Victoria |
| | 2/7 th Battalion | Melbourne/Northern Victoria |
| | 2/8 th Battalion | Melbourne/Victoria |
| 18th Brigade | 2/9 th Battalion | Queensland |
| | 2/10 th Battalion | South Australia |
| | 2/11 th Battalion | Perth/WA |
| | 2/12 th Battalion | Tasmania and Queensland |

Table 7: 6th Division original structure

Men who enlisted in the 2nd AIF in Sydney might, therefore, be allocated to any one of the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/4th Battalions. Men enlisting in Melbourne might be allocated to any one of the four Victorian Battalions. The process of allocation is evident from the attestation forms. The first page of the form includes spaces for the man's Army number and unit. Almost without exception, these items are filled out in a different pen and in different hand writing than the balance of the form. This can be seen in Private Anderson's form (Figure 1) and in Private Cliff's form (Figure 7). On Private Cliff's form, the word 'Signals' appearing next to the word 'Unit' appears to have been written by the person who filled out the balance of the form, but the words '6th Div Sigs' to the right of those words are in a different hand. The evidence of all the forms suggests that the men completed most of the attestation forms but that they

were later allocated to units by a bureaucratic decision that was recorded on the attestation forms by whoever made the allocation.

The 16th Brigade left Sydney Harbour bound for the Middle East on 10 January 1940.²²⁵ Thereafter, recruiting was allowed to slacken off, but it did not cease altogether. Table 8 shows the gross recruiting figures for the 2nd AIF for 1940.

| Month | Men recruited |
|--------------|----------------|
| January | 811 |
| February | 217 |
| March | 1,316 |
| April | 5,441 |
| May | 8,000 |
| June | 48,496 |
| July | 21,022 |
| August | 32,524 |
| September | 1,049 |
| October | 995 |
| November | 1,028 |
| December | 2,441 |
| Total | 123,340 |

Table 8: 2nd AIF gross monthly recruitment figures 1940

On 6th February 1940, the War Cabinet approved a request from the Military Board to raise and train second, third and fourth reinforcements for the 6th Division.²²⁶ On 28th February 1940, the War Cabinet decided to raise a 7th Division.²²⁷ This explains the slight pick-up in enlistments in March, however, as Table 8 makes clear, men did

²²⁵ "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 2 ", (AWM52-8-3-1-002). Entry for 10 January 1940.

²²⁶ Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings 27 September 1939 to 6 February 1940: NAA: 5954: 803/1. Minute for 6 February 1940.

²²⁷ Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings 14 February 1940 to 16 June 1940. Minute for 28 February 1940.

not begin to enlist in high numbers until after Germany invaded France and the Low Countries in May 1940.

The list of Reserved Industries and Occupations established what came to be called the manpower restrictions. A committee, chaired by General Blamey himself, administered the restrictions. They were intended to 'ensure that the Manpower of the country [was] so allocated in time of national emergency that the services of men are secured to the nation in the capacity where they can best be utilised in the national interest.'²²⁸

From the viewpoint of the volunteers, the manpower restrictions were designed to prevent good men enlisting. Many occupations of dubious military value were on the list. Upholsterers, sail-makers, train conductors and dental mechanics would have been surprised to find their occupations listed. Some occupations were only restricted if the volunteer had reached a certain age. Others were restricted regardless of age. Hence, in the boiler-making trade, leading hands and boilermakers could only volunteer if they were under 25 years of age. Cabinet makers engaged in radio manufacture could join if they were under 30; carpenters in the mining industry could only join if they were under 25; and carpenters engaged in shipbuilding were restricted no matter what their age.²²⁹ Major-General Clive Steele, the Chief Engineer of the Australian Army, was so unkind as to say the manpower restrictions prevented everybody joining except 'stockbrokers and certain classes of the unemployed.'²³⁰

The medical examination was stringent. Men were rejected if they were missing a digit, if they had an overlapping little toe, or if they had haemorrhoids. By 31 December 1939, the doctors at Victoria Barracks in Sydney had rejected 1,268 men

²²⁸ Memorandum dated 2 September 1939 by General Blamey in his capacity as Chairman of the Manpower Committee: NAA: A663; O130/1/750 PART 2.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Quoted in: Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 145.

out of a total of 7,980 men who had presented for examination. In the first crop of volunteers for the 2nd AIF, one man in six had failed the medical.²³¹

The 2/1st Battalion

The 2/1st Battalion began life on 16 October 1939, when its first commanding officer, Lt-Colonel Eather, established his headquarters in Room 17 of the Command and Staff School at Victoria Barracks, in Paddington.²³² Charged with building a battalion from the ground up, Eather began by selecting his officers. He was besieged by regular and militia officers wanting to join the 6th Division and serve overseas. With so many volunteers, Eather was spoiled for choice.

At 39 years of age, Eather was too young to have served in the Great War. He was a militia officer, having been appointed to command the 56th Battalion at the age of 31. Eather appointed Captain WG Adams DSO, MC as his second in command. Adams was a regular soldier and a veteran of the Great War. Lieutenant Don Jackson, a regular soldier, became adjutant. Another regular soldier, Lieutenant Ernest Lergessner became quartermaster. All the other officers were from the militia. This was not out of a preference for militia men. The entire strength of the permanent army (officers and other ranks) in 1938 was only 2,795 men.²³³ Now that war had broken out, there were precious few regular soldiers available.

With the senior positions filled, interviews continued to fill the positions for junior officers. Competition for places was stiff. Each interview lasted half to three quarters of an hour.²³⁴ Among the junior officers who passed the selection process were Lieutenants Boyd Moriarty, Michael Kennedy, Douglas Channell, Fred Embrey, Clive Dieppe and Dick Digby. Captain CH 'Tom' Selby was appointed

²³¹ Report dated 31 December 1939, 'Outline of Medical Examination of 16th Brigade': NAA: MP508/1; 211/786/2.

²³² "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 1."Entry for 16 October 1939.

²³³ Long, *To Benghazi*, 14.

²³⁴ Steve Eather, *Desert Sands, Jungle Lands : A Biography of Major General Ken Eather* (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 11 - 12.

medical officer. On 25 October 1939, Warrant Officer Delves, a regular soldier, knocked on the door of Room 17. Saluting smartly, he said to Eather, 'Sir, I hear you are forming an infantry battalion.' Eather said that he was. Delves said, 'I want to be your RSM.' Impressed by the initiative of the man, Eather gave WOI Wally 'Doover' Delves the job.²³⁵

My father often told the story of his interview, which was held in a room at Victoria Barracks decorated with photographs of old soldiers. When Lt-Colonel Eather asked why my father wanted to join the 2/1st Battalion, he replied by pointing to the photographs of his father, grand-father and great grand-father hanging on the walls of the interview room. In my research for this study, I came across an entry in the 16th Brigade War Diary entry for 9 February 1940 that told a different story of how he and my uncle came to join the 16th Brigade. In this extract, the author of the diary calls my uncle, Jika Travers, by his given name, Basil:-

A wireless message received on board last night [the Brigade was then on as ship bound for the Middle East] . . . stated that Lieut. Basil Holmes Travers had been selected as NSW Rhodes Scholar for 1940. This good news was hailed with delight by the personnel of this ship as Lt. Travers is aboard as an officer of the 2/2 Bn. His brother, Lt. W.H. Travers is with the 2/1 Bn.

The news was of special interest and pleasure to the Brigadier [Allen] who not only served with Travers' father (Col R.J.A. Travers) in the last war, but was also acquainted with his grandfather on the maternal side – General William Holmes who was killed in the last war while showing the NSW Premier (W.A. Holman) around the front lines. This was at Hill 63, Flanders where the Brigadier's own Bn (45 Bn) was billeted at the time.

The Brigadier, when discussing young Travers' achievement, recalled with pride the day when Col. Travers brought his two sons to him and asked him to take them to the war. The Brigadier suggested that they go to different Bns, and although Col. Travers said he himself had no superstition on that score, he left the decision to their Mother. Mrs

²³⁵ Ibid., 11. Not all of these men remained with the 2/1st Battalion. Many of them found their way into other units and different roles before the Battle of Crete. For that reason, not all of them qualify as subjects of this study.

Travers agreed with the Brigadier's suggestion and while the eldest son went to the 2/1 Bn, B.H. went to the 2/2 Bn.

The new Rhodes Scholar has had a brilliant scholastic and athletic career both at S.C.E.G.S. (Shore) and the Sydney University. He excels at cricket and football and in the 2nd A.I.F. cricket match against the 1st A.I.F. team in Sydney a few days before we embarked, he scored 67 – top score for his side.²³⁶

My father's credentials were similar to his brother's. He had been Head Prefect at Shore, and a fine schoolboy athlete. At Sydney University, he had completed an Economics degree and represented the University at Rugby. In 1939, he played Rugby for the New South Wales Waratahs.



Figure 5: My father, in Lieutenant's uniform

²³⁶ "16th Brigade War Diary Vol 2," (AWM52-8-2-16-002). Entry for 9 February 1940.

In contrast to militia battalions that had been established years before, the 2/1st Battalion was a task force especially selected for the job at hand. Whereas in militia units men may have worked their way into senior positions by long service, Lt-Colonel Eather selected the entire command structure of the 2/1st Battalion afresh. Owing no obligation to select his officers on seniority or long service, Eather was free to select the men he wanted.

By contrast with the selection of officers, Eather appears to have had little control over the selection of the rank and file. Most of the men who volunteered for the 2nd AIF were militia soldiers. The recruitment process seems to have allotted them to the AIF Battalions randomly. Recognising the same concern that Brigadier Allen raised with my grandparents, the Army may well have had a policy of mixing up recruits. The loss of a battalion containing many men from the same family, or the same neighbourhood, could have a devastating effect. However, the recruitment protocols contained no evidence of any such policy. Policy or not, there was no evidence in the attestation forms of men from the same street or neighbourhood enlisting together. There were three and, possibly, four pairs of brothers in the original 2/1st Battalion – the Berrys, the Powers, the Thornelys, and, possibly, the Noakes. The evidence of the attestation forms is that they all enlisted separately, on different days from their brother.²³⁷

Summary

The 2/1st Battalion began life with a clean slate. It consisted only of volunteers. The officers were selected by interview from a large field of applicants. Most of the other ranks had experience of serving in the militia. They had passed a selection process which, although not perfect, was designed to winnow out men who were too old, or

²³⁷ Tragically, the Berry brothers were killed within a week of one another – Harold on 19 April 1941 and Keith on 25 April 1941. They are buried together in Phaleron War Cemetery, in Athens.

medically unfit. The selection process was an opportunity to pick the eyes out of the militia battalions. It favoured the selection of men who were:-

1. tall;
2. fit;
3. young;
4. single;
5. white;
6. British subjects;
7. with previous military service;
8. whose occupation was not sufficiently important to be reserved, or who were unemployed; and who were
9. free to volunteer for an indefinite period of military service, possibly overseas.

Chapter 5

The Demographics of the Original 2/1st Battalion

This chapter describes what the attestation forms reveal about the social demographics, background and experience of the men of the original 2/1st Battalion. It describes and compares the men by reference to:-

1. their status as British subjects;
2. their age;
3. their employment status;
4. their occupation;
5. their religion;
6. their marital status;
7. their previous militia service;
8. whether they enlisted in 1939 or 1940;
9. their place of residence on enlistment; and
10. the affluence of their place of residence on enlistment.

British subjects

With only two exceptions, all members of the original 2/1st Battalion were natural born British subjects. This meant that they were born ‘within His Majesty’s dominions and allegiance’.²³⁸ The two men who were not natural born British subjects were Lance Corporal Wolfe Greenstein, who was born in the Ukraine, and Private Rudolf Born, who was German. Both Greenstein and Born had been naturalised as British subjects.

Table 9 gives the birth places of Battalion members.

| Place of Birth | Number |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Metropolitan Sydney | 281 |
| NSW country | 198 |
| England | 55 |
| Scotland | 25 |
| New Zealand | 13 |
| Ireland | 8 |
| South Africa | 2 |
| Wales | 1 |
| Fiji | 1 |
| New Guinea | 1 |
| India | 1 |
| Russia (Odessa) | 1 |
| Germany | 1 |
| Unknown | 1 |
| New South Wales | 479 |
| Interstate | 60 |
| Australia | 539 |
| British Empire (other than Australia) | 107 |
| Europe (including the Ukraine) | 2 |

Table 9: 2/1st Battalion, Place of Birth

²³⁸ *British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act*, s1.

Table 9 underlines the fact that the original 2/1st Battalion was part of a white army of the British Empire. Its makeup owed precious little to ethnic diversity. In this regard, the Battalion reflected the State. Table 10 compares the birthplaces of the members of the original 2/1st Battalion with the birthplaces of the total male population of New South Wales recorded in the 1933 census.

| Place of Birth | NSW Males % | 2/1st Battalion % |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Australia | 84.6 | 83.2 |
| British Isles | 11.8 | 13.7 |
| New Zealand | 0.9 | 2.0 |
| Africa | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Asia, including British India | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| Europe, excluding the British Isles | 1.4 | 0.1 |
| America, including Canada | 0.2 | 0 |
| Other | 0.2 | 0.6 |

Table 10: Birthplace of members of the 2/1st Battalion compared to the birthplace of all NSW males

British subjects born in the British Isles, New Zealand and Africa were slightly over-represented in the original 2/1st Battalion compared to the male population of the State. Australian-born British subjects were correspondingly under-represented. The few New South Welshmen born in Europe, Asia and America were under-represented in the Battalion compared to the population of the State. If these foreign-born men did volunteer, they were evidently rejected. They may have been rejected because they were not British subjects. Those born in Asia and America may also have been rejected because they were not substantially of European origin or descent.

Around 17% of the original 2/1st Battalion had migrated to Australia. This percentage was similar to the percentage of migrants in the State. The census data, mirrored in the makeup of the original 2/1st Battalion, provided a picture of the demography of the State before the boom in European migration that followed World War II.²³⁹

The attestation forms provide no evidence that any members of the 2/1st Battalion were Australian Aborigines.

Age

According to the attestation forms, the youngest recruit enlisted in the original 2/1st Battalion was Private Arthur Robinson, who enlisted in Bathurst on 26 October 1939 when he was still only 19 years and 10 months old. How he came to be accepted before he turned 20 is not explained. He was the only man in the original 2/1st Battalion whose attestation form showed him to be younger than 20 on enlistment. The oldest recruit (according to the attestation forms) was Major Ian Campbell. He was born on 23 March 1900, making him 39 years old when he enlisted on 13 October 1939.

The age on enlistment of all the members of the 2/1st Battalion is summarised in Figure 6.

²³⁹ The enlistment patterns in the Union Army show that large-scale migration to the United States began before the Civil War. Wiley estimated that as many as 25% of men in the Union Army were born outside America: Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank; the Common Soldier of the Union*, 307. The lack of records made it impossible to say what percentage of the Confederate Army was born outside America although there, again, the evidence suggested a significant migrant population: *The Life of Johnny Reb : The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, 324.

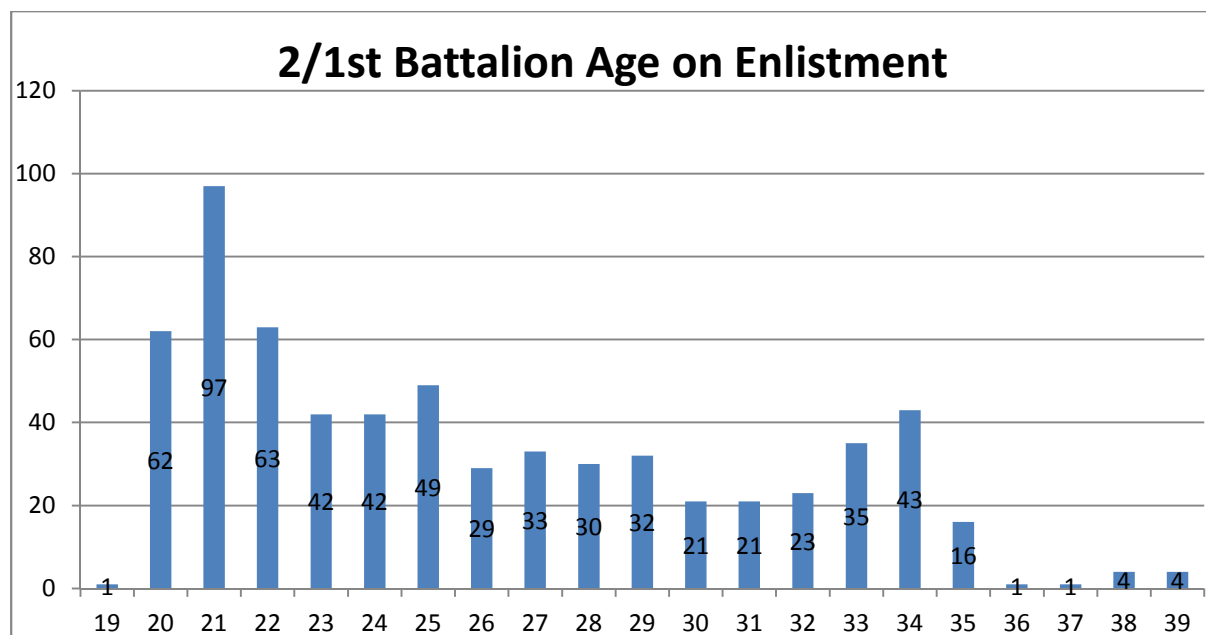


Figure 6: 2/1st Battalion, age on enlistment

Figure 6 provides good evidence that men of the Battalion lied about their age in order to enlist. There are marked spikes in the younger and older age cohorts caused by younger men increasing their ages, and by older men reducing theirs. The numbers of men claiming to be 21 and 34 are especially high, while the numbers claiming to be 20, 22 and 33 are also elevated.

The fact that the spike appears at age 21, and not at age 20, is explained by the fact that men claiming to be aged 20 had to provide evidence of their parents' consent before enlisting, whereas men claiming to be 21 did not. Men aged 20 whose parents would not consent to their enlistment would claim to be 21. Equally, younger men lying about their age could avoid involving their parents in the lie by pretending to be 21 rather than 20.

The Army seems to have been relatively unconcerned about men lying about their age. Whilst manpower officers were present to enforce the manpower restrictions, and papers had to be produced to prove that an applicant was a naturalized British subject, the recruitment orders did not insist on proof of age, for example, by requiring birth certificates to be produced.

The Army was particularly lax in the case of older men who reduced their ages. Strictly applied, the age restrictions for the 2nd AIF excluded almost all Great War diggers, unless they were officers. It was all but impossible for enlisted men to meet the age requirements of the 1st AIF and the 2nd AIF.²⁴⁰ Despite this, and possibly because strict application of the age protocols would exclude fit men with valuable military experience, the Army turned a blind eye to the recruitment of over-aged men, to the point that Great War veterans wore their Great War medal ribbons on their 2nd AIF uniforms. In 1940, when a convoy carrying Australian soldiers to the Middle East was diverted to England, the 18th Brigade of the 2nd AIF found itself training on Salisbury Plain. General Birdwood, who commanded the Australians in the Great War, visited the Brigade. He was pleased to find among the men ‘a number of my own old Diggers who served with me when they were very young’.²⁴¹ Gavin Long records that, when King George VI visited the diggers, he found many men wearing the ribbons of the Great War. When the King asked their age, they answered to a man: ‘Thirty four’.²⁴² If their answers were right, they were twelve years old when they earned their ribbons in 1918. Long’s story may explain why the spike in the older ages seen in Figure 6 occurs at age 34 and not at age 35 – the age-fakers may have thought their age was less likely to be questioned if they claimed to be 34 than if they claimed to be 35.

What adjustments are necessary to correct for the age-faking? One response would be to check the age of the men in the contentious age cohorts against their birth certificates, but the vast majority of the births were in New South Wales, and the records of these births are not available - the New South Wales Government keeps birth records private for a period of 100 years after the birth. Interstate and overseas birth records may be available, but they are difficult to access and too few in number to demonstrate a trend.

²⁴⁰ The minimum age to join the AIF was 19. Men aged 19 in 1918 were 40 in 1939.

²⁴¹ William Riddell Birdwood Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown : An Autobiography* (London: Ward Lock, 1942), 439.

²⁴² Long, *To Benghazi*, 307.

Birth certificates are not necessary to prove falsification in the case of the Power brothers, both of whom were members of the original 2/1st Battalion. Corporal Leonard Power enlisted on 20 October 1939. He was 20 years old, having been born on 18 March 1919. Corporal Neville Power enlisted on 2 January 1940. He was 21 years old, having been born on 13 November 1918. Mrs Sadie Power, their mother, was a remarkable woman. Not only did she give two sons to the Battalion, but she gave birth to Leonard just four months after she gave birth to Neville!

Three men who served in the Great War and lowered their age to enlist in the 2/1st Battalion were identified. Their World War I attestation forms were retrieved from the National Archives. The men were:-

Frederick Thomas Bennett

According to his World War I attestation form, he was born on 3 February 1891, and 27 years of age when he enlisted on 5 August 1918. According to his World War II attestation form, he was born on 3 February 1905, and 35 years of age when he enlisted on 11 April 1940.

Henry Gledhill

According to his World War I attestation form, he was 18 years of age when he enlisted on 22 June 1916. His World War I form does not give a date of birth. According to his World War II attestation form, he was born on 30 September 1905, and 34 years of age when he enlisted on 8 November 1939.

Percy Gosper

According to his World War I attestation form, he was 18 years of age when he enlisted on 8 January 1915. The form does not give a date of birth. According to his World War II attestation form, he was born on 17 July 1904, and 35 years of age when he enlisted on 10 October 1939.

It was possible to identify these men because they enlisted in both wars under the same names and signed their attestation forms with identical signatures. Other men who lied about their ages may have adopted other deceptions, including changing names, to disguise their identities when they enlisted in World War II.

In the absence of evidence identifying all of the age-fakers, adjustments can be made by reference to the age cohorts in Figure 6. There are 35 and 43 men respectively in the 33 and 34 years age cohorts, when Figure 6 would suggest that, on a normal distribution of ages, there should have been around 20 men in both cohorts. That would suggest that around 38 older men (15 + 23) reduced their ages. There are 62, 97 and 63 men respectively in the 20, 21 and 22 years age cohorts, compared to 42, 43 and 49 men in the 23, 24 and 25 years cohorts. If it is assumed from Figure 6 that there should have been 65 men in the 20 years cohort, 60 men in the 21 years and 55 men in the 22 year cohort, then around 42 younger men increased their ages. Overall, around 80 men lied about their age. That equates to 12.5%, or one eighth, of the original 2/1st Battalion.

Taking the ages as stated in the attestation forms, the average age on enlistment of the members of the original 2/1st Battalion was 26 years. The median age was 25. The officers and senior non-commissioned officers were older than the other ranks, but only slightly. Table 11 gives the breakdown of average ages.

| Group | Average Age on Enlistment |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Officers | 27.1 |
| Senior NCOs | 26.4 |
| Other ranks | 25.8 |
| Entire Battalion | 26.0 |

Table 11: 2/1st Battalion, average age on enlistment

Given that 40 or so younger men increased their ages and 40 or so older men reduced theirs, the lies may well cancel each other out when it comes to calculating the average and median ages of the Battalion.

The average age of the 2/1st Battalion may be compared with the average ages of other military units. Long gave the average age of the 2/9th Battalion as 27.19 years.²⁴³ It was a relevant comparison – the 2/9th Battalion was raised in Queensland at the same time as the 2/1st Battalion was raised in New South Wales. No other sources have been identified that give the average ages of 2nd AIF battalions raised in 1939.

Comparing the age of the 2nd AIF with that of the 1st AIF is not a comparison of like with like because the ages on enlistment in the 1st AIF ran from 19 to 38. Bean described the 'rank and file' of the 1st AIF as being 'of an ideal fighting age – two fifths of it over 25; nearly the same number between 21 and 25; one fifth under 21'.²⁴⁴ By introducing the notion of an ideal fighting age, Bean was suggesting that a unit would ideally have a mix of youth and relative maturity. In the breakdown he gave as ideal, 60% of the 'rank and file' would be under 26, and 40% 26 or over. On this measure, the 2/1st Battalion was older than Bean's ideal age – 55% of its men were under 26, and 45% 26 or over.

According to Colonel Butler's figures, the average age on enlistment of the AN&MEF and the 1st AIF was 26.4 years.²⁴⁵ Blair did not mention age in his study of the 1st Battalion. Comparisons with the American Civil War are affected by the lack of reliable data on the Confederate side. As far as the Union Army is concerned, the comparison must take account of the facts that the official ages on enlistment ran from 18 to 45 and that many men who were older than 45 and younger than 18 took

²⁴³ Ibid., 59.

²⁴⁴ Bean, *The Story of Anzac : From the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, 60.

²⁴⁵ Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, 898 - 99. Volume III

part. Wiley gave the average age of the soldiers of the Union Army in July 1862 as 25.10 years.²⁴⁶ Table 12 summarises the comparisons of average ages.

| Unit or formation | Average Age |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Union Army | 25.10 |
| 2/1 st Battalion | 26 |
| 1 st AIF | 26.4 |
| 2/9 th Battalion | 27.19 |

Table 12: Comparison of average ages

The average ages fall within a two year range. Long commented that the average age for the 2/9th Battalion was higher than expected.²⁴⁷ Wiley commented that the Union Army was youthful.²⁴⁸ This comparison supports both comments. The original 2/1st Battalion was younger than the 2/9th Battalion and the 1st AIF. If the average age on enlistment of the 2nd AIF Battalions seems high, it should be borne in mind that, absent an influx of young reinforcements, the average age of the Battalions would increase as the war progressed. This was what Gould observed in the Union Army: see Table 13.²⁴⁹

| Date | Union Army Average Age |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| July 1862 | 25.10 |
| July 1863 | 25.76 |
| July 1864 | 26.06 |
| May 1865 | 26.32 |

Table 13: Increase in the average age of the Union Army, from Gould

²⁴⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank; the Common Soldier of the Union*, 303.

²⁴⁷ Long, *To Benghazi*, 59.

²⁴⁸ Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank; the Common Soldier of the Union*, 303.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Figure 7 compares the age distribution of the original 2/1st Battalion with that of the 1st AIF.²⁵⁰ Most of the men of the 2/1st Battalion were aged between 20 and 34. The 1st AIF had more men younger than 20 and older than 34 than the 2/1st Battalion.

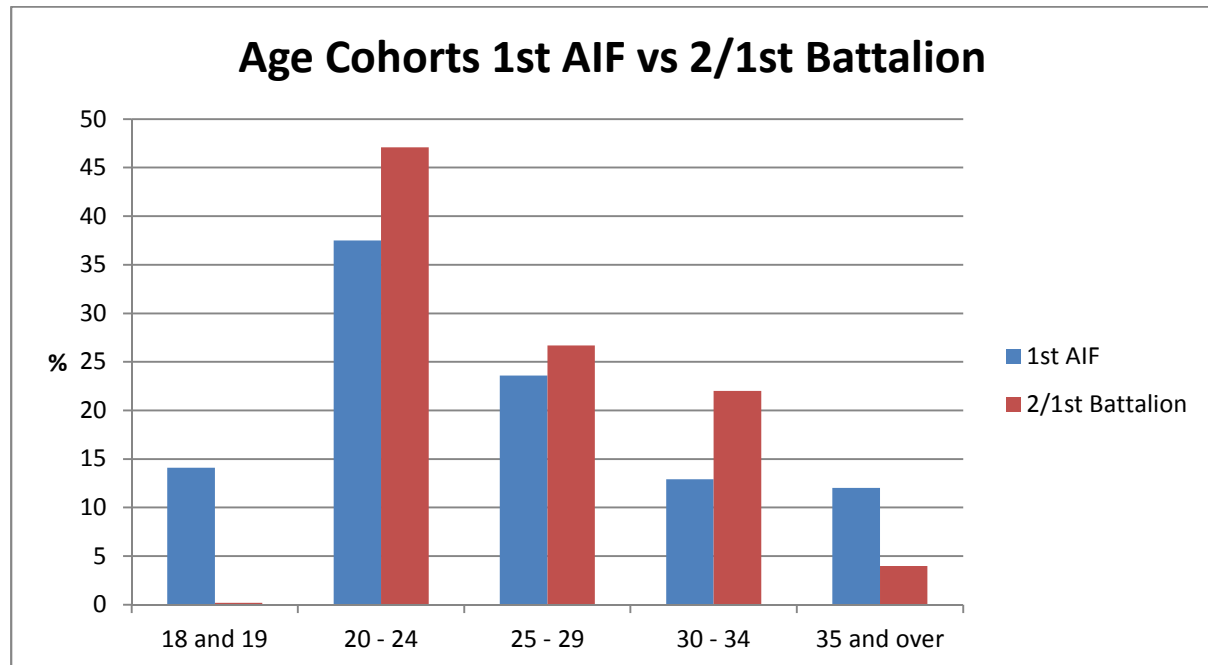


Figure 7: Age Cohorts 1st AIF vs 2/1st Battalion

The good sense of Bean's notion that there is an ideal fighting age is demonstrated by the example of two World War II Australian militia battalions. The 39th and 53rd Battalions were rushed to New Guinea in the crisis of 1942 to face the Japanese advance at Kokoda. According to Jane Ross, the average age of these battalions, excluding officers, was 18½ years – a staggeringly young age.²⁵¹ Ross was harsh in her criticism of these battalions, describing their performance as 'the one blot on Australia's reputation in New Guinea.'²⁵² If the battalions did, indeed, perform poorly, that was hardly surprising. Sending such young battalions to the front was a failing of the high command, not the men.

²⁵⁰ The AIF data come from: Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, 898 - 99. Volume III

²⁵¹ Ross and Australia. Army., *The Myth of the Digger : The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars*, 131. Ross does not explain how or by whom the averages ages was calculated.

²⁵² Ibid., 130.

Ross did not disclose the origin of the 18½ age figure, nor is it the place of this study to comment on the performance of the two Battalions at Kokoda. There is, however, evidence to support some of Ross' claims.²⁵³ Lt-Colonel Ralph Honner, a veteran of the campaigns in Libya, Greece and Crete, took command of the 39th Battalion on 16 August 1942. He found that he was taking charge of a group of young men who had been badly served by their superiors. He wrote, 'Physically the pathetically young warriors of the 39th were in poor shape. Worn out by strenuous fighting and exhausting movement, and weakened by lack of food and sleep and shelter, many of them had literally come to a standstill.'²⁵⁴ The historian, David Horner, criticised the 53rd Battalion, quoting General Rowell, who wrote that: 'After the experience of 53 Battalion I can have No repeat No confidence that any AMF units will stand.'²⁵⁵

Assuming that the 18½ age figure is correct, the case of the 39th and 53rd Battalions not only confirms the good sense behind Bean's notion of an ideal fighting age, it supports Stanley's argument that it is only by studying the composition and character of smaller military units that diversity within larger military units will be revealed.²⁵⁶ The 2/1st Battalion was a volunteer battalion raised in the heady days after war was declared. It had twelve months of military training before it first saw service at Bardia and Tobruk. The 39th and 53rd Battalions were militia battalions raised by conscription in the dark days of October 1941.²⁵⁷ Men falsified their ages to achieve enlistment in the 2/1st Battalion. The government conscripted men into the 39th and 53rd Battalions. Far from expecting the three Battalions to be similar to one

²⁵³ There is a balanced discussion in: Stuart Braga, *Kokoda Commander : A Life of Major-General "Tubby" Allen*, Australian Army History Series (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), 182ff.

²⁵⁴ Quoted in: Peter Brune, *Ralph Honner : Kokoda Hero* (Crow's Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2007), 152. Honner commanded a company of the 2/11th Battalion in the Battle of Retimo, escaping to the mountains before the Battalion surrendered: *We Band of Brothers : A Biography of Ralph Honner, Soldier and Statesman* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 85ff.

²⁵⁵ D. M. Horner, *Crisis of Command : Australian Generalship and the Japanese Threat, 1941-1943* (Canberra ; Norwalk, Conn.: Australian National University Press, 1978), 141 -42, 47.

²⁵⁶ Stanley, "'Our Big World': The Social History of the Light Horse Regiment, 1916 - 1918," 3.

²⁵⁷ The 39th Battalion was established on 1 October 1941 (39th Battalion War Diary Volume 1: AWM52; 8/3/78/1; entry for 1 October 1941). The 53rd Battalion was established on 8 December 1941 (53rd Battalion War Diary Volume 1: AWM52; 8/3/91/4; entry for 8 December 1941).

another, there is every reason to expect them to be different. Not least, it is a question of motivation. No-one fakes his age to join a conscript battalion.

Employment status

When the men of the original 2/1st Battalion answered the questionnaire, they indicated in their answers if they were unemployed - 102 men, or 15.71% of the original 2/1st Battalion, claimed to be unemployed. This may be compared with the national unemployment rate. In July 1939, 12.5% of Australian male wage earners were unemployed.²⁵⁸ If the population unemployment rate of 12.5% rate were applied to the 649 members of the 2/1st Battalion, it would be expected that 81 men would have been unemployed. The unemployed were, therefore, over-represented in the 2/1st Battalion compared to the nation, with 21 more men unemployed than the national average would suggest.

As already discussed, two reasons have been suggested for the relatively high unemployment rate among the battalions recruited early in the war. The first was that men falsely claimed to be unemployed to avoid the manpower restrictions. Ken Clift claimed to be one of many 6th Division men who did this.²⁵⁹ Clift's attestation form is attached as Figure 8, on the next page.


²⁵⁸ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, 198n.

²⁵⁹ Clift, *The Saga of a Sig : The Wartime Memories of Six Years Service in the Second A.I.F*, 1 - 2.

1/1/1944
1-1944
7-1944

A.A. Form A.200.

| CHECK | DATE | INTL |
|------------|------|------|
| D. 1 | 28 | 30 |
| Job. 2 | 30 | |
| M. 3 | | |
| H 103 | 30 | |
| B 103 Conv | 30 | |
| In'ex Card | 30 | |

AUSTRALIAN  MILITARY FORCES

ATTESTATION FORM

FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.

Army No. NX 3698

Surname CLIFT (BLOCK CAPITALS) Other Names KENNETH ROCHESTER

Unit Signals 6. Div. Sig.

Enlisted for service at M.P. T.R. Depot. Paddington (Place)

NSW. (State) 9-10-39. (Date)

A

Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment.*

- What is your name? ... 1. Surname CLIFT (BLOCK LETTERS)
Other names Kenneth Rochester
- Where were you born? ... 2. In or near the town of Waverley
in the state or country of NSW. Wales
- Are you a natural born or a naturalised British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced. ... 3. Natural Born
- What is your age and date of birth? ... 4. Age 22
Date of Birth 7-1-10.
- What is your trade or occupation? ... 5. draughtsman (I.C. Draw)
- Are you married, single or widower? ... 6. Single
- Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm? ... 7. /
- Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship:—wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister) ... 8. Name Kenneth Roy Clift
Address 56 Munivernie Road
Boro. NSW.
Relationship Father
- What is your permanent address? ... 9. 56 Munivernie Road
Boro. NSW.
- What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so) ... 10. C.O.

3. Kenneth Rochester Clift do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to serve in the Australian Military Forces within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

Witnessed by Armstrong Major Kenneth Rochester Clift
(Signature of Attesting or Witnessing Officer) (Signature)

* The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.

D.A. 30/9/39.—C.12221.—100K

Figure 8: Ken Clift's attestation form, front page

Clift did not claim to be unemployed in his attestation form. This calls into question his claim that men falsely claimed to be unemployed to avoid the manpower restrictions. The claim is further undermined by the fact that few, if any, of the 2/1st Battalion men who claimed to be unemployed in the answers to the questionnaire worked in restricted occupations. Forty of the men who claimed to be unemployed were labourers; 10 were stockmen or farm hands; and 8 were motor drivers. None of these was a reserved occupation. These men would gain nothing by falsely claiming to be unemployed. In fact, it is difficult to find a reserved occupation in the list of occupations of the 2/1st Battalion men who claimed to be unemployed. Seven unemployed men gave no occupation and 7 said they were clerks. They may, conceivably, have been in reserved occupations. In short, the evidence of the attestation forms suggests that deception of the sort Ken Clift described was not widespread in the original 2/1st Battalion, if it existed at all.

The second reason given for the relatively high unemployment rate was the politicians' claim that the pay offered to the 2nd AIF was so low that it would attract only the unskilled and the unemployed. If that claim were correct, it might be expected that the unemployed men would be among the first to join. That is seen in the 2/1st Battalion. Most of the unemployed men were early enlisters. Of the 102 unemployed men in the Battalion, 94 enlisted in 1939, compared to only 8 who joined in 1940. This suggests that the pay did act as a carrot for unemployed men to enlist, as Eddie Ward predicted.

Despite this, many 6th Division men have disputed the 'economic conscripts' tag. FW Speed, an officer in the 2/5th Battalion (a Victorian Battalion recruited in 1939) said that: 'There were some who joined without a job . . . [But, so] far as the 2/5th Battalion was concerned, the proportion who left jobs of one kind or another was pretty substantial.'²⁶⁰ He regarded the 'economic conscripts' tag as undeserved. One

²⁶⁰ Charlton, *The Thirty-Niners*, 21.

of John Barrett's respondents from the 2/17th Battalion agreed: 'In my unit we had wealthy graziers, farmers, most trades, stockmen, a stud master, solicitors – down to uneducated blokes like me. I think this is important: I only remember one man who was unemployed . . . I resent the remarks often made about the AIF having many unemployed in its ranks.'²⁶¹ The men of the 2/1st Battalion shared his feeling of resentment. According to their unit history: 'The five shillings a day basic rate of pay for the AIF gave rise to the appellation "five bob a day murderers", coined by certain mischief-makers in the community. Used in the hearing of new enlistees, this term provoked many a fight.'²⁶²

Although the rate of unemployment among members of the original 2/1st Battalion exceeded the national rate, the excess hardly suggests that Australia was shipping its unemployment problem to the European war.²⁶³

Occupation

The occupations of 11 men are unknown. 638 Battalion members gave their occupations, however, it is difficult to find a completely satisfactory way to analyse their answers. The questionnaire left it to the men to describe their jobs in their own words. They gave a huge range of professions and occupations, with many of them inventing idiosyncratic job titles. Wiley found the same problem with the men of the Civil War. He could only describe their employment backgrounds in general terms: 'Soldiers who marched in Rebel ranks belonged to a wide variety of occupations and professions;'²⁶⁴ and: 'Occupations and professions of the men in blue were considerably more varied than their ages.'²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Barrett, *We Were There : Australian Soldiers of World War Two Tell Their Stories*, 101.

²⁶² Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, 5 - 6.

²⁶³ As Jay Winter said of English recruiting in the Great War: 'Unemployment did not fill the ranks of Kitchener's armies: popular sentiment did.' Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms : A Social History of the British Army in the First World War*, 197.

²⁶⁴ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb : The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, 330.

²⁶⁵ *The Life of Billy Yank; the Common Soldier of the Union*, 303.

One approach to analysing the answers is to select occupational categories and allocate the men to the categories based on the description they gave of their job. This is what the Commonwealth Statistician did when he tabulated occupation data from Personal Data sheets.²⁶⁶ He selected eight categories: labourers; factories; agricultural; sales and commerce; clerical and professional; motor drivers; building and other. The Statistician used these categories to classify the occupations of 51,137 out of 52,165 New South Welshmen who enlisted in the 2nd AIF in the 18 month period from the outbreak of war until 26 April 1941.²⁶⁷ Figure 9 is a graphical representation of the Statistician's tabulation.

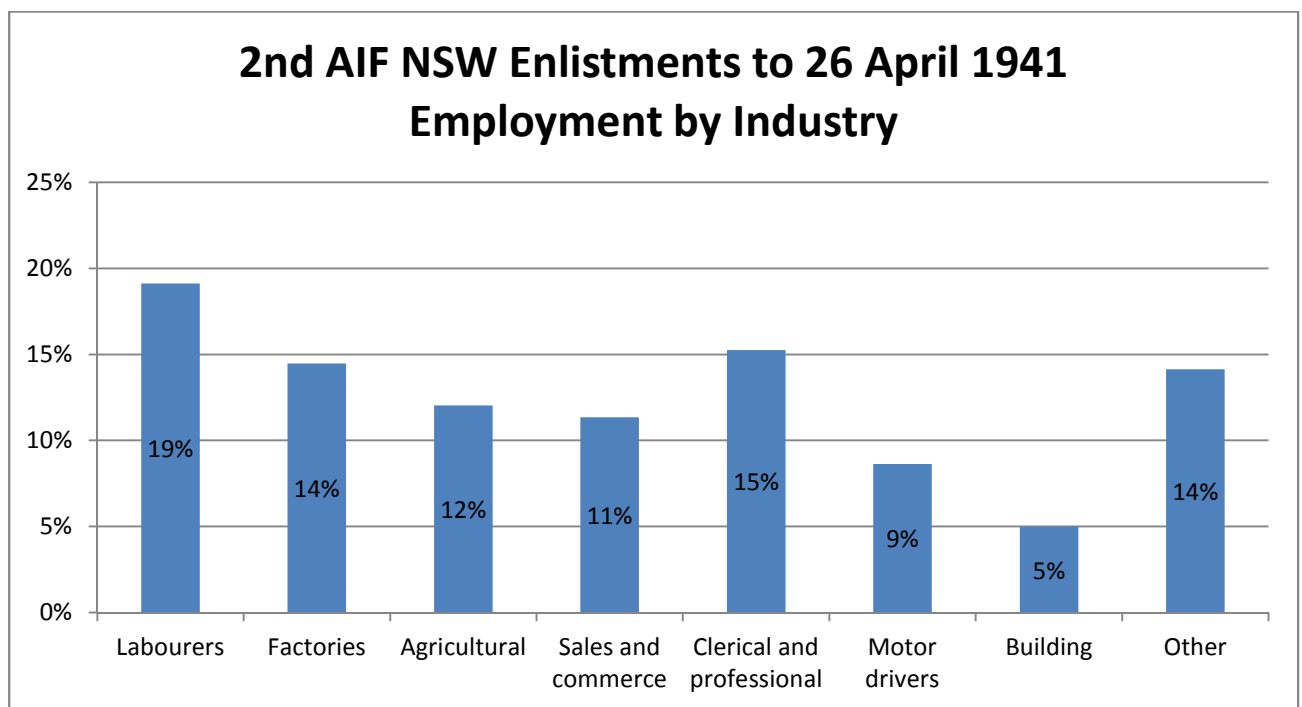


Figure 9: 2nd AIF NSW Enlistments to 26 April 1941, Employment by Industry

For the purposes of this study, I attempted to classify the members of the 2/1st Battalion in the same way. Some men – labourers and motor drivers, for example – were readily categorised, but problems soon emerged. How, for example, should the following men be categorised:-

²⁶⁶ Letter from the Acting Commonwealth Statistician to the Secretary of the Department of the Army 10 June 1941: NAA: MP508/1; 304/750/14.

²⁶⁷ Letter from the Acting Commonwealth Statistician to the Secretary of the Department of the Army 10 June 1941: NAA: MP508/1; 304/750/14.

1. Private Cyril New, who described his occupation as: farm hand truck driver;
2. Sergeant Thomas Docherty, who described his occupation as: poulterer (plucker); and
3. Private Herbert De Meyers; who described his occupation as: furniture assistant?

Did Private New fall into the agricultural category, or was he a motor driver? In which category did Sergeant Docherty belong - agricultural, factories or sales and commerce? And how was it possible to categorise Private De Meyers without knowing what a furniture assistant actually did? Many men fell into this uncertain group. Doing the best I could, I classified the men of the Battalion in the Statistician's categories. Figure 10 gives the result.

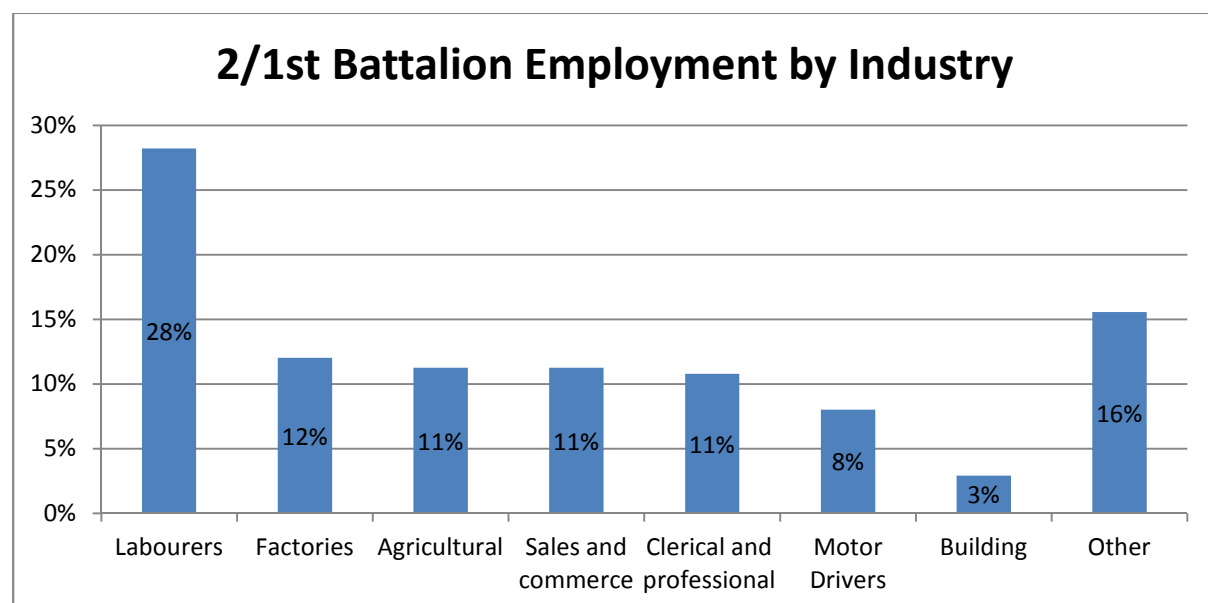


Figure 10: 2/1st Battalion, Employment by Industry

Despite the arbitrary nature of the process, the following comparisons between the 2/1st Battalion and the Statistician's 18 month cohort seem valid: (i) labourers constituted 28% of the 2/1st Battalion, compared to 19% of the 18 month cohort; and (ii) clerical workers and professionals constituted 11% of the 2/1st Battalion,

compared to 16% of the 18 month cohort. In short, there were more labourers and fewer clerks and professionals in the original 2/1st Battalion than in the 18 month cohort.

Butler gave occupational data for the 1st AIF as did Blair for the 1st Battalion, but they used slightly different categories than the Statistician.²⁶⁸ Adjusting their categories to bring them roughly into line with the Statistician's allows the comparison of the four studies seen in Table 14. The industry classification system used in the 1933 census was different from the classification systems used in the military studies. It did not include a category for labourers, which was the largest category in all but one of the military studies. For that reason, it is not possible to give a meaningful comparison with the census results. The figures in Table 14 are percentages.

| Occupations | Butler | Blair | Commonwealth Statistician | This Study |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| | 1st AIF | 1st Bn | 2nd AIF 18 month cohort | 2/1st Bn |
| Labourers | 30 | 22 | 19 | 28 |
| Industry/Factories | - | 13 | 14 | 12 |
| Clerical/Professional | 12 | 16 | 15 | 11 |
| Commerce/Sales | - | 6 | 11 | 11 |
| Agriculture/rural | 17 | 8 | 12 | 11 |
| Motor/transport | - | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| Building | - | - | 5 | 3 |
| Tradesmen | 34 | 17 | - | - |
| Other (includes seafaring, mining, domestic and nurses) | 7 | 10 | 14 | 16 |

Table 14: Summary of the occupation studies

Again, despite the arbitrary nature of the process, it is possible to discern broad patterns in Table 14. Labourers formed the largest class in every study except Butler's. Both Butler and Blair had a category for tradesmen. It appears to have

²⁶⁸ Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, 890. Volume III; Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.," 22. Scott gives the identical occupational data as Butler in Appendix 6 of Volume 11 of the Official History: Scott, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918 Australia During the War*, XI, 874.

included men who would have been included as labourers in the other studies. Next in order of magnitude in most lists, and relatively close to one another, came the industry/factory group, the clerical/professional group, the commerce/sales group and the agriculture group. The motor/transport group and the building group were smaller than these four groups in every study that included them.

Table 14 shows that the percentage of labourers in the 2/1st Battalion was higher than in all the other studies except Butler's. It also shows that the percentage of clerical workers and professionals in the 2/1st Battalion was lower than both Blair's and the Statistician's groups. These differences offer limited support for White's claim that the pay and conditions offered in 1939 were so low that they attracted mainly unskilled workers. They may also suggest that it was easier for labourers to quit their jobs at short notice on the outbreak of war than it was for clerical workers and professionals to quit theirs.

As an aside, it is striking how many jobs held by men of the original 2/1st Battalion in 1939 no longer exist. What opportunities are there in Australia today to work as book finishers, bus and tram conductors, clickers, commercial travellers, compositors, ironmongers, lift drivers, newspaper boys, textile workers, or tennis racquet painters? Men of the 2/1st Battalion held all of these jobs. And how many men today could give the occupation that one 2/1st Battalion man gave on his attestation form: labourer and professional wrestler? This was Private Stanley Milton (Frank) Hurley – ring name: Register Pain.²⁶⁹

Religion

Figure 11 gives the breakdown of the religions of the men of the original 2/1st Battalion: 462 men were Protestant of one variety or another; 163 were Roman Catholic; 20 professed no faith; 2 were Jewish; and 2 gave no religion.

²⁶⁹ Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, 127.

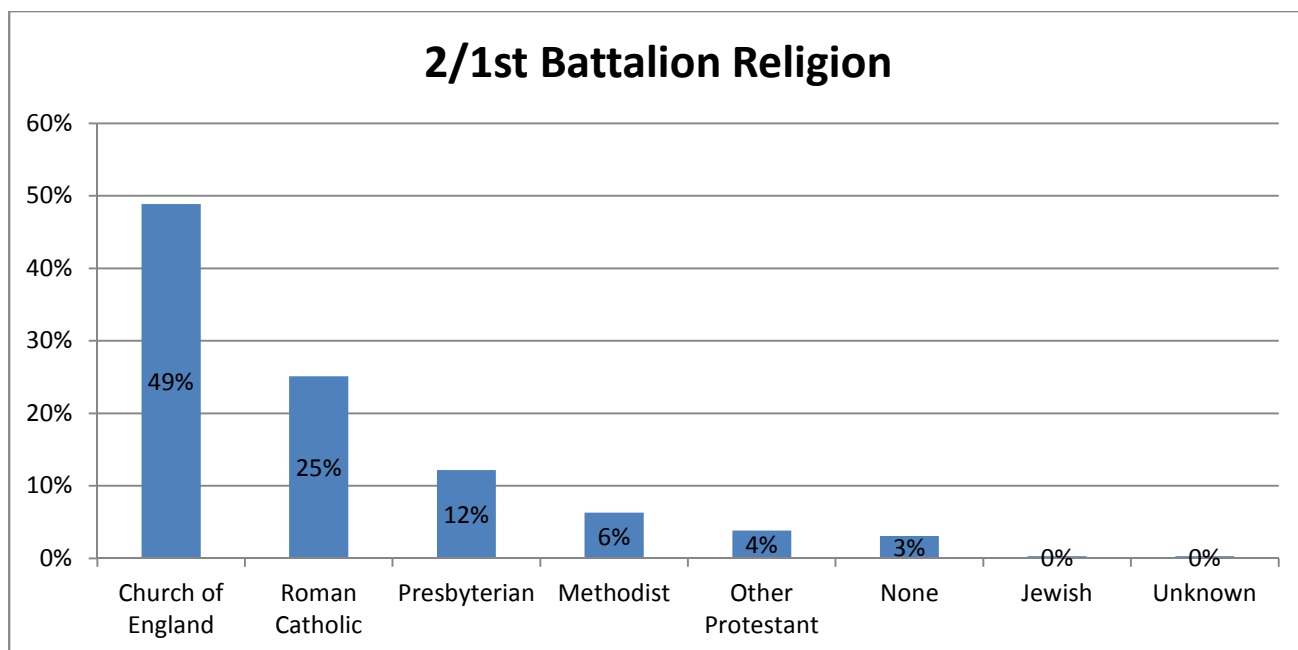


Figure 11: 2/1st Battalion, religion

Table 15 compares the results for the original 2/1st Battalion with those from the 1933 census,²⁷⁰ Butler,²⁷¹ Robson²⁷² and Blair.²⁷³ The figures in Table 15 are percentages.

| | Church of England | Roman Catholic | Presbyterian | Methodist | Other Protestant | None | Jewish | Unknown | Other |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|------|--------|---------|-------|
| Butler AIF | 49 | 19 | 15 | 10 | - | - | 0.4 | - | 6 |
| Robson AIF | 47 | 20 | 14 | 11 | 4 | - | 1 | 4 | - |
| Blair 1st Bn | 61 | 18 | 13 | 4 | 4 | - | - | - | - |
| 1933 census | 44 | 21 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 13 | - |
| This study | 49 | 25 | 12 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 0.5 | 0.5 | - |

Table 15: Summary of the data on religion

²⁷⁰ Roland Wilson, "Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 30th June 1933."

²⁷¹ Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, 890. Volume III

²⁷² Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914-1918: Some Statistical Evidence," 739.

²⁷³ Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.," 24.

Protestants were numerically dominant in every study. It may well be painting a false picture of unity to aggregate the Protestants – their churches had no doubt separated from one another for reasons they saw as compelling. Disaggregating the Protestants, however, would make little difference. If that were done, members of the Church of England, on their own, would still make up the largest group. The percentage of Roman Catholics in the 2/1st Battalion was the highest of all the studies. Roman Catholics represented 25% of the original 2/1st Battalion, compared to 21% of the population in the 1933 census. If any sectarian bitterness remained from the conscription debates of 1916 and 1917, it did not prevent those Catholic men from volunteering to join an army of the British Empire.

Table 15 is interesting because it shows that the 1st Battalion stood out as having the highest proportion of members of the Church of England and the lowest proportion of Roman Catholics. This concentration of members of the Church of England seems unusual. With the benefit of the comparative results in Table 15, and particularly with the evidence of the unusually high number of members of the Church of England in the 1st Battalion, Blair may have been able to make more of the argument on anti-Catholic bias than he did. This again demonstrates that unit studies have the potential to reveal diversity that would otherwise go undetected.²⁷⁴

The census results include a very high 'unknown' number (13%). It was not compulsory to answer the census question about religion. The 'unknown' number in the census results included those who chose not to answer the question. There is reasonably good agreement between the results from Robson's study, the census and this study, particularly if it is assumed that those who chose not to answer the census question, in fact, professed a religion, and could be redistributed proportionately among the other religions to give an accurate comparison across all the studies.

²⁷⁴ Peter Stanley, "Our Big World": The Social History of the Light Horse Regiment, 1916 - 1918," *ibid.*: 3.

Roman Catholic men of the original 2/1st Battalion were more likely to work as labourers than Protestants. Protestant men were more likely to work in clerical and professional occupations and in factories than Roman Catholics. The spread of occupations was otherwise similar for Protestants and Roman Catholics: see Figure 12.

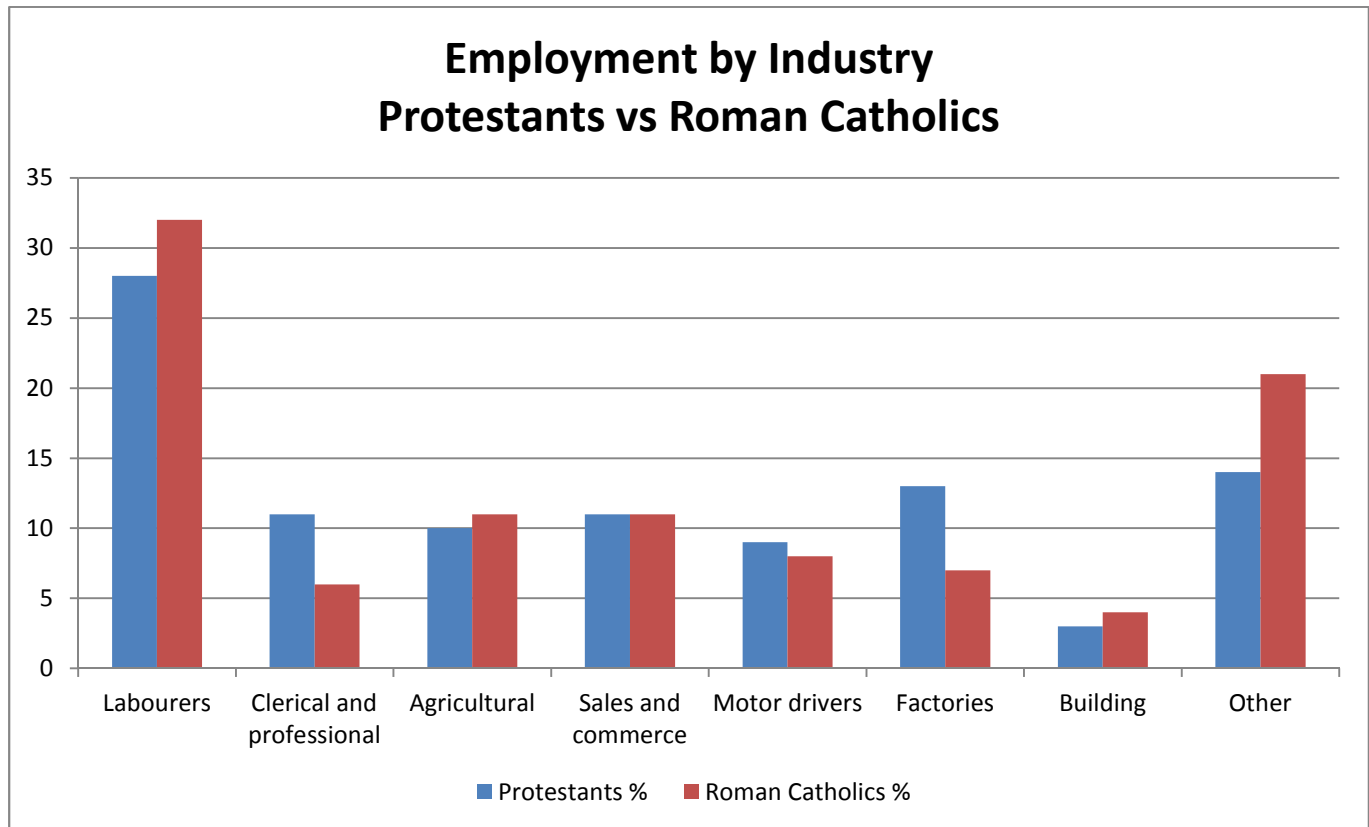


Figure 12: 2/1st Battalion, Employment by Industry, Protestants vs Roman Catholics

The rate of unemployment was higher among Roman Catholics than in the other religions. Roman Catholics made up 25% of the Battalion and 34% of its unemployed men.

On a morbid note, the rate of death was higher among members of the Church of England than among the other religions. Members of the Church of England made up 49% of the Battalion and 66% of its dead.

Previous militia service

The 2nd AIF was raised on a quota under which 50% of recruits were intended to be current members of the permanent army or the militia, 25% men with previous military service; and 25% men with no previous service.²⁷⁵ The questionnaire included the question:-

7. Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm?

Because the question asked about 'active service', most men construed it as referring to service in wartime. Consistently, most members of the permanent army and the militia who volunteered for the 2/1st Battalion answered this question: no. Among the four members of the Battalion who were professional soldiers, three answered the question: no. Only one, WOI Delves, answered it: yes. Thirty five of the 37 officers of the original 2/1st Battalion had served in the militia,²⁷⁶ yet only seven of them answered the question: yes, as did a scattering of men in the other ranks. The answers to the questionnaires, therefore, provide no satisfactory evidence of the previous militia service of all Battalion members.

Thirty-niners, or reinforcements?

The 2/1st Battalion prided itself being the first. The Battalion took the motto of the 1st Battalion: *Primus agat primas*, meaning: 'May the First be first!'²⁷⁷ The Battalion's pride in being first extended to pride in being the first to volunteer – being thirty-niners, in other words. When the 9th Division relieved the 2/1st Battalion after its victories in Bardia and Tobruk, Sergeant Fearnside (a 9th Division man) described

²⁷⁵ Raising of Special Force for service in Australia or overseas: NAA: MP729/7; 37/421/97. Military Board Instructions, par 7.

²⁷⁶ Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, 2 - 5. Lt-Colonel Campbell and Captain Lergessner were members of the permanent army.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 and 461.

how men of the 2/1st Battalion welcomed him to Libya: ‘The war is over’, they said, and: ‘You bludgers should’ve heard the bugle in 1939!’²⁷⁸

In fact, the 2/1st Battalion’s claim to be thirty-niners lacked foundation. Although 402 men enlisted in 1939, 245 men (or 38% of the Battalion) did not enlist until 1940. The dates of enlistment of the men of the Battalion are shown in Figure 13.

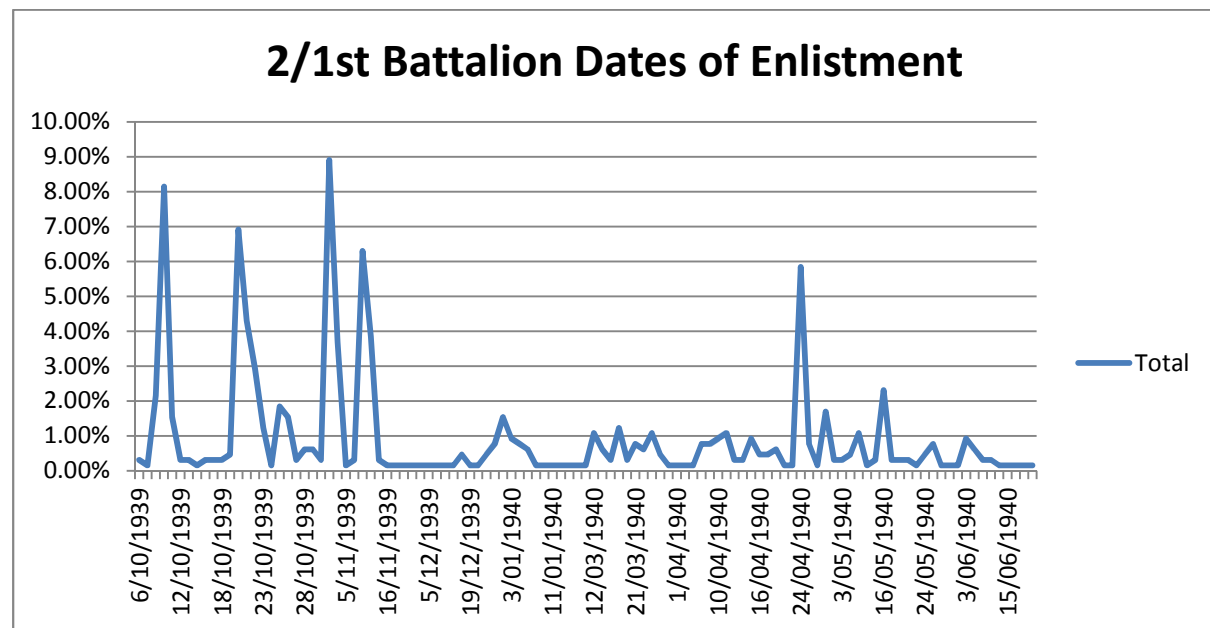


Figure 13: 2/1st Battalion, dates of enlistment

Most enlistments occurred in October and November 1939. The main part of the Battalion left Sydney for the Middle East on 10 January 1940, but the Army continued to enlist men as reinforcements six months after the Battalion departed. Germany invaded Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940. There followed a spike in enlistments on 24 April 1940, when 38 men enlisted. Germany invaded France and the Low Countries on 10 May 1940. There followed a second spike in enlistments between 15 and 17 May 1940, when 19 men enlisted. The last man to join the original 2/1st Battalion was Private Leonard Inett, who enlisted in Lismore on 9 July 1940. The reinforcements did not join the rest of the Battalion until October 1940, by

²⁷⁸ G. H. Fearnside, *Half to Remember : The Reminiscences of an Australian Infantry Soldier in World War II* (Sydney: Haldane Publishing, 1975), 25. They were also called 'Rainbow Boys' because they only came after the storm: Clift, *The Saga of a Sig : The Wartime Memories of Six Years Service in the Second A.I.F.*, 42.

which time the Battalion was in Egypt, finalising preparations to leave for the Western Desert.²⁷⁹

A higher percentage of Protestants enlisted in 1939 than in 1940. A higher percentage of Roman Catholics enlisted in 1940 than in 1939: see Figure 14.

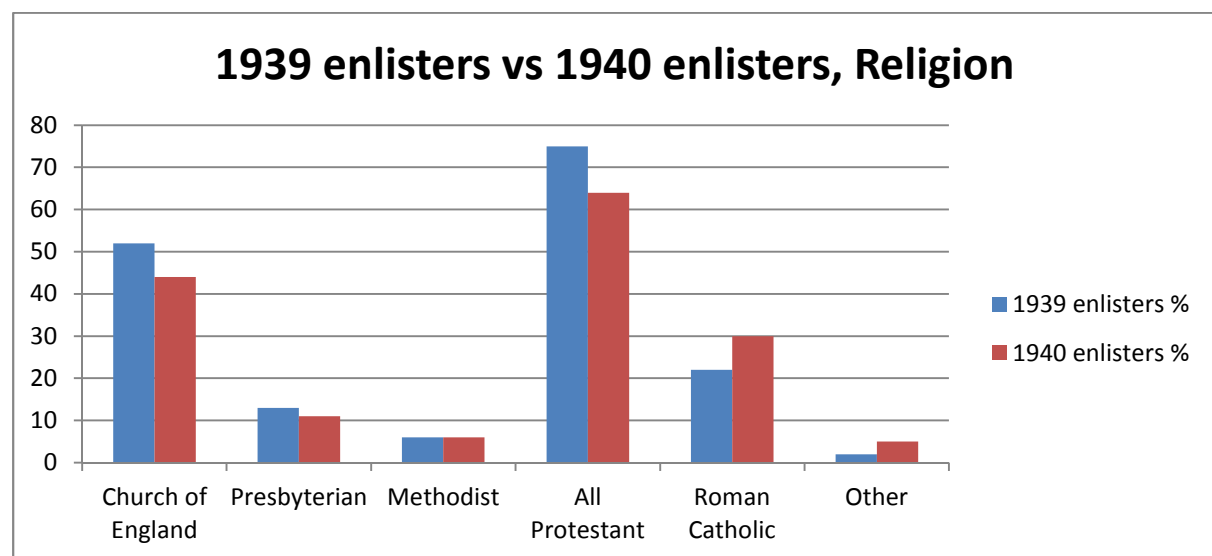


Figure 14: 2/1st Battalion, 1939 enlisters vs 1940 enlisters, Religion

Place of residence on enlistment

Most members of the 2/1st Battalion lived in Sydney when they enlisted. Table 16 gives the breakdown.

| Place of residence | Number | % |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|
| Sydney metropolitan area | 501 | 77 |
| NSW country | 132 | 20 |
| Interstate | 14 | 2 |
| Unknown | 2 | 0.3 |

Table 16: 2/1st Battalion, place of residence on enlistment

²⁷⁹ Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, 60.

Blair does not give comparable data for the 1st Battalion.

Figure 15 shows the places of residence on enlistment of the 501 members of the Battalion resident in Sydney by local government area. More than 60% lived in the City of Sydney or in the municipalities of the eastern suburbs and the northern suburbs shown in red on Figure 15. The western and southern municipalities were represented in modest numbers compared to the municipalities marked in red.

Overall, 53% of the men who lived in metropolitan Sydney (264 out of 501) lived in the 18 wealthier municipalities with index numbers greater than 190.²⁸⁰ The low pay did not discourage men from wealthier areas volunteering. This was hardly economic conscription.

²⁸⁰ These were the wealthier municipalities shown in purple and red in Figure 3.

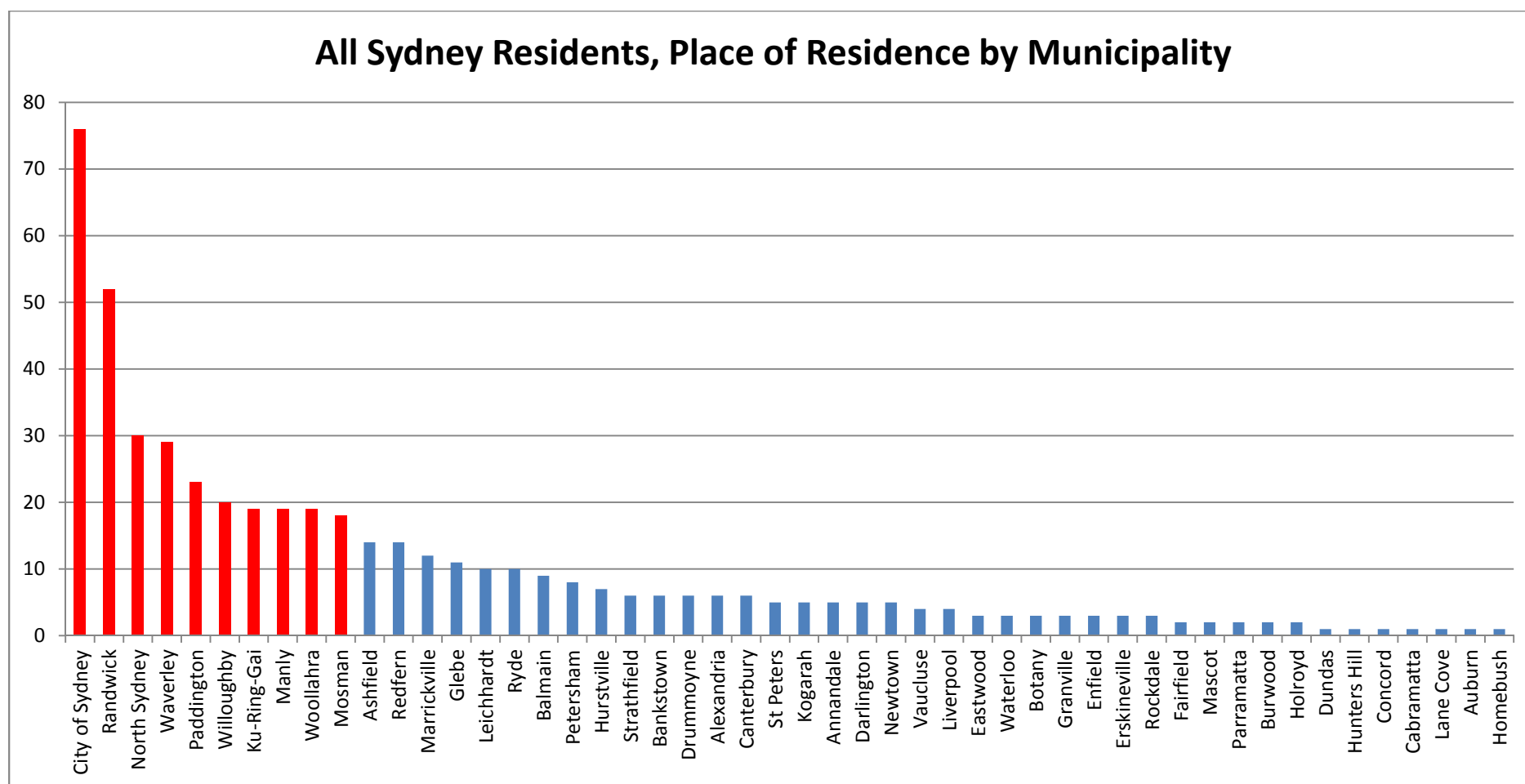


Figure 15: All Sydney Resident Members of the 2/1st Battalion, Place of Residence by Municipality

Protestants and Roman Catholics alike came in large numbers from the City, from Randwick and from Waverley: see Figures 16 and 17, on the following pages. After those three areas, Protestants were more likely to come from North Sydney, Manly, Ku-Ring-Gai and Mosman, whilst the Roman Catholics were more likely to come from Paddington, Redfern and Woollahra.

Sixty nine Battalion members lived in North Sydney, Willoughby and Manly. Only 5 of them (7%) were Roman Catholic, compared to Roman Catholics making up 25% of the Battalion. Thirty seven Battalion members lived in Paddington and Redfern. Only 17 of them (46%) were Protestant, compared to Protestants making up 71% of the Battalion.

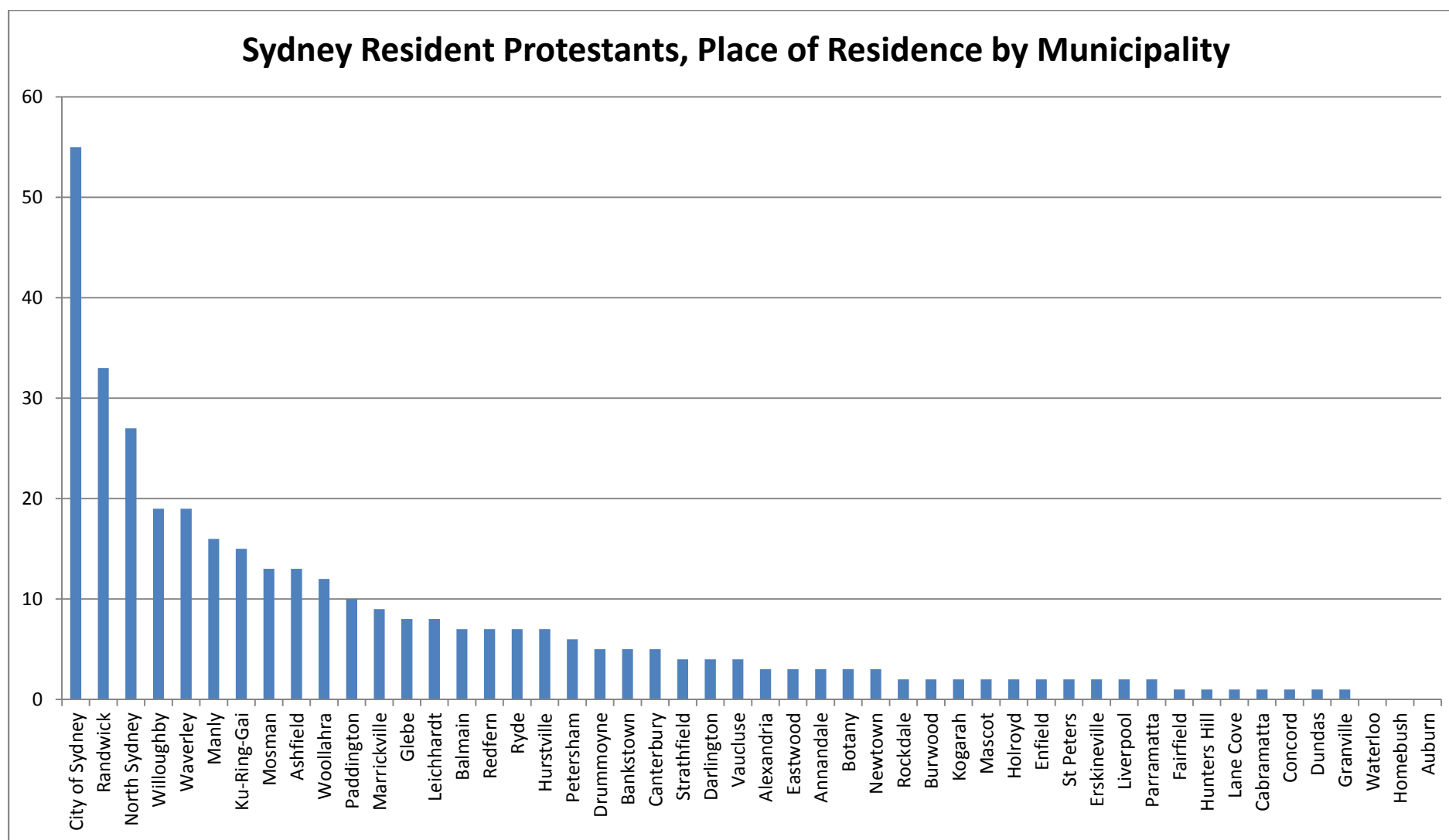


Figure 16: Sydney Resident Protestant Members of the 2/1st Battalion, Place of Residence by Municipality

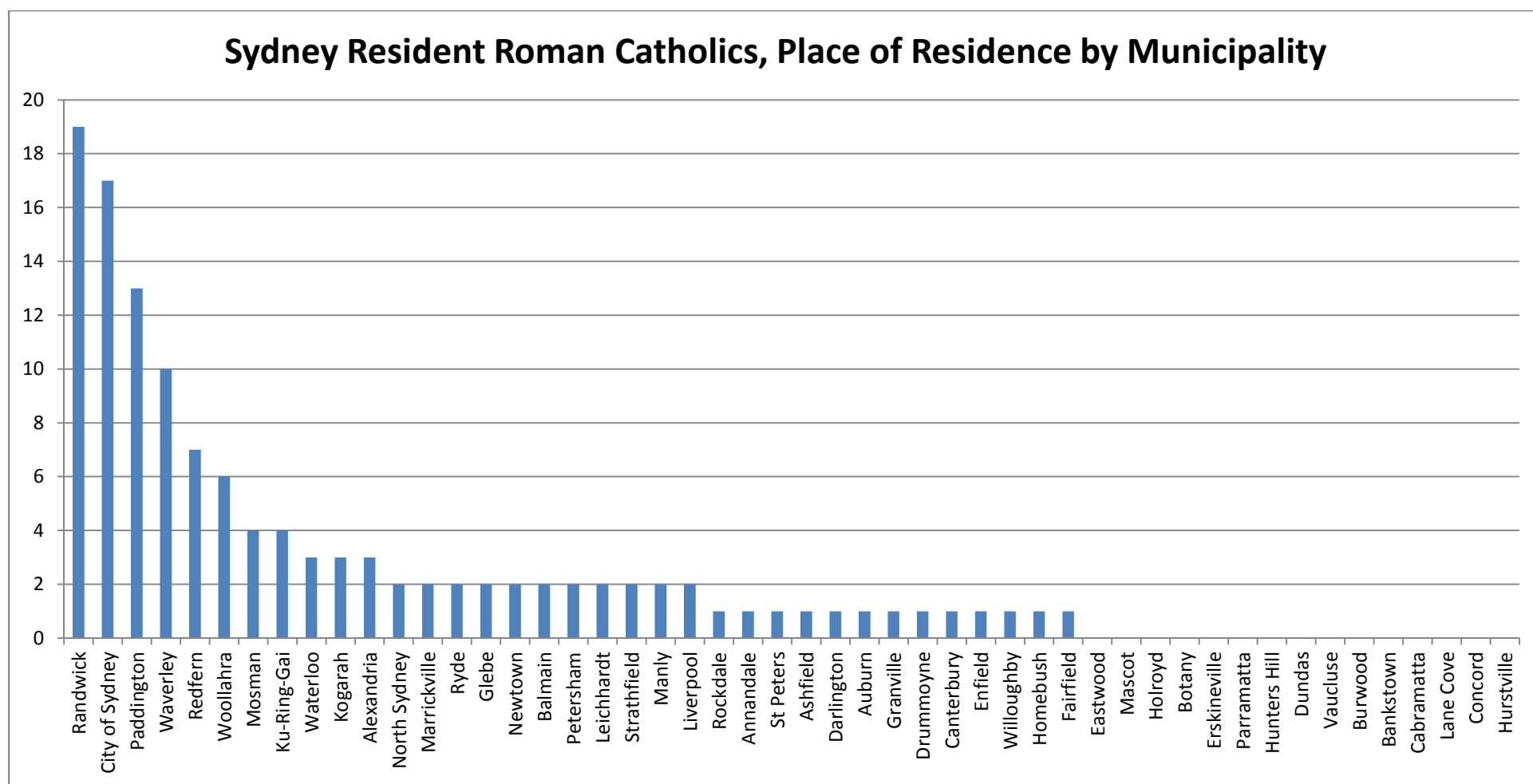


Figure 17: Sydney Resident Roman Catholics Members of the 2/1st Battalion, Place of Residence by Municipality

Quite why Protestants favoured the north shore whilst Roman Catholics avoided it is a mystery. This was not limited to the 2/1st Battalion. It was also reflected in the results of the 1933 census.²⁸¹ Table 17 gives census data showing the percentage of males who were Roman Catholic in eight municipalities on different sides of the Bridge.

| Municipality or State | Roman Catholics % |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ku-Ring-Gai | 8.5 |
| Willoughby | 14.5 |
| Manly | 14.9 |
| Mosman | 14.9 |
| North Sydney | 18.6 |
| New South Wales | 21.6 |
| Randwick | 26.7 |
| Paddington | 31.7 |
| Redfern | 33.5 |

Table 17: Roman Catholics as a percentage of the male population

City vs country

Members of the Battalion who lived in country New South Wales naturally tended to work in rural occupations. In fact, 65% of the country men worked as labourers or in agricultural occupations: see Figure 18.

²⁸¹ Roland Wilson, "Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 30th June 1933," 52 - 53. Part I The figure for Roman Catholics includes a category used in the census: 'Catholic Undefined'.

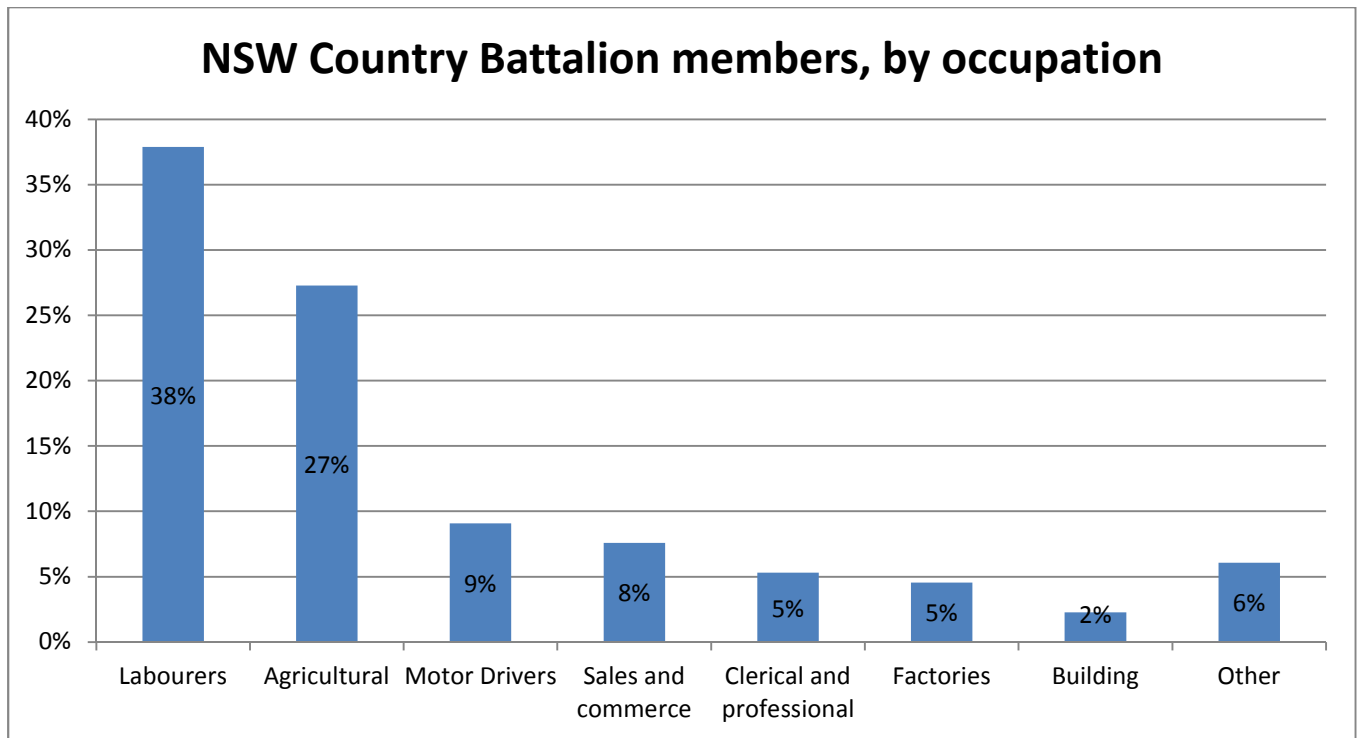


Figure 18: NSW Country Battalion members, by occupation

There was a broader spread of occupations among city members: see Figure 19. Only 33% of them worked as labourers or in agricultural occupations.

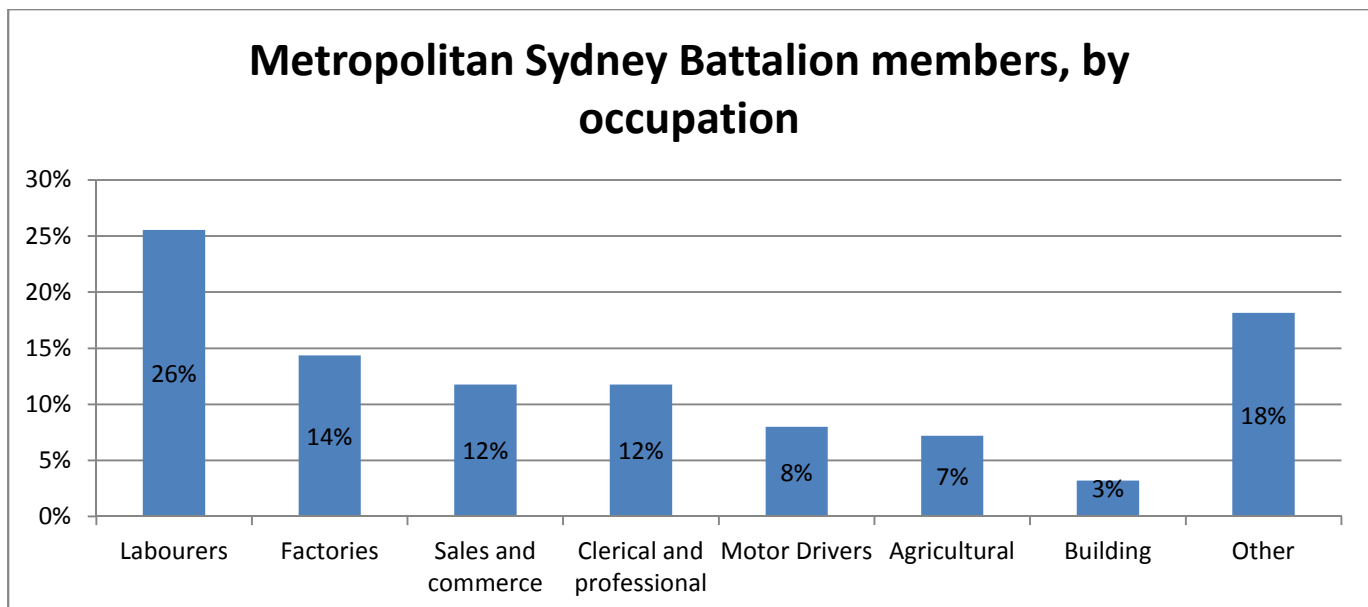


Figure 19: Metropolitan Sydney Battalion members, by occupation

Although 65% of country men worked as labourers or in agriculture, compared to 33% of metropolitan members, the evidence of this study does not provide a basis to say whether the metropolitan men of the Battalion were more prosperous than the country men, or *vice versa*.

Marital status

Eighty per cent of the men of the 2/1st Battalion were single when they enlisted. Table 18 gives the breakdown, together with comparable data for the 1st AIF from Butler.²⁸²

| Marital status on enlistment | 2/1 st Bn % | 1 st AIF % |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Single | 80 | 81.6 |
| Married | 19 | 17.38 |
| Widowed | 0.45 | 0.84 |
| Divorced | 0.30 | - |
| Unknown | 0.15 | 0.16 |

Table 18: 2/1st Battalion, marital status on enlistment, compared to that of the 1st AIF, from Butler

Blair does not give marriage data for the 1st Battalion. A greater proportion of the 1st AIF was single than of the 2/1st Battalion, probably because 18 and 19 year olds were allowed to enlist in the 1st AIF and not in the 2nd.

A far higher percentage of older men of the 2/1st Battalion were married than younger men: Figure 20. The average age of the married men was 30.14, compared to 24.90 for the single men.

²⁸² Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, 890. Volume III

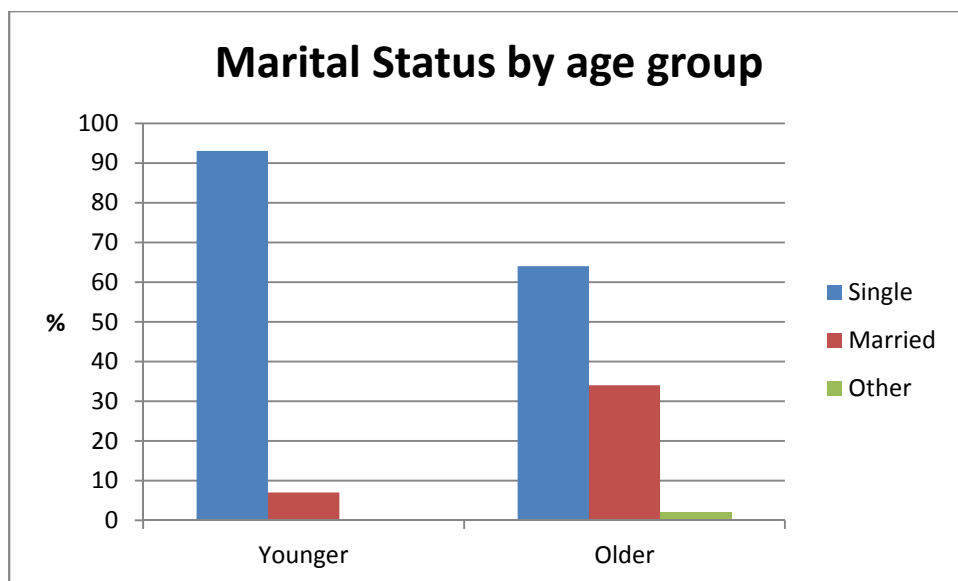


Figure 20: Marital status by age group

Given that the men were required to enlist for the duration of the war plus 12 months, it might be expected that married men would find it more difficult than single men to make such an open-ended commitment, particularly if they had a family to support. If single men were, indeed, freer to enlist than married men, one possible indicator might be that the single men would enlist earlier than the married men. However, the delay in enlisting attributable to being married was marginal - 63% of the single men enlisted in 1939, compared to 58% of the married men.

Married men were slightly more likely to be unemployed than single men - 16.8% of the married men were unemployed compared to 15.38% of the single men. Officers were more likely to be married than men in the other ranks. Thirteen officers, or 35% of the officer group, were married. This result is all the more surprising given that the officers as a group were only marginally older than the other men.

Roman Catholics were slightly more likely to be married than the members of the Church of England: 49% of the married men were Church of England, reflecting their percentage in the Battalion; 29% of the married men were Roman Catholics, compared to their percentage in the Battalion of 25%.

Younger vs older

Men under 25 represented 55% of the Battalion: 356 men of the Battalion were 25 or under on enlistment; 293 were over 25. Figure 21 compares the industries in which the younger and older groups were employed. A higher percentage of older men than younger men worked as clerks and professionals, and as labourers. The difference in the clerical and professional figure probably reflected the time it took to rise through the clerical and professional ranks.

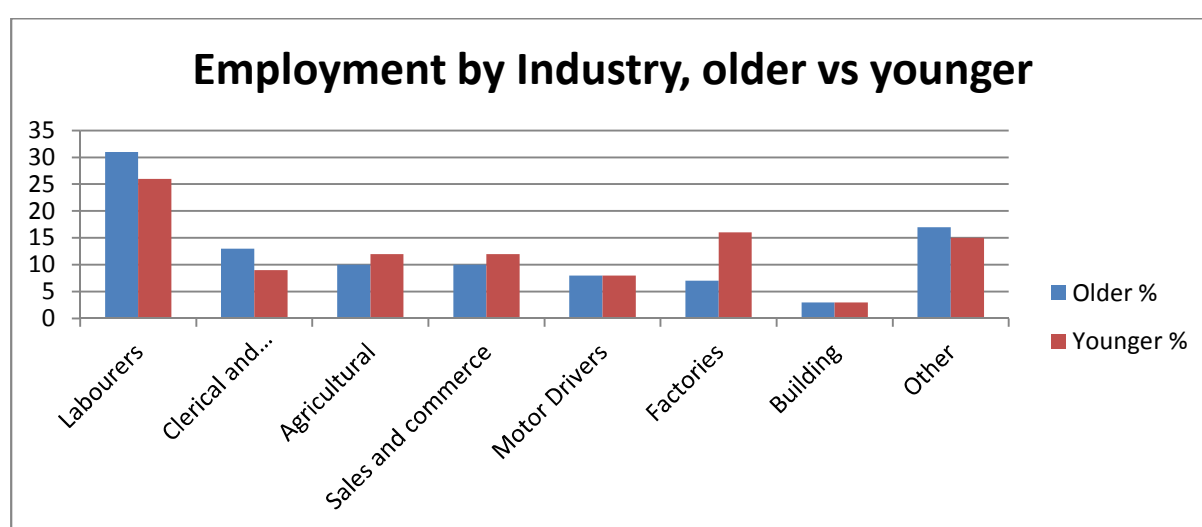


Figure 21: Employment by Industry, older vs younger

A higher percentage of younger men than older men worked in factories. A higher percentage of Protestants than Catholics worked in factories. Of the 56 younger men who worked in factories, only 5 were Roman Catholic (Roman Catholics made up 9% of young factory workers, compared to 25% of the Battalion). In short, a higher percentage of younger men than older men worked in factories; a higher percentage of Protestants than Roman Catholics worked in factories; and a higher percentage of younger Protestants than younger Roman Catholics worked in factories. It is difficult to discern a trend that would explain all these results. The rate of unemployment was the same in both age groups.

The officers were drawn almost equally from both age groups: 18 officers were 25 or under; 21 were over 25.²⁸³ Among the platoon commanders, Lieutenants Vincent Kiely, Michael Kennedy, Jack Whittle, Kenneth MacPherson and Terry Fairbairn were 21 on enlistment and Lieutenants Charles Stanton and Harold Sealy were 22. At the other end of the age scale, Captain John Hodge was 34 on enlistment, Major Raymond Oram was 33 and Major George Hooper 35. The commanding officer of the Battalion in Greece and Crete, Lt-Colonel Ian Campbell, was 39 on enlistment. Except for the age-fakers, Campbell was the oldest man in the Battalion.

Age appears to have made little difference to the prospects of promotion. Officers, senior NCOs and other ranks were drawn from the older and younger groups in similar percentages: see Figure 22.

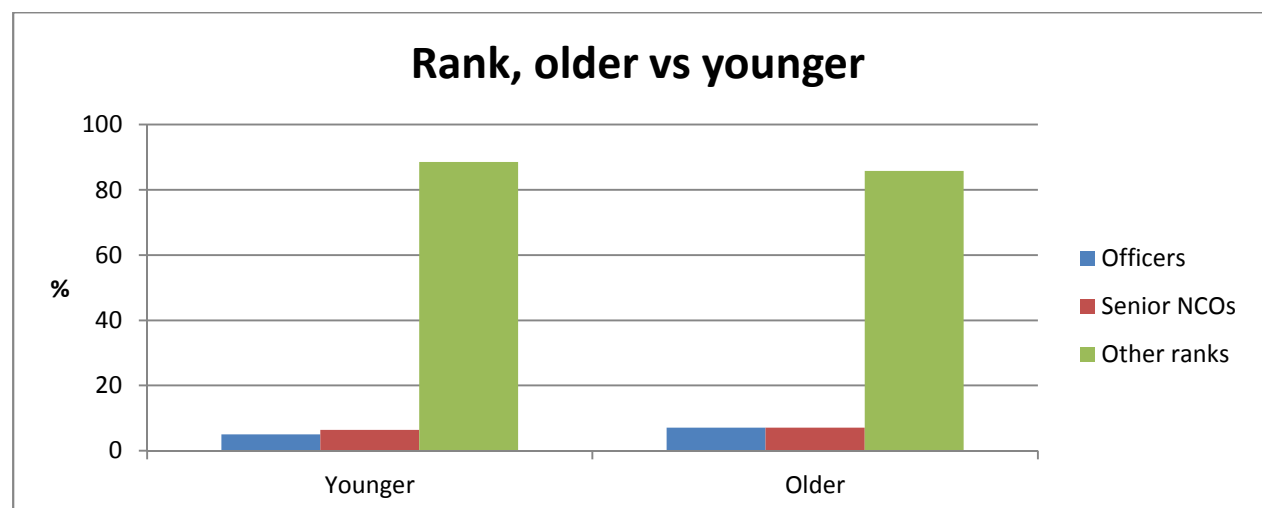


Figure 22: 2/1st Battalion, rank, younger vs older

The officers of the 2/1st Battalion

The decision to raise an expeditionary force gave an opportunity to the commanders of the new force to select the best available officers. The age requirements in the recruiting protocols - lieutenants under 30; captains under 35; majors under 40; and

²⁸³ As already seen, the average age of the officers was 27.1, compared to 26 for the entire Battalion.

Lt-Colonels under 45²⁸⁴ – opened the door to the selection of younger officers. The evidence of the 2/1st Battalion suggests that Lt-Colonel Eather took full advantage of the opportunity.

Given that Eather was in a position to select the best young officers from those who volunteered to join the special force, there is no reason to expect the men he chose would reflect the majority traits of the Battalion. Indeed, there is every reason to suspect that they would be different from the Battalion as a whole. In Hale's study, the men elected to be officers in a Confederate unit one year after the war began came from families owning more than four times the state average in property. Hale concluded that, 'Though demonstrated competence in camp and field doubtless explains why some men were chosen for promotion over others, it would appear that affiliation with the economic elite of east Texas enhanced a man's chance to become an officer.'²⁸⁵ Hale observed an association between family prosperity and promotion. The association was all the more interesting because, in that case, promotion was by an election held a year after the unit was formed, and after the candidates for election had been given a chance to show their military prowess. Hale suggested that the officers were elected on military merit and not because of their family connections, yet the men elected men who came from relatively prosperous families. The implication was that their relatively prosperous family backgrounds somehow contributed to the military qualities that the men of the unit recognised when they elected them as officers.

There are 37 officers in the sample for this study. Their personal details are summarised in Table 19.

²⁸⁴ Long, *To Benghazi*, 39.

²⁸⁵ Hale, "The Third Texas Cavalry: A Socioeconomic Profile of a Confederate Regiment," 24 - 25.

| Highest Rank | First Name | Surname | Age | Occupation | Married | Residence | Religion |
|--------------|------------|---------------|-----|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------|------------|
| Lieutenant | Kenneth | MacPherson | 21 | Clerk | Single | Roseville | Chris. Sc. |
| Lieutenant | Vincent | Kiely | 21 | Bank clerk | Single | Ashfield | CE |
| Lieutenant | Jack | Whittle | 21 | Clerk | Single | Pymont | CE |
| Lieutenant | Thomas | Fairbairn | 21 | Soldier | Single | Campbelltown | Pres. |
| Lieutenant | Michael | Kennedy | 21 | Clerk | Single | Manly | Pres. |
| Lieutenant | Noel | Craig | 22 | Traveller | Single | Mosman | CE |
| Lieutenant | Harold | Sealy | 22 | Process engineer | Single | Chatswood | CE |
| Lieutenant | Charles | Stanton | 22 | Farmer | Single | Burraborang Valley | None |
| Captain | William | Travers | 23 | Salesman | Single | Kirribilli | CE |
| Lieutenant | Albert | Herron | 24 | Salesman | Single | Strathfield | Cong. |
| Lieutenant | Thomas | Rogers | 24 | Journalist | Single | Roseville | RC |
| Lieutenant | John | Fitzgerald | 25 | Apprentice sheet metal worker | Single | Sydney City | CE |
| Lieutenant | James | Forrest | 25 | Assistant sales manager | Single | Elizabeth Bay | CE |
| Lieutenant | Gwynne | Mann | 25 | Grazier | Single | Laurel Hill | CE |
| Lieutenant | Anthony | Walter | 25 | Clerk | Single | Mosman | CE |
| Lieutenant | Patrick | Lawry | 25 | Motion picture | Single | Elizabeth Bay | Pres. |
| Lieutenant | Allan | Gilmour-Walsh | 25 | Accountant | Married | Manly | RC |
| Lieutenant | Donald | Stewart | 26 | Station book-keeper | Single | Croydon | Pres. |
| Captain | Richard | Digby | 27 | Clerk | Married | Waverley | CE |
| Major | William | Gunther | 27 | Medical practitioner | Single | Sydney City | CE |
| Lieutenant | Brian | Savage | 27 | Public servant | Single | Gordon | Cong. |
| Lieutenant | Clive | Dieppe | 28 | Clerk | Single | Manly | CE |
| Lieutenant | Ronald | Wilmott | 28 | Advertising agent | Single | Sydney City | CE |

| Highest Rank | First Name | Surname | Age | Occupation | Married | Residence | Religion |
|--------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------------------|---------|---------------|----------|
| Captain | Douglas | Channell | 29 | Announcer | Married | Padstow Park | CE |
| Lieutenant | Bryan | Cooke | 29 | Salesman | Married | Mount Eliza | CE |
| Lieutenant | Kenneth | Hill-Griffiths | 29 | Bank Officer | Single | Not known | Pres. |
| Lieutenant | Frederick | Ordish | 30 | Civil servant | Single | Canberra | CE |
| Captain | Walter | Delves | 30 | Professional soldier | Married | Liverpool | RC |
| Captain | Alan | Carter | 31 | Medical practitioner | Married | South Yarra | CE |
| Captain | Basil | Kenny | 31 | Accountant | Single | Elizabeth Bay | Prot. |
| Captain | Boyd | Moriarty | 32 | Manager | Married | Manly | CE |
| Lieutenant | Leslie | Tilney | 32 | Salesman office systems | Married | Woollahra | CE |
| Major | Raymond | Oram | 33 | Assessor | Married | Leichhardt | CE |
| Captain | Ernest | Lergessner | 33 | Professional soldier | Married | Seaforth | RC |
| Captain | John | Hodge | 34 | Clerk | Married | Northbridge | Meth. |
| Major | George | Hooper | 35 | Clerk | Married | Crows Nest | RC |
| Brigadier | Ian | Campbell | 39 | Professional soldier | Married | Sydney City | Pres. |

Table 19: Original 2/1st Battalion, officers' brief details

Officers vs the Battalion

Three officers in the sample – Lt-Colonel Campbell, Captain Lergessner and Captain Delves – were professional soldiers. Campbell began the war as Brigade Major of the 16th Brigade. He assumed command of the 2/1st Battalion in Greece, after Lt-Colonel Eather was prevented by illness from going to Greece. Captain Lergessner joined the Battalion as Quartermaster in October 1939. Captain Delves was its first Regimental Sergeant Major. The other officers were chosen from militia battalions.²⁸⁶

The average age of the officers was 27.1, compared to 26 for the entire Battalion. Officers were more likely to be married than the men of the Battalion as a whole. None of the officers was unemployed. Protestants were over-represented among the officers compared to their numbers in the Battalion. Roman Catholics were under-represented. Figure 23 gives the comparison.

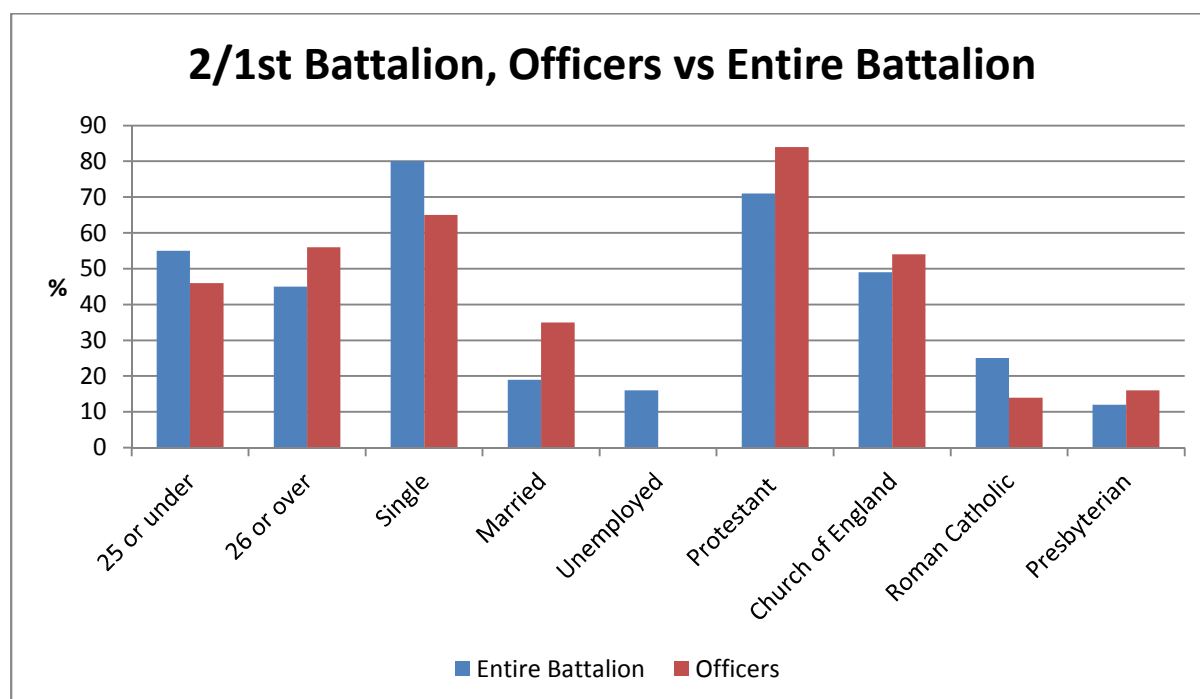


Figure 23: 2/1st Battalion, Officers vs the Entire Battalion

²⁸⁶ Mostly, the 1st, 17th, 30th and 36th Battalions: Givney and Association of First Infantry Battalions Editorial Committee., *The First at War: The Story of the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-45 the City of Sydney Regiment*, 4 - 5.

Among the officers, there were 31 Protestants and 5 Roman Catholics. One officer professed no religion. Protestants made up 71% of the Battalion, Roman Catholics 25% and others 4%. If officers had been appointed in proportion to the religious make-up of the Battalion, there would have been 26 or 27 Protestant officers, 9 or 10 Roman Catholic officers and one or two officers from the 'other' category. In other words, 4 or 5 more Protestants were officers than would have been if officers had been appointed in proportion to the religion of the entire Battalion.

The difference between the officers and the entire Battalion was strongly marked in the area of employment. Not only were all of the officers in employment, but they were employed in a different spread of industries than the men of the Battalion. Figure 24 gives the comparison.

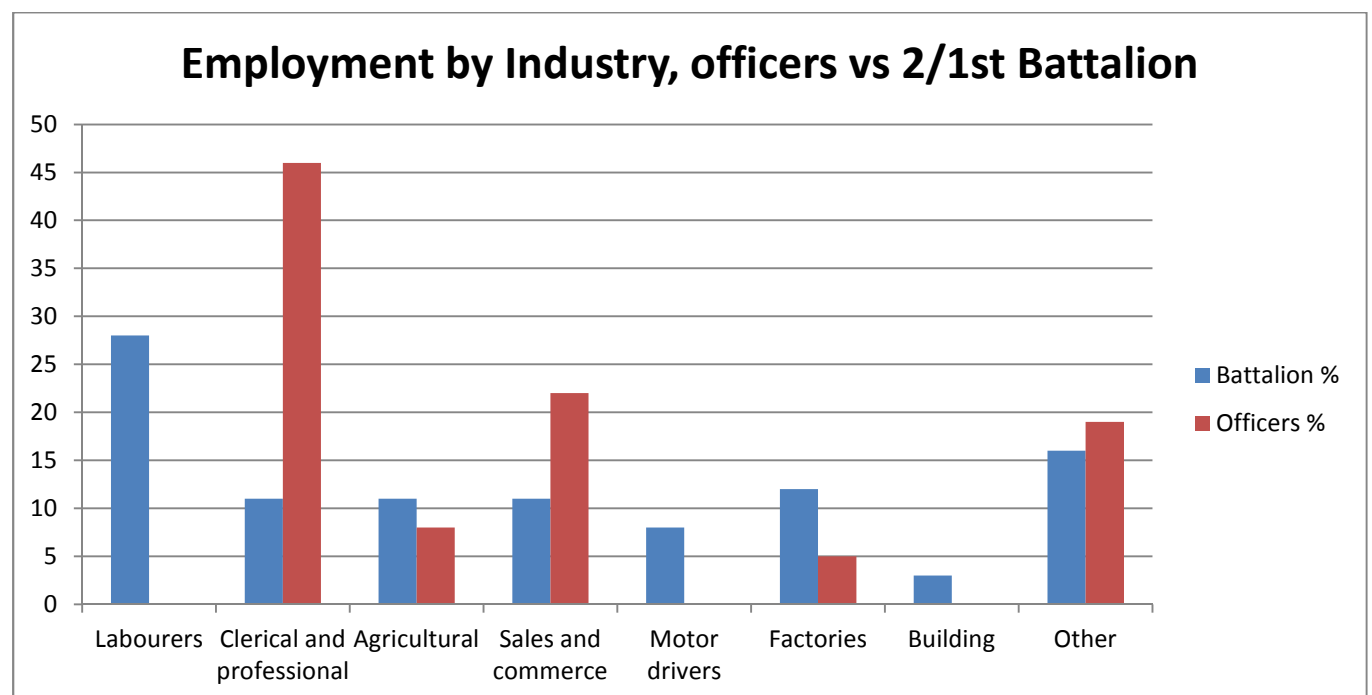


Figure 24: Employment by Industry, officers vs 2/1st Battalion



Figure 25: The Officers of the 2/1st Battalion in Palestine, 1940

The Officers of the 2/1st Battalion in Palestine 1940

Reading from left to right, the officers are:-

Back Row: Lieutenants Embrey, Catterns, Fairbairn, Rogers, Macarthur-King, Hill-Griffiths, Willmott, Savage, Simpson, Craig, Whittle, Stewart and Golding.

Middle Row: Lieutenants Sealy, Digby, Kennedy, Dieppe, Captain Finlay, Lieutenants Channel, Moriarty, Travers, Macpherson, Mann and Pike.

Front Row: Padre Kircher, Captains Baines, Dillon, Majors Oram, Adams (Second in command), Lt-Colonel Eather, Captain Jackson (Adjutant), Major Hooper, Captains Hodge, Lergessner and Selby (Medical Officer).

No officer worked as a labourer, a motor driver or in the building trade. The officers of the original 2/1st Battalion were more likely than other ranks to work in the clerical and professional fields and in sales and commerce.

The final issues to be considered arise from Dale Blair's study of the 1st Battalion. He found (i) that there was a deliberate bias against appointing Roman Catholics to commissioned rank; and (ii) that the officers of the Battalion tended to come from more affluent suburbs of Sydney than the other ranks. Did either of those observations hold true for the original 2/1st Battalion?

Anti-Catholic bias?

There was only one Roman Catholic officer in the 1st Battalion, when Roman Catholics accounted for 17.86% of the Battalion.²⁸⁷ It was possible that the imbalance was due to the Catholics lacking the skills to be officers, but Blair was able to discount that possibility. In the 1st Battalion, the same percentage of Roman Catholics worked in clerical and professional roles as in the Battalion as a whole.²⁸⁸ Blair also showed that Roman Catholics had been made NCOs almost in proportion to their numbers in the Battalion.²⁸⁹ Blair concluded that his evidence appeared 'to support the notion that a deliberate bias existed in preventing Catholics entering into the commissioned ranks.'²⁹⁰ Figure 26 gives his results.

²⁸⁷ Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F.."

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 24.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 24 - 25.

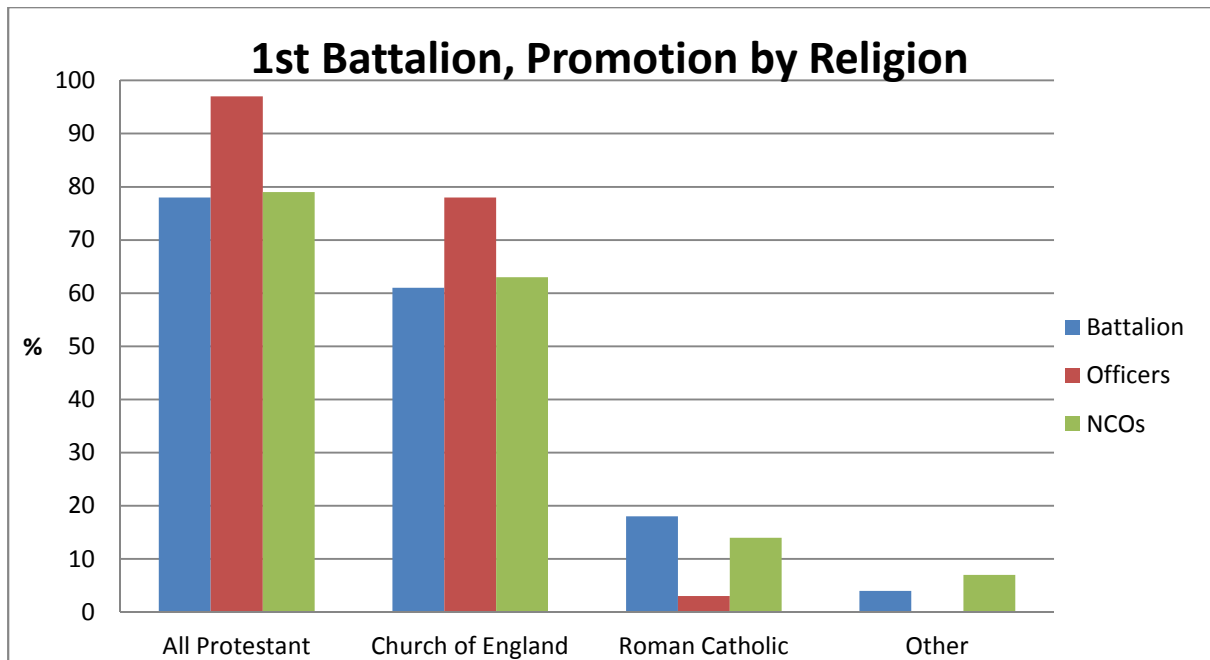


Figure 26: 1st Battalion, Promotion by Religion, from Blair

An imbalance in the promotion of Catholics is also seen in the results for the 2/1st Battalion. Figure 27 shows the results.

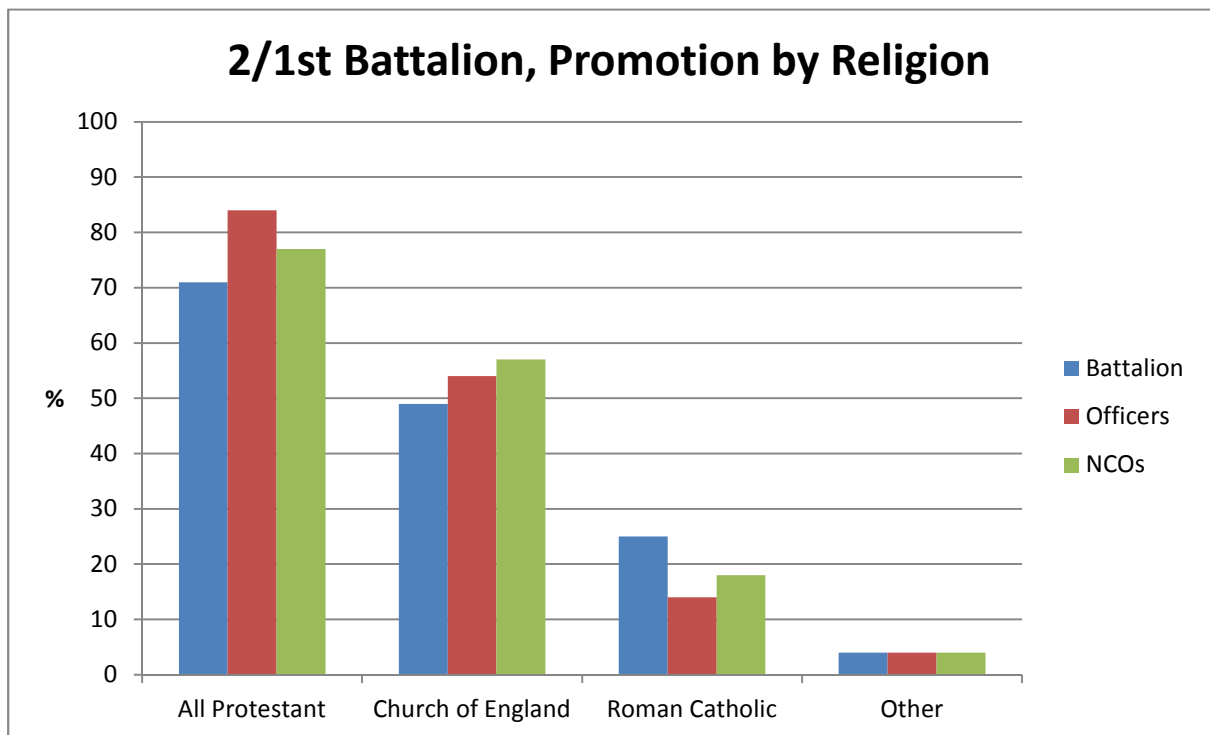


Figure 27: 2/1st Battalion, Promotion by Religion

The imbalance in the 2/1st Battalion was not as great as the imbalance in the 1st Battalion. The imbalance in the 2/1st Battalion showed fewer Catholics being promoted to both commissioned and non-commissioned ranks than their numbers in the Battalion would suggest.

Like Blair, it is necessary to ask whether the imbalance was due to the Roman Catholics lacking the skills needed for promotion. On this question, the evidence of the 2/1st Battalion is different from that of the 1st Battalion. In the 2/1st Battalion, fewer Roman Catholics were clerks or professionals, and more were labourers, than the Battalion averages. Figure 28 shows the employment of 2/1st Battalion Roman Catholics by industry.

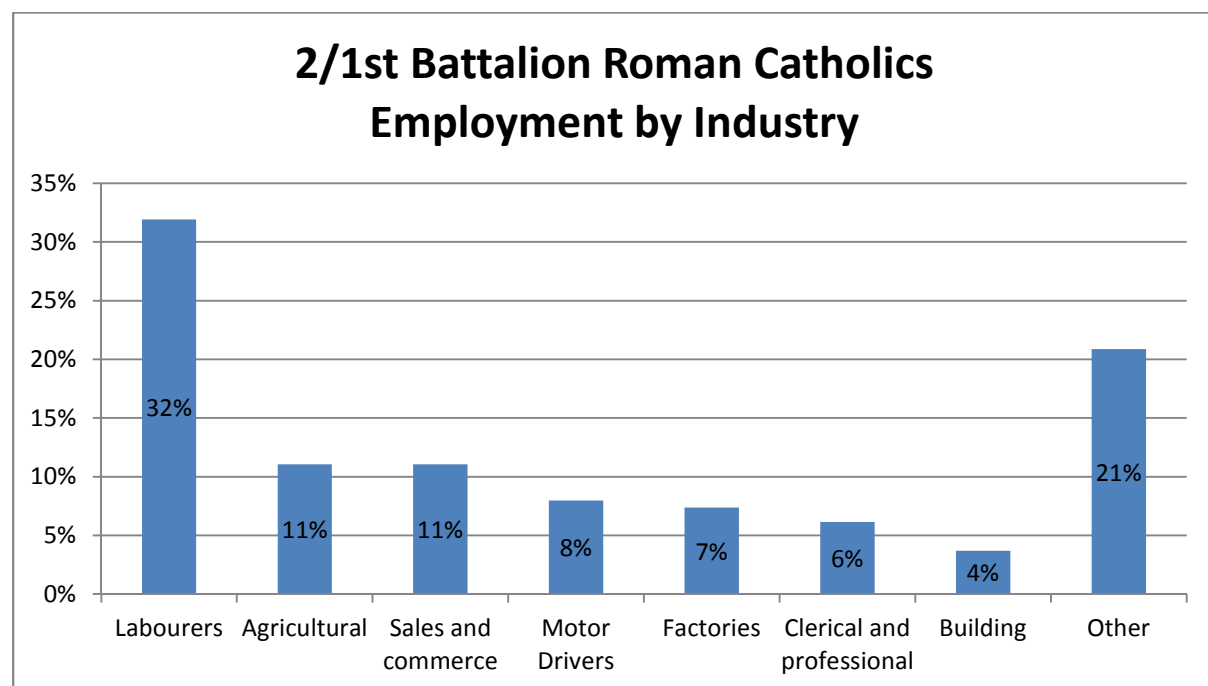


Figure 28: 2/1st Battalion Roman Catholics, employment by industry

Figure 28 shows that 32% of the 2/1st Battalion Roman Catholics were labourers. This compares to 28% of the entire Battalion who were labourers. Perhaps more tellingly, 6% of Roman Catholics were clerks or professionals (10 men), compared to 11% across the Battalion. As there were 163 Roman Catholics in the Battalion, the 4%

increase in the labourers category equates to 7 or 8 extra Roman Catholic men who were labourers. More significantly, the 5% reduction in the clerical and professional workers category equates to 7 or 8 fewer Roman Catholic men who were clerks or professionals. That difference may explain some and, perhaps, all, of the shortfall of Roman Catholic officers.

This observation may reflect a broader trend. It would be stretching the evidence of the small sample of this study to suggest that Roman Catholics avoided intellectual careers or pursuits, but Patrick O'Farrell makes that point in *The Catholic Church in Australia*:-

Up to the Second World War the contribution of Catholics to Australian intellectual and cultural life was substantially less than their numbers warranted. They had avoided the more hazardous areas of intellectual, artistic and creative activity. Even in areas where they were present, the hostility of their environment fostered withdrawal; their habits were cautious and indrawn, their dispositions unimaginative, unadventurous. Only recently has a prosperous economy diminished the obsession with security and caution characteristic of a socially emergent Catholicism.²⁹¹

Ten Roman Catholic members of the 2/1st Battalion worked as clerks or professionals. Of these, two were officers, two were sergeants, two were corporals and four were private soldiers. That does not suggest a reluctance to promote Roman Catholics. Of the 5 Roman Catholics who were officers, two were professional soldiers, one was a journalist, one a clerk and one an accountant. One of the professional soldiers was Walter Delves, who began his life in the Battalion as its Regimental Sergeant Major. He was sent to an Officer Training School in the Middle East, and promoted to be a Lieutenant in Greece.²⁹² If there had been an anti-Catholic bias, it must be squared with the planned approach evidently taken to Sergeant Major Delves' promotion.

²⁹¹ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia : A Short History : 1788-1967*, 276.

²⁹² "2/1st Battalion War Diary Vol 12 ", (AWM52-8-3-1-012). Entry for 12 April 1941.

From affluent suburbs?

Thirty officers and 472 other ranks lived in metropolitan Sydney. Table 20 shows where they lived by local government area.

| Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Other ranks living in the municipality | Officers living in the municipality |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Cabramatta | 120 | 1 | |
| Liverpool | 123 | 3 | 1 |
| Darlington | 126 | 5 | |
| Fairfield | 133 | 2 | |
| Erskineville | 137 | 3 | |
| Alexandria | 139 | 6 | |
| Redfern | 139 | 14 | |
| Balmain | 145 | 9 | |
| Holroyd | 146 | 2 | |
| Newtown | 147 | 5 | |
| Paddington | 147 | 23 | |
| Glebe | 149 | 11 | |
| Bankstown | 150 | 5 | 1 |
| City of Sydney | 153 | 68 | 8 |
| Leichhardt | 154 | 9 | 1 |
| St Peters | 154 | 5 | |
| Granville | 156 | 3 | |
| Annandale | 157 | 5 | |
| Waterloo | 157 | 3 | |
| Eastwood | 161 | 3 | |
| Auburn | 163 | 1 | |
| Botany | 167 | 3 | |
| Mascot | 167 | 2 | |
| Parramatta | 167 | 2 | |
| Hurstville | 170 | 7 | |
| Marrickville | 173 | 12 | |
| Petersham | 175 | 8 | |
| Rockdale | 175 | 3 | |

| Municipality | 1933 Census Income Index | Other ranks living in the municipality | Officers living in the municipality |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Ryde | 176 | 10 | |
| Kogarah | 180 | 5 | |
| Enfield | 181 | 3 | |
| Canterbury | 183 | 6 | |
| North Sydney | 196 | 28 | 2 |
| Randwick | 197 | 52 | |
| Waverley | 198 | 28 | 1 |
| Ashfield | 200 | 12 | 2 |
| Drummoyne | 200 | 6 | |
| Hunters Hill | 200 | 1 | |
| Dundas | 201 | 1 | |
| Homebush | 201 | 1 | |
| Willoughby | 202 | 18 | 2 |
| Burwood | 208 | 2 | |
| Concord | 208 | 1 | |
| Manly | 210 | 14 | 5 |
| Lane Cove | 214 | 1 | |
| Strathfield | 225 | 5 | 1 |
| Woollahra | 225 | 18 | 1 |
| Ku-ring-gai | 228 | 16 | 3 |
| Mosman | 230 | 16 | 2 |
| Vaucluse | 252 | 4 | |

Table 20: Residence in metropolitan Sydney, officers vs other ranks

Table 20 lends itself to a three part analysis, with the first part being the City of Sydney, the second being the wealthier municipalities and the third being the poorer municipalities: see Table 21.

| Area | Other ranks % | Officers % |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Wealthier municipalities (index number > 190: 18 municipalities) | 47 | 63 |
| City of Sydney (index number = 153) | 14 | 26 |
| Poorer municipalities, excluding the City of Sydney (index number < 190: 32 municipalities) | 38 | 10 |

Table 21: Summary of the residence data

Leaving aside the City of Sydney, officers were more likely than the other ranks to live in wealthier municipalities and less likely than the other ranks to live in the poorer municipalities. This supports the view that the officers tended to come from more affluent areas than the other ranks. As the City of Sydney has a low index number (153), the fact that a relatively high number of officers lived there might count against the notion that the officers came from more affluent areas than the other ranks. The attestation forms permit closer analysis of the parts of the City where the men lived. That is shown in Table 22.

| Suburb | Other ranks % | Officers % |
|---------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| City (CBD) | 47 | 50 |
| Elizabeth Bay | - | 37.5 |
| Darlinghurst | 14.7 | - |
| Surry Hills | 14.7 | - |
| Pymont | 1.4 | 12.5 |
| Kings Cross | 8.8 | - |
| East Sydney | 2.9 | - |
| Camperdown | 1 | - |
| Chippendale | 1 | - |
| Millers Point | 1 | - |

| Suburb | Other ranks % | Officers % |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| Moore Park | 1 | - |
| Potts Point | 1 | - |
| Ultimo | 1 | - |

Table 22: City of Sydney, breakdown of neighbourhoods

Half of the officers who lived in the City lived in the CBD. Two of the officers who gave CBD addresses did not live at the addresses they gave. Lt-Colonel Campbell, who was a professional soldier, enlisted in Melbourne. The address on his attestation form was not a residential address, but an address for his mother, in care of the Bank of New South Wales branch at George and Wynyard Streets, Sydney. Campbell's father, General Campbell, lived in retirement in Moss Vale.²⁹³ Lieutenant Willmott gave as his address the office of his father's advertising business in Grosvenor Street, Sydney. He lived in Woollahra.²⁹⁴ A third officer who gave a CBD address, Major Gunther, a medical officer, did live in the CBD – but in the University Club, in Phillip Street.²⁹⁵ The fourth officer who gave a CBD address, Lieutenant Fitzgerald, lived in a small terrace house at 34 Surrey Street, Darlinghurst. Of the three officers who lived in Elizabeth Bay, Lieutenant Forrest lived in a residential flat at 76 Bayswater Road; Lieutenant Lawry lived with his mother in the Dunrobin Private Hotel in Roslyn Gardens; and Lieutenant Kenny lived with his father in a duplex apartment at 21 Onslow Street. Only one officer lived the west of the CBD – Lieutenant Whittle. He lived with his mother in a flat at 125 Point Street, Pyrmont.

On closer examination, therefore, two of the officers who gave addresses in the City of Sydney did not live there, and a third who did live there was living in the relative luxury of the University Club. Having regard to these facts, Table 21 can be adjusted so as to show Lt-Colonel Campbell as not living in metropolitan Sydney and to

²⁹³ Geoffrey Serle et al., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 548. Volume 7

²⁹⁴ Personal communication from Lieutenant Willmott's son, Geoffrey: 16 August 2014.

²⁹⁵ It no longer exists.

allocate Major Gunther and Lieutenant Willmott to the wealthier suburbs. The result is shown in Table 23.

| Area | Other ranks % | Officers % |
|---|------------------|---------------|
| Wealthier municipalities (index number > 190) | 47 | 72 |
| City of Sydney (index number = 153) | 14 | 17 |
| Poorer municipalities (index number < 190, excluding the City of Sydney) | 38 | 10 |

Table 23: Adjusted summary of residence data

Table 23 paints a clear picture. The officers of the original 2/1st Battalion did tend to come from wealthier areas than the other ranks. It would make little difference if Major Gunther was treated as living in the City of Sydney. In that event the percentage of officers living in the wealthier municipalities would be reduced to 69%.

Summary

The majority of men of the original 2/1st Battalion were: white; 25 or younger; single; employed; Australian-born; Protestant; and living in Sydney. As widespread as these majority traits were, it would be wrong to treat the men who had them as stereotypes of the Battalion. For a start, only 20% of the Battalion (132 men) had all of the majority traits. More importantly, against all but one of the majority traits there were men with the corresponding minority trait. While 55% of the Battalion were under 26, 45% were 26 or older. While 80% of the Battalion were single, 19% were married. While 84.3% of the Battalion were in work, 15.7% were unemployed. While 539 members of the Battalion were born in Australia, 109 members were born overseas. While 71% of the Battalion were Protestant, 25% were Roman Catholic.

While 77% of the Battalion lived in metropolitan Sydney, 23% came from the country or interstate. Only one trait was shared across the Battalion – everyone was white.

The evidence of the attestation forms cast light on many issues of historical interest. It demonstrated that 12.5%, or one eighth, of the men of the original 2/1st Battalion faked their age to enlist. The average age of the Battalion, perhaps old at first blush, was shown to be similar to the average age of comparable military units. It was the average ages of the conscript 39th and 53rd Battalions that were out of line - and shockingly so.

The rate of unemployment in the 2/1st Battalion exceeded the national average by a small margin. This gave some support to the claim that the pay and conditions of the 2nd AIF were attractive to the unemployed, but fell short of justifying the 'economic conscripts' tag. The unemployment evidence confirmed the results of Barter's study. It also confirmed that Bean's 200 unemployed figure was anomalous. The occupational data reflected the manpower restrictions at work, with the occupations of the men tending to be in the junior ranks and to favour manual, agricultural or factory work.

Despite the age faking, which was readily identified and measured, the attestation forms were shown to be a reliable source of demographic evidence.

There was evidence of a religious bias in the selection of officers of the 2/1st Battalion, but it was not as marked as that which Blair discovered in the 1st battalion of the 1st AIF. As to the 1st Battalion, the comparative evidence of all the studies suggested that the preponderance of members of the Church of England in the 1st Battalion was unusual. That may have been relevant to the bias that Blair observed. There was some evidence that the Roman Catholic members of the original 2/1st Battalion came lower on the economic scale than the Protestants, but the margin was a narrow one.

A majority of the men of the 2/1st Battalion came from the 18 wealthiest local government areas of metropolitan Sydney. The officers tended to come from more affluent parts of Sydney than the men. The low pay did not discourage men from wealthy suburbs from enlisting – another fact which calls in doubt the ‘economic conscripts’ tag. Incidentally and surprisingly, the evidence showed that Roman Catholics were under-represented in the suburbs of Sydney north of the Harbour Bridge - a fact that was reflected in the makeup of the Battalion.

The officers of the 2/1st Battalion were selected as an elite. Not only did they tend to come from more affluent suburbs than the other ranks, they were all in employment and they were less likely than the other ranks to be employed in manual, agricultural or factory work. They were also very young.

This chapter has used the evidence of the attestation forms to describe the social demographics, background and experience of the men of the 2/1st Battalion. It supplemented the evidence of the attestation forms with observations and parallels from comparable studies and from the 1933 census. The next chapter will build on this material to identify and understand the culture of the original 2/1st Battalion.

Chapter 6

The Culture of the Original 2/1st Battalion

The Army brought together 649 volunteers to create the original 2/1st Battalion. From its establishment in Sydney on 16 October 1939 until its capture on Crete on 30 May 1941, the original Battalion lasted just 20 months. Over a period of fifteen months, the men lived and trained together, working towards the goal of becoming an effective military unit. They first went into battle at Bardia in January 1941. For the next five months, they were in regular contact with the enemy.

The culture of a military unit

Accounts of the transition of groups of individuals into a cohesive military unit are a staple of military history. Stories of that type may follow a well-trodden path, but that does not mean that each unit will emerge from the transition in identical form to each other unit. To the contrary, each unit will develop a distinctive character which can be identified and described. Studying individual units may reveal differences between units recruited early in a war and units recruited later; between volunteer units and conscript units; and between units raised in different States or regions. The differences between the original 2/1st Battalion and the conscript 39th and 53rd Battalions are a striking case in point. The differences between British officers at the start of the Great War and at the end are another case in point. The notion that there exists a stereotypical military unit may be as elusive as the notion that there exists a truly stereotypical soldier.

Social military historians describe the distinctive character of a military unit as its culture. The culture of a unit emerges during the process of transition from a group

of individuals to a military unit. Reflecting the fact that culture emerges gradually, it makes sense to begin the analysis of culture by looking beyond the demographic data and asking: what broader qualities did the men of the original 2/1st Battalion share?

Shared qualities of the original 2/1st Battalion

First, and foremost, the men of the original 2/1st Battalion shared the quality that they were volunteers. Prime Minister Menzies announced the formation of the 2nd AIF in the second week of September. Recruitment began in the second week of October. Within two months, 402 men of the original 2/1st Battalion had volunteered, making a commitment to serve for the duration of the war plus 12 months.

The fact that these early enlisters were volunteers set them apart. It marked them as men who 'heard the bugle' in 1939. It set them apart from the men who did not volunteer until after Germany invaded Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940. It set them apart from the men who did not volunteer until after Germany invaded France and the Low Countries on 10 May 1940. It set them apart from the men who did not volunteer at all, but chose instead to wait and see if they were conscripted. Their early enlistment was a mark of distinction. The men of the original 2/1st Battalion were among 19,654 men who volunteered for the 2nd AIF in 1939. Enlistment for the 2nd AIF did not begin in large numbers until May 1940, when Germany invaded France and the Low Countries - 102,043 men volunteered for the 2nd AIF in the three months from June to August 1940. The 19,654 early enlisters were an exclusive subset of the men and women who eventually served in the Australian armed forces in World War II – all 726,543 of them.²⁹⁶

The fact that most of the men of the original 2/1st Battalion were early enlisters goes, of course, to the question of motivation. Motivation is, in large part, a matter for

²⁹⁶ Long, "The Final Campaigns. [with Plates and Maps.]," 635.

individual evidence beyond the scope of this study, but inferences about motivation can be drawn from the evidence of this study: for instance, from the facts that the men of the Battalion were prepared to leave jobs and family at short notice; that they were willing to make an open-ended commitment to serve for the duration of the war plus 12 months; and that as many as one eighth of them were prepared to lie about their age to achieve enlistment.

Although most 2/1st Battalion men enlisted in 1939, a large minority (38%) enlisted in 1940. The spikes in enlistment following the invasion of Denmark and Norway and again after the invasion of France and the Low Countries suggest that those events did prompt men to volunteer. It is not clear what sentiment the invasions awakened in the men who volunteered shortly after they occurred. The invasions may have done no more than confirm that there really would be a shooting war after months of phoney war. They may equally have confirmed in the minds of the men that Germany was bent on dominating Europe, and had to be stopped. This study provides good evidence that the invasions of Scandinavia and the Low Countries prompted men to enlist, but it provides no evidence of why the invasions prompted men to enlist.

The act of volunteering marked the men of the original 2/1st Battalion as a self-selected group of men prepared to take a chance. Their willingness to accept the risks of upheaval inherent in the decision to enlist was a mark of initiative and motivation.²⁹⁷

The fact that most of the men of the original 2/1st Battalion were able to enlist at such short notice indicated another shared quality – the men lacked ties that might have prevented them from enlisting. Eighty per cent of the men of the Battalion were

²⁹⁷ It was also an example of what Huntington called ‘liberal transmutation’ – of citizens giving up the luxuries of civilian life to serve their country. Huntington argued that Americans revered citizen-soldiers more than they did professional soldiers, precisely because they made this sacrifice: Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 157 -58. The same case could be made of Australians.

single. Many were young - 55% were 25 or younger on enlistment. At work, they had few ties. Those in work had not risen to positions of such importance that their occupations were reserved. The numbers of labourers among the men of the 2/1st Battalion were comparatively high. Numbers of clerical workers and professionals were comparatively low. Against this, men who were out of work, who may have been freer to enlist than employed men, enlisted in numbers only slightly higher than the national unemployment rate.

The men of the original 2/1st Battalion were white, British subjects, substantially of European origin and descent. Ethnic diversity was not a hallmark of the Battalion.

Whilst most men of the original 2/1st Battalion came from metropolitan Sydney, they were mixed with a good number of men from elsewhere. The Army appears to have allocated men to battalions at random. There is no evidence that this was a deliberate policy – it may have been happenstance - but the result in the 2/1st Battalion was a mix of men from different parts of metropolitan Sydney, from country New South Wales and interstate.

The men who were accepted passed a medical examination that was so rigorous that 16% of all volunteers were rejected. Men who were not fully fit on enlistment were knocked into shape by the schedule of drill and route marches that the Army prescribed. The minimum height of 5 feet 6 inches (168cm) may not be tall by today's standards, but when General Irwin Rommel saw 50 or 60 Australian prisoners in the Western Desert in May 1941, he recorded in his diary that they were 'immensely big and powerful men, who without question represented an elite formation of the British Empire.'²⁹⁸

The average age of the original 2/1st Battalion, at 26, may seem old but, in the expert eyes of CEW Bean, the Battalion was of ideal fighting age. Fifty five per cent of the

²⁹⁸ Erwin Rommel and B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Rommel Papers* (London: Collins, 1953), 132. The prisoners could not have been members of the 2/1st Battalion. It was in Crete in May 1941.

men were 25 or younger on enlistment, and 45% were over 25. This gave it the right mix of youth and relative maturity.

All of the officers and most of the men had previous military experience, for the most part, in the militia. Brigadier Allen, the commanding officer of the 16th Brigade, a few other officers and most of the age-fakers in the ranks who reduced ages to enlist had fought in the Great War. They knew the standard of performance that war demanded of infantrymen. Partly because of this bank of military experience, the 16th Brigade was ready to leave for the Middle East on 10 January 1940, only three months after it was formed.

Ninety six per cent of the original 2/1st Battalion (625 men) professed a Christian faith. Two men were Jewish. Twenty men professed no faith. The religion of two men is unknown. Whatever differences may be supposed to exist between Protestants and Roman Catholics, the fact that a huge majority of the Battalion professed a Christian faith was a powerful unifying factor.²⁹⁹ Doctrinal differences between denominations had no bearing on the fact that, when the 2/1st Battalion arrived in Palestine, there was hardly a man who could not relate what he saw to stories from the Bible.

The shared Christian ethos was a hallmark of the original 2/1st Battalion. The heritage went beyond remembering stories from Sunday School or Mass. It encompassed what O'Farrell called the Western cultural tradition. At a high level, the Western cultural tradition extended to the elevated concepts that O'Farrell listed: the rule of law; political democracy and individual freedom; the secular state; toleration of diversity; economic capitalism; change and modernity.³⁰⁰ At the level of the Battalion, however, it was more likely to be expressed as a sense of common

²⁹⁹ This is not to ignore or denigrate the members of the Battalion who did not profess a Christian faith, but rather to observe that they represented a very small minority of the Battalion.

³⁰⁰ O'Farrell, "Imagination's Stain: Historical Reflections on Sectarian Australia," 3.

purpose, as a shared determination to make the best of the job the men had volunteered to do.

Making up 25% of the men, Roman Catholics were well-represented in the 2/1st Battalion. They were more likely to be labourers and less likely to be clerks or professionals, or to work in factories, than Protestants. They were more likely to be unemployed than the Protestants. Roman Catholics tended to favour the eastern suburbs or the inner suburbs of Sydney. Protestants tended to favour suburbs north of the Harbour Bridge that were, by and large, more prosperous than the suburbs favoured by the Catholics south of the Bridge.

This evidence suggests that the Protestants in the Battalion were, overall, more prosperous than the Roman Catholics. The margin between them was not wide, but it was seen in every measure that the study produced. The evidence that the Roman Catholics were at a social and economic disadvantage to the Protestants, combined with the fact that Roman Catholics made up 13.5% of the officers of the Battalion, roughly half of their 25% of the whole of the Battalion, prompts three questions:-

1. Was the imbalance in promotion due to anti-Catholic bias?
2. Did the imbalance in promotion reflect the social and economic disadvantage of the Roman Catholics? and, more broadly;
3. Was anti-Catholic bias the cause of the social and economic disadvantage of the Roman Catholics?

The anti-Catholic bias evident in the 2/1st Battalion was not as extreme as that uncovered by Blair in the case of the 1st Battalion. This, again, prompts questions. Was anti-Catholic bias on the wane? Were Catholics becoming more prosperous? O'Farrell argued that sectarianism declined in Australia to the point that it had all

but disappeared by the 1970s.³⁰¹ The evidence of naked bias seen in the 1st Battalion followed by the evidence of a less pronounced bias in the 2/1st Battalion 25 years later is consistent with the trend O'Farrell described. With only two battalions to compare (the 1st and the 2/1st), generalisations are problematic. This is an area where more unit studies would cast light.

When Prime Minister Menzies announced the formation of the 2nd AIF, he made the obvious comparison with the 1st AIF.³⁰² CEW Bean made a similar comparison. After visiting the 2nd AIF in camp at Ingleburn, outside Sydney, he wrote a piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* praising the new force.³⁰³ Bean wrote that, 'I had never seen a body of troops that would be more formidable to meet.' It was classic myth-making. It was also high praise, given that it placed the 2nd AIF above the 1st. For Bean, the 2nd AIF had an advantage over the 1st because it was heir to a 'tradition already made'. Bean concluded his article:-

And perhaps I have left to the last the most vital factor in its moulding – that a considerable proportion of the young AIF are sons of Diggers, often of Diggers with a breastful of ribbons, and in many cases of Diggers who were killed. To these the AIF is their spiritual home, and in them, in a very real sense, the old AIF lives again.³⁰⁴

General Mackay made the same comparison on the eve of the Battle of Bardia. A Great War veteran and the commanding officer of the 6th Division, Mackay said that the '6th Div. was tough, hard and confident . . . They have absorbed much military knowledge . . . and were, above all, determined to do as well as or better than their fathers . . .'³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ Ibid., 5 and 4. Accessed on 16 August 2014

³⁰² Robertson and McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy, 1939-1945 : A Documentary History*, 29.

³⁰³ CEW Bean, "A.I.F. Lives Again," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1939.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ivan Chapman, *Ivan G. Mackay : Citizen and Soldier* (Melbourne: Melway Publishing, 1975), 180. See also: Stockings, *Bardia : Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac*, 288 - 89. and Chester Wilmot, Neil McDonald, and Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Chester Wilmot Reports : Broadcasts That Shaped World War II* (Sydney: ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004), 63.

The men of the original 2/1st Battalion had in common that they were constantly compared with their ‘fathers’. When I began this study, I expected it would be a simple matter to prove that most 2/1st Battalion men were sons of men of the 1st AIF. My father was the son of a 1st AIF man; Lieutenant Don Jackson, the original adjutant of the 2/1st Battalion, was the son of General Robert Jackson;³⁰⁶ Lt-Colonel Ian Campbell was the son of Colonel Gerald Campbell;³⁰⁷ and Lieutenant Frederick Ordish was the son of Lt-Colonel Harold Ordish. But here the trail ran dry. Attempts to trace other family connections to the 1st AIF failed. Some men of the 2/1st Battalion gave their fathers as their next-of-kin. Searching for the names of the fathers in the World War I nominal roll produced no matches. The Australian War Memorial holds Gavin Long’s file listing men who served in World War II whose fathers who served in World War I. The list is one page long. There are only 15 families on the list.³⁰⁸ It transpired that very few members of the 2/1st Battalion were sons of members of the 1st AIF. The overwhelming majority of the original 2/1st Battalion were born between 1915 and 1919, when the overwhelming majority of the 1st AIF were away at the Great War: see Table 23.³⁰⁹

| Date | Number of original 2/1st Battalion members born |
|-------------|---|
| 1900 – 1914 | 170 |
| 1915 – 1919 | 473 |
| 1920 -1921 | 6 |

Table 24: Dates of birth of members of the 2/1st Battalion

³⁰⁶ AWM 67; 3/197; Serle et al., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 580 - 81. Vol 17. Lieutenant Jackson later became a general himself. He had been promoted, and was no longer in the 2/1st Battalion during the battle of Crete. For that reason, he is not part of the sample for this study.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 548. Vol 7. Lt-Colonel Campbell, too, later became a general.

³⁰⁸ AWM 67; 11/7.

³⁰⁹ My father was born on 9 November 1915 – thanks to the short interlude after my grandfather returned to Sydney from German New Guinea, where he served in the AN&MEF, and before he left for Gallipoli. My father was 3 years old when he first met my grandfather - at Central Railway Station, in Sydney.

Indeed, this study has proved that there were almost as many members of the 1st AIF in the original 2/1st Battalion as there were sons of members! This was a surprising finding. My sense is that it would have been equally surprising to Bean, Mackay and the men of the Battalion. The men had grown up in the aftermath of the Great War. If they were not actually sons of 1st AIF men, it seems reasonable to conclude that their upbringing led them to identify as 'sons' of the 1st AIF. This is the thrust of Bean's piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* - Australian men born in the first 20 years of the last century were heirs to the traditions of the 1st AIF. This may have been so whether their fathers fought in it or not.

There would have been more sons of 1st AIF men in the 2nd AIF battalions raised later in 1940 and in 1941. By the time those battalions were raised, the sons of returned 1st AIF men born in 1920 and 1921 would have turned 20, making them eligible to volunteer with their parents' consent. Further, the sons of 1st AIF men would have become eligible for service in militia battalions (limited initially to home service) on turning 18.

Although the recruitment protocols seemed on their face a heartless set of parameters, the result of their implementation was the selection of a group of men who not only had the physical attributes of good soldiers, they also had the mental and spiritual attributes. They were young, fit, tall and healthy, but, more than that, they were volunteers, free of the ties of home, they shared a common ethnicity and a common allegiance as British subjects, they shared a Christian ethos, and they were imbued with the traditions of the 1st AIF. These shared values were qualities of the type that Lee identified as being central to the culture of a military unit.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Wayne E. Lee, "Cultural Analysis in American Military History," 1117 - 18, 40 - 41. By using quantitative methods to address basic demographic questions about the men of the original 2/1st Battalion, this study has arrived at conclusions that go to issues as unquantifiable as the values, motivations and expectations of the men, in much the same way as Fogel's study of the birth ages of slave mothers went to the unquantifiable issue of promiscuity: Fogel, "The Limits of Quantitative Methods in History," 337.

German aggression threatened the shared values. The German attacks on Poland, Scandinavia, the Low Countries and France offended the Christian ethos. When German ambitions went so far as to threaten Great Britain and the British Empire, they offended the pride of the men in their ethnic heritage, or, what might be the same thing, in the British Empire. When General Mackay observed that the men of the 2/1st Battalion were determined 'to do as well as or better than their fathers,'³¹¹ he was describing the culture of the Battalion at work. The desire to emulate the 1st AIF shaped the behaviour of the 2/1st Battalion. So central was it to the motivation of the Battalion that General Mackay mentioned it on the eve of Bardia. The previous military experience of Great War veterans was another factor that moulded the behaviour of the Battalion. The experience of all the men who served in the Great War - not only the officers, but also the men who lowered their age to enlist – became part of the shared memory of the Battalion when the old hands told the novices what battle would demand of them.

Summary

This chapter has identified and described the qualities that the men of the original 2/1st Battalion shared on enlistment. The qualities included physical qualities valuable in a good soldier – they were young, fit, tall and healthy. They also included mental and spiritual qualities equally valuable in a good soldier – they were volunteers, free of the ties of home, they shared a common ethnicity and a common allegiance as British subjects, they shared a Christian ethos, and they were imbued with the traditions of the 1st AIF. The culture of the original 2/1st Battalion was built on the common reaction of the men to German aggression, and on the affront that it represented to their shared values. The shared values lay at the heart of the culture of the original 2/1st Battalion.

³¹¹ Chapman, *Iven G. Mackay : Citizen and Soldier*, 180.

The concluding chapter asks how the evidence of this study can be extended beyond the original 2/1st Battalion to throw light on broader questions about the myths and legends that have come to surround the Australian soldier and the Anzac tradition. It suggests that the study of individual military units should be encouraged. The study end as it began, with a few comments on the difference between history-making and myth-making.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Broader applications

This study has described the culture of a single Australian infantry battalion. It has covered the first twenty months of World War II from the outbreak of war to the campaigns in the Western Desert, Greece and Crete. It has been the principal concern of this study to identify the distinctive character and composition of the original 2/1st Battalion. Its final objective is to assess whether and, if so, how the analysis of the study can be extended beyond the 2/1st Battalion to throw light on broader questions about the myths and legends that have come to surround the Australian soldier and the Anzac tradition.

The narrative of the 2/1st Battalion is clear. It was an early volunteer battalion; it was part of the 16th Brigade and the 6th Division that travelled to the Middle East; it was part of Western Desert Force that drove the Italians out of Egypt and back through Libya; it was part of Lustreforce that was sent on the ill-fated mission to mainland Greece; and it was part of Creforce that checked the Germans on the island of Crete, but was defeated in that battle. The experiences of the 2/1st Battalion may be compared with those of other battalions of the 16th Brigade and, perhaps, of the 17th Brigade. Those battalions were part of the 6th Division. They were raised at the same time as the 2/1st Battalion. They fought alongside it in the Middle East. Depending on the circumstances, that kind of extrapolation might be valid even though there were differences between the 2/1st Battalion and the other battalions. It might, for example, be fair to make comparisons with battalions of the 17th Brigade,

even though the 17th Brigade was raised in Victoria, if there were reason to expect that the circumstances of the two Brigades were otherwise relevantly similar.

The validity of that kind of extrapolation becomes more dubious the more remote the connection between the units under comparison. For example, the 9th Division relieved the 6th Division after its victories in Bardia and Tobruk, when the 6th Division was withdrawn to be sent to Greece. It might be tempting to compare the 9th Division with the 6th – after all, both were volunteer Divisions, both travelled to the Middle East, and the achievements of the 9th Division during the siege of Tobruk were among the proudest achievements of the 2nd AIF. Yet it is only necessary to quote the first two sentences of Mark Johnston's *That Magnificent 9th* to understand why it would be problematic to compare the 9th Division with the 6th:-

The origins of what was to become the most famous Australian division in World War II were inauspicious. Not only was it raised when the allied cause was at a low ebb, but also many of the recruits initially assigned to it were not keen to be 9th Division men.³¹²

It was, as Johnston said, a brilliant Division, but the circumstances of its formation, the manner in which it was trained and its first experiences of battle were dramatically different from those of the 6th Division. The decision to raise the 9th Division was not made until September 1940.³¹³ While the 6th Division had the luxury of training for more than a year before going into battle, the 9th Division 'was only partially trained and was very short of equipment'³¹⁴ when it was rushed to the front in the Western Desert in February 1941. To compare the 9th Division with the 6th Division is not a comparison of like with like.

The scope to extend the results of this study to other units by a process of comparison or extrapolation is limited. The experience of the 2/1st Battalion is not a

³¹² Mark Johnston, *That Magnificent 9th : An Illustrated History of the 9th Australian Division, 1940-46* (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 1.

³¹³ Hudson et al., *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49*, 177. Volume IV

³¹⁴ General Wavell's Despatch *Operations in the Middle East from 7th February, 1941 to 15th July 1941*, dated 3 July 1946, paragraph 8.

surrogate for the experience of other units, as the example of the 9th Division demonstrates. The case is *a fortiori* when it comes to comparing the 2/1st Battalion with other units whose connection to the 2/1st Battalion was more tenuous than that of the battalions of the 9th Division. Absent special circumstances, there is no reason in logic to expect that the experience of the men of the original 2/1st Battalion would have any bearing on the experience of men in other units, in other theatres, in other years of the war.

The 2/1st Battalion had a distinctive, identifiable culture. That indicates that other battalions had equally distinctive, identifiable cultures. It suggests diversity, not homogeneity. This study has demonstrated that, when demographic studies of other formations have been available, they were valuable, not because they revealed similarities with the 2/1st Battalion, but because they revealed points of difference. Blair identified religious bias in the 1st Battalion, and proposed that the officers came from more affluent suburbs than the men;³¹⁵ Robson used his sample as a basis to question Bean's bush stereotype;³¹⁶ Ross revealed the strikingly young ages of the 39th and 53rd Battalions;³¹⁷ and Simpson revealed the changing characteristics of British officers over the course of the Great War.³¹⁸ In every case, it was the points of difference that enriched the historiography. These studies substantiate what Stanley suggested – that closer scrutiny of Australian military units would reveal a diversity that historians have tended to ignore.³¹⁹

Studying individual units should be encouraged. With more unit studies, it would be possible, for example, to compare units recruited early in a war with units recruited later; to compare volunteer units with conscript units; to compare units State by State; to compare country units with city units (if units were recruited on a

³¹⁵ Blair, "An Australian 'Officer-Type'? - a Demographic Study of the Composition of Officers in the 1st Battalion, First A.I.F."

³¹⁶ Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–1918: Some Statistical Evidence."

³¹⁷ Ross and Australia. Army., *The Myth of the Digger : The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars*.

³¹⁸ Simpson K, 'The Officers', in: Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms : A Social History of the British Army in the First World War*, 64ff.

³¹⁹ Stanley, "'Our Big World': The Social History of the Light Horse Regiment, 1916 - 1918."

territorial basis), and to compare infantry units with commando units. It is through comparisons of that type that the full potential of unit studies will be realised.³²⁰

Comparisons between units would also cast light on the search for a stereotypical soldier. There are, of course, similarities between the servicemen and women of all wars and all nations. They tend to be young, fit, strong and single. They have in common the initiative to leave home, the courage to fight for their country, and the forbearance to make sacrifices. While the temptation to search for stereotypes among soldiers is understandable, there may be more to be gained from identifying points of difference than from multiplying points of similarity. A stereotype can become a straitjacket. Constructing a stereotype of a British officer in the Great War conceals the fact that British officers serving in the first year of that war shared quite different qualities than did British officers serving in its last year. Constructing a stereotype of a World War II digger conceals the fact diggers who volunteered for overseas service in the 2nd AIF in 1939 shared quite different qualities than did diggers who were conscripted into the militia in 1942.

Reporting evidence, or myth-making?

Myth-makers ask questions about the diggers for different purposes than historians. Myth-makers take past events and mould them into a shape that suits the aspirational goals they seek to create. Historians look at past events and ask: why were they that way? Yet there can be a fine line between describing the culture of a successful Battalion and myth-making. On 4 January 1940, a week before its departure for the Middle East, the 16th Brigade staged a farewell parade through the streets of Sydney. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the parade under the headline, *The AIF Lives Again*:-

³²⁰ The benefits of unit studies have been demonstrated in the United States, where the study of Civil War units is further advanced than the study of Australian military units.

Today [the AIF] lives again. The hundreds of thousands of people who watched in the midsummer heat of Sydney yesterday the march past of 6,000 splendid young Australian soldiers – sturdy and erect in their military bearing, disciplined of ranks, and high-spirited of demeanour – were made thrillingly aware of the rebirth of that grand army whose exploits brought imperishable renown to Australia. These volunteers of the new generation are of the same stock, they marched with the same free swing, and they manifestly comprised the same tough fighting material as went to the making of the First AIF . . .

Whatever charges of indifference to routine discipline were levelled against the old AIF, the fighting quality of its members and their capacity for leadership were universally praised. Their discipline was of the sort which stood the test of battle, and of this fighting tradition the men of the Second AIF are the natural inheritors. They are 'Second' only in the sense that their ranks are being formed long after those of the old army have dissolved. Neither their spirit nor their achievements, we may be sure, will be inferior . . . They did credit to themselves and their officers, and wherever they may go and whatever stern trials may await them they will of a certainty do honour to the land that bred them.³²¹

The *Herald* report touched on many of the shared qualities identified in this study, but with an unmistakeable eye towards establishing a mythology for the 2nd AIF that took up where the mythology of the 1st AIF left off. Had the reporter seen in the parade signs of the emerging culture of the 16th Brigade, or was he creating a myth?

Many factors were combining to create the culture of the original 2/1st Battalion - among them, the shared qualities of the men, their shared experience of military training and discipline, the parade, the cheers of the crowd, the newspaper report and the impending sea voyage. To these would be added the shared experiences of training in Palestine and Egypt, of battles in the Western Dessert, of the campaign in Greece, and, finally the exhilaration of the victory on Crete, followed so soon after by the disappointment of capture.

The line between reporting evidence and myth-making is finer when the unit in question has enjoyed success in the field. The original 2/1st Battalion did enjoy

³²¹ "The A.I.F. Lives Again," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, no. 5 January 1940.

success in the field, at Bardia and Tobruk, at least – it may take the eye of an optimist to count the battle of Retimo as a victory when it resulted in the capture of the entire Battalion!³²² Yet Retimo says a lot about culture. It demonstrates that a unit with a strong culture may nevertheless suffer defeat, or, to put it another way, that an infusion of Anzac spirit, as powerful as it may be, is no guarantee of victory.³²³ Equally, the fact that the original 2/1st Battalion could regroup on Crete after the retreat on mainland Greece and meet and defeat a German parachute regiment is a testament to the strength of its culture. In that sense, what social military historians call culture may be equated with what soldiers call morale.

On Anzac Day 2005, the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote that:-

Anzac Day is a crucible of shared sentiments, it is about the values that Australians would want to exhibit in adversity and about aspirations they hold for their peace and their freedom.³²⁴

This was part of the mythologising of Anzac, it is true, but it was more about hopes for the future than about commemoration of the past. It was hardly distorting history – it had very little to do with history. It was aimed at framing national identity.

Historians are engaged on quite a different exercise than myth-makers. This study sought to answer the historian's question: what kind of men were the diggers? It aimed to answer the question by evaluating evidence. The thesis was that, if the historian's answer does not rest on evidence, it is nothing more than myth-making. The study did not aim to add to the mythologising of Anzac, or to curtail it. It aimed to present evidence about a small group of diggers. It did not attempt to portray them as heroes, but as common men, hoping to explain what kind of men they really were.

³²² Actually, two Battalions. The 2/11th Battalion shared the fate of the 2/1st at Retimo.

³²³ The point is made powerfully in the context of the victory at Bardia in Part Three of: Stockings, *Bardia : Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac*.

³²⁴ Quoted in: Lake et al., *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, 95.

Chronology

| Date | Event |
|-------------------|--|
| 1 January 1901 | Australian Federation. |
| 18 October 1912 | Italy takes control of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica on execution of the First Treaty of Lausanne, ending the Italo-Turkish War. |
| 4 August 1914 | Start of the Great War. |
| 11 November 1918 | Armistice Day. |
| 28 June 1919 | Germany signs the Treaty of Versailles. |
| 29 October 1922 | Mussolini forms government in Italy with Mussolini as Prime Minister. |
| 8 November 1932 | Roosevelt becomes President of the United States. |
| 30 January 1933 | Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany. |
| 19 August 1934 | Hitler becomes <i>Führer</i> of Germany on the death of von Hindenburg. |
| 16 March 1935 | Hitler orders rearmament. |
| 3 October 1935 | Italy invades Ethiopia (Abyssinia). |
| 7 March 1936 | German troops occupy the Rhineland. |
| 9 May 1936 | Italy annexes Ethiopia (Abyssinia). |
| 28 May 1937 | Chamberlain becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain. |
| 6 November 1937 | Italy signs the Anti-Comintern Pact. |
| 12 March 1938 | German <i>Anschluss</i> with Austria. |
| 30 September 1938 | Munich Agreement: claiming he has secured 'peace in our time', Chamberlain clears the way for Germany to occupy the Sudetenland. |
| 15 October 1938 | Germany occupies the Sudetenland. Czech government resigns. |
| 15 March 1939 | Germany invades Czechoslovakia. |
| 31 March 1939 | Britain and France guarantee the security of Poland. |

| Date | Event |
|-------------------|---|
| 7 April 1939 | Italy invades Albania. Australian Prime Minister Lyons dies in office. |
| 13 April 1939 | Britain guarantees the independence and territorial integrity of Greece and Romania. |
| 26 April 1939 | Menzies becomes Prime Minister of Australia. |
| 28 April 1939 | Hitler repudiates the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. |
| 12 May 1939 | Britain and Turkey issue a Joint Declaration. In the event of war in the Mediterranean, they will assist one another. |
| 22 May 1939 | Germany and Italy sign the 'Pact of Steel'. |
| 24 June 1939 | France and Turkey issue a Joint Declaration. In the event of war in the Mediterranean, they will assist one another. |
| 23 August 1939 | Germany and Russia sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. |
| 1 September 1939 | Germany invades Poland. |
| 3 September 1939 | Britain and France declare war on Germany. Australia and New Zealand follow suit. |
| 5 September 1939 | The United States proclaims its neutrality. |
| 6 September 1939 | South Africa declares war on Germany. |
| 10 September 1939 | Canada declares war on Germany. |
| 15 September 1939 | Menzies announces decision to raise an expeditionary force. |
| 17 September 1939 | Russia invades Poland. |
| 29 September 1939 | Germany and Russia agree to partition Poland. |
| 6 October 1939 | First member of the 2/1 st Battalion enlists. |
| 12 October 1939 | Governor General proclaims the formation of the 2 nd AIF. |
| 16 October 1939 | 2/1 st Battalion formed at Victoria Barracks, Sydney. |
| 19 October 1939 | Britain, France and Turkey sign 15 year treaty of mutual assistance. |
| 4 January 1940 | 16 th Brigade marches through the streets of Sydney. |
| 9 January 1940 | First contingent of the 2 nd AIF leaves Sydney. |

| Date | Event |
|--------------------|---|
| 12 February 1940 | First contingent of the 2 nd AIF arrives in the Middle East. Trains in Palestine. |
| 28 March 1940 | France and Britain agree not to sue for peace separately of one another. |
| 9 April 1940 | Germany invades Denmark and Norway. |
| 14 – 15 April 1940 | Second contingent of the 2 nd AIF leaves Melbourne. |
| 10 May 1940 | Germany invades Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. Churchill replaces Chamberlain as British Prime Minister and forms unity government. |
| 15 May 1940 | Holland surrenders to the Germans. |
| 26 May 1940 | Evacuation from Dunkirk begins. |
| 28 May 1940 | Belgium surrenders to the Germans. |
| 4 June 1940 | Evacuation from Dunkirk ends. |
| 10 June 1940 | Italy declares war on Britain and France. |
| 22 June 1940 | France surrenders to the Germans. |
| 4 July 1940 | Italy invades British Somaliland. |
| 10 July 1940 | The Battle of Britain begins. |
| 16 July 1940 | Hitler issues War Directive No 16 ordering the Army to prepare Operation Sea-Lion – the invasion of England. |
| 31 July 1940 | Hitler sets an agenda for the invasion of Russia in May 1941. |
| 1 August 1940 | Hitler fixes 15 September 1940 as the date for the invasion of England. |
| 4 August 1940 | Italy completes the occupation of British Somaliland. |
| 20 August 1940 | Italy announces blockade of British Mediterranean and African possessions. |
| 2 September 1940 | 16 th Brigade moves from Palestine to Helwan, Egypt, near Cairo. |
| 3 September 1940 | Hitler postpones the invasion of England from 15 September 1940 to 21 September 1940. |
| 13 September 1940 | Italy invades Egypt. |
| 17 September 1940 | Hitler postpones invasion of England indefinitely. |

| Date | Event |
|-------------------|---|
| 17 September 1940 | Italy takes Sidi Barrani. |
| 26 September 1940 | 16 th Brigade moves from Helwan to Ikingi Maryut, Egypt, near Alexandria. |
| 7 October 1940 | Germany occupies Romania. |
| 12 October 1940 | Germany cancels its plan to invade Britain. |
| 19 October 1940 | 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th reinforcements join the 2/1 st Battalion in Egypt. |
| 28 October 1940 | Italy invades Greece. |
| 29 October 1940 | British troops land in Crete. |
| November 1940 | Hungary and Romania join the Axis powers. |
| 5 November 1940 | Roosevelt re-elected President of the United States. |
| 12 November 1940 | Hitler issues War Directive No 18 ordering the Army to prepare to assist the Italians in North Africa and to occupy the northern part of the Greek mainland. |
| 14 November 1940 | Greek counter-attack drives the Italians back into Albania. |
| 24 November 1940 | Hungary, Romania and Slovakia join the Tripartite Pact. |
| 9 December 1940 | The Battle of Sidi Barrani begins. |
| 12 December 1940 | The British take Sidi Barrani, Buqbuq and Sollum. |
| 12 December 1940 | 16 th Brigade moves from Ikingi Maryut to Maaten Bagush, near Sidi Barrani. |
| 13 December 1940 | Hitler issues War Directive No 20 ordering the Army to prepare Undertaking Marita - the invasion of mainland Greece. |
| 18 December 1940 | Hitler orders planning for the attack on Russia to begin. 16 th Brigade moves to Sollum. |
| 20 December 1940 | 16 th Brigade crosses border into Libya. |
| 3-5 January 1941 | Battle of Bardia. |
| 9 January 1941 | Hitler orders the Army to discontinue preparations to invade England. |
| 11 January 1941 | Hitler issues War Directive No 22 ordering the Army to assist the Italians in Tripolitania and Albania, and with air operations from Sicily and Tripolitania. |

| Date | Event |
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| 21-22 January 1941 | Battle of Tobruk. |
| 29 January 1941 | General Metaxas, the Greek Prime Minister, dies. Alexandros Kozyris succeeds him as Prime Minister. |
| 30 January 1941 | Derna falls. |
| 6 February 1941 | Benghazi falls. |
| 8 February 1941 | First German transports leave Naples for North Africa. |
| 8 February 1941 | British take El Agheila. |
| 12 February 1941 | Rommel arrives in North Africa. |
| 13 February 1941 | Menzies meets Wavell, who is contemplating the Greek adventure. |
| 14 February 1941 | First Afrika Corps troops arrive in North Africa. |
| 24 February 1941 | War Cabinet approves in principle sending troops to Greece, subject to the concurrence of the Australian and New Zealand Cabinets. |
| 26 February 1941 | Australian Cabinet agrees to send troops to Greece. |
| 1 March 1941 | German troops enter Bulgaria, welcomed by the Bulgarians. |
| 7 March 1941 | The War Cabinet confirms the plan to support the Greeks. First British troops disembark at the Piraeus. 2/1 st Battalion moves from Tobruk to Mersa Matruh. |
| 10 March 1941 | The Australian Cabinet approves the Greek adventure. |
| 15 March 1941 | 2/1 st Battalion moves from Mersa Matruh to Ikingi Maryut. |
| 18 March 1941 | 2/1 st Battalion embarks from Alexandria for Greece. |
| 21 March 1941 | Australians take Giarabub. |
| 22 March 1941 | 2/1 st Battalion arrives in Athens. |
| 24 March 1941 | Rommel attacks El Agheila, taking the fort, water points and airfield. |
| 26 March 1941 | <i>Coup d'état</i> in Yugoslavia by ministers opposed to the Axis powers. |
| 27 March 1941 | Hitler issues War Directive No 25 initiating the invasion of Yugoslavia and activating Operation Marita - the invasion of Greece (but limited to the |

| Date | Event |
|---------------|--|
| | Salonika basin and the Edessa Heights). |
| 31 March 1941 | Germans advance east from El Agheila. |
| 3 April 1941 | Germans re-take Benghazi. |
| 4 April 1941 | Hitler issues War Directive No 27 for the invasion of the remainder of mainland Greece. |
| 5 April 1941 | 2/1 st Battalion moves to Veria Pass, northern Greece. |
| 6 April 1941 | Germany invades Greece and Yugoslavia. Germans re-take Derna. Germans capture Generals Neame and O'Connor. |
| 8 April 1941 | Lavarack takes command of the Tobruk fortress. |
| 9 April 1941 | Lt-Colonel Campbell takes command of the 2/1 st Battalion. |
| 11 April 1941 | Germans lay siege to Tobruk, with the Australian 7 th and 9 th Divisions helping hold the port against German and Italian troops. |
| 12 April 1941 | Germans re-take Bardia. |
| 13 April 1941 | Germans re-take Sollum. |
| 14 April 1941 | The British win the Easter Battle at Tobruk. General Morshead succeeds to the command of the Tobruk fortress. |
| 17 April 1941 | Yugoslavia capitulates. 2/1 st Battalion withdraws to Larissa. |
| 18 April 1941 | Alexandros Koryzis, Greek Prime Minister, commits suicide. |
| 22 April 1941 | The Australians and New Zealanders to begin leaving the Greek mainland. |
| 23 April 1941 | 2/1 st Battalion acts as rear guard at the Brallos Pass. |
| 25 April 1941 | Hitler issues War Directive No 27 for Undertaking Merkur - the invasion of Crete. <i>HMS Wryneck</i> evacuates the main part of the 2/1 st Battalion from Greece to Crete. |
| 30 April 1941 | Greece surrenders to Germany. 2/1 st Battalion takes up position at Retimo. |
| 2 May 1941 | Completion of the evacuation of Greece. |
| 20 May 1941 | Battle of Crete begins. |

| Date | Event |
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| 22 May 1941 | RAF withdraws from Crete. |
| 30 May 1941 | Resistance on Crete ends. Lt-Colonel Campbell leads the surrender of the 2/1 st Battalion. |
| 1 June 1941 | Britain abandons the embarkation from Crete. |
| 21 June 1941 | Churchill replaces Wavell. |

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