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Return to Gallipoli

Every year tens of thousands of Australians make their pilgrimages to Gallipoli, France and other killing fields of the Great War. It is a journey steeped in history. Some go in search of family memory, seeking the grave of a soldier lost a lifetime ago. For others, Anzac pilgrimage has become a rite of passage, a statement of what it means to be Australian.

This book explores the memory of the Great War through the historical experience of pilgrimage. It examines the significance these 'sacred sites' have acquired in the hearts and minds of successive generations, and charts the complex responses of young and old, soldier and civilian, the pilgrims of the 1920s and today's backpacker travellers. This book gives voice to history, retrieving a bitter-sweet testimony through interviews, surveys and a rich archival record. Innovative, courageous and often deeply moving, it explains why the Anzac legend still captivates Australians.

'A personal and scholarly account from an accomplished historian. I read this book with pleasure and admiration' – Professor Ken Inglis (Emeritus Professor, Australian National University).

Bruce Scates is an Associate Professor in the School of History, University of New South Wales. He has published in leading international journals and is the author and co-author of three previous Cambridge titles, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic*; *Women at Work in Australia's Cities and Towns* (with Rae Frances); and *Women and the Great War* (also with Rae Frances). All of these books won critical acclaim and the last won the coveted New South Wales Premier's History Award.

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For Rae, Bill and Alex – at journey's beginning and end.

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Note on Money, Measurement and Terminology

In keeping with the period I have generally retained imperial units of measurement. To avoid anachronism, metric measures are used in any discussion of the late twentieth century.

Money

Australia used pounds, shillings and pence for much of the period covered by this book. It is impossible to give a modern equivalent of a 1920 pound (£), but in the interwar period an unskilled white male worker might earn as little as £2 2s. a week while a doctor might have made as much as £500 a year. There were 12 pennies (d.) in one shilling (s.) and 20 shillings in one pound (£). A guinea was £1 1s. When Australia adopted decimal currency in 1966, $2 was equal to about £1.

Measurement

The relevant metric equivalents to imperial measures are as follows:

1 inch = 25.4 mm
1 foot = 0.3048 m
1 yard = 0.914 m
1 mile = 1.61 km
1 acre = 0.405 ha
1 pound = 0.4536 kg
1 stone = 6.35 kg
1 ton = 1.016 t

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Terminology

Anzac was originally the acronym of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps but it also came to represent a place (the site where Australian and New Zealand troops landed at Gallipoli), a group of servicemen (initially those who served in the campaign) and a mythology or legend. In each case, the meaning of Anzac is contextualised by the narrative to follow. Similarly the Returned Services League (RSL) was first formed in 1916 under the title Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, to which the word 'Airmen's' was added after World War Two. To avoid confusion I have generally referred to the RSL but noted its imperial antecedents (and competing organisations for officers) in the interwar period. By the same token, the Australian War Museum is referred to by the current name of the Australian War Memorial.

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Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANU	Australian National University
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AOT	Archives Office of Tasmania
AWM	Australian War Memorial
Batt	Battalion
Capt	Captain
CMG	Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George
Cpl	Corporal
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
DHS	Department of Human Services
Drv	Driver
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
Fl Lt	Flight Lieutenant
Gnr	Gunner
HMAS	His/Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HMS	His/Her Majesty's Ship
IWGC	Imperial War Graves Commission
IWM	Imperial War Museum
Lt	Lieutenant
MC	Military Cross
ML	Mitchell Library
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NHTP	No Home Town Provided
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
NSWSR	New South Wales State Records
NT	Northern Territory

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POW	Prisoner of War
PRO	Public Records Office
Pte	Private
Q	Questionnaire completed by
Qld	Queensland
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RCWMF	Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files
Rev.	Reverend
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RN	Royal Navy
RSL	Returned Services League
RSSILA	Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia
SA	South Australia
SAS	Special Air Service
Sgt	Sergeant
Tas.	Tasmania
Tpr	Trooper
UNSW	University of New South Wales
VC	Victoria Cross
Vic.	Victoria
VPRO	Victorian Public Records Office
WA	Western Australia
WGRU	War Graves Registration Unit
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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Acknowledgments

This book began ten years ago, in a corner of Northern France that swallowed up a generation. It was my first visit to Europe and my first pilgrimage to a war cemetery. Commissioned by Cambridge University Press to write a book on women's experience of the Great War, I was gathering soldiers' epitaphs: bitter-sweet words of farewell that promised some insight into largely hidden worlds of loss and mourning. I travelled with my partner and co-author, Rae Frances. Without even knowing it we were following a trail blazed by four generations of Australians. The cemeteries of the Somme were windswept and lonely. Yet everywhere we looked, our countrymen and women had left their messages: poppies, photographs, poetry and heartfelt dedications scratched deep in cemetery visitors' books. One pilgrim to Adelaide Cemetery had laid a sprig of wattle by the grave of an unknown, tiny Australian flags were pinned to panels of the missing at Villers-Bretonneux. It did not take long to realise that this was a place of pilgrimage, a site of memory still revered, still honoured, still tended. I wondered how many Australians had made this long journey; how one generation of pilgrims must have differed from another. And I wondered at the thousands more who could never afford to go there, whose loved ones were never laid to rest, whose grief was long, bitter, suspended.

In the ten years I have taken to write this book, I have accrued a great many debts. Recovering the history of Australian pilgrimage led me first to England, the principal destination of four generations of pilgrims. I thank Shirley Hancock, Maria Choules and the staff of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Maidenhead, Richard Davies and his colleagues in the Leeds University Library, the ever efficient and exceedingly polite staff of the Public Records Office, the British Library and the Imperial War Museum. Through a combination of leave, conference travel and an ARC Discovery Grant, I was able to visit war graves in Turkey, France, Belgium, Egypt, Malta and England. Each yielded their rich store of visitors' names and addresses, each provided an opportunity to gather more informants for my survey. Like pilgrims before me, I was aided by the staff of Australia House and the many dispersed offices of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The latter is charged in perpetuity with the care of Australian war graves but

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they also care for the many pilgrims that make their faltering way through history.

My Australian research was made possible by a host of libraries and archives. I warmly acknowledge the support of the Mitchell, La Trobe, Oxley, Battye and National Libraries and thank the UNSW library for access to fragile bound newspapers. I am equally indebted to the Victorian, NSW, South Australian and Tasmanian State Archives, various state health authorities (for the release of asylum records) and the Australian Archives offices in both Canberra and Melbourne. Many key sources for this study, including Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files and AIF Service Dossiers, had been withdrawn for digitalisation. Special thanks are due for special conditions of access, particularly to Paul Daglish of Australian Archives and Ann Marie Condé, Robyn van Dyke, Margaret Lewis and Kerrie Leach in the Australian War Memorial. Thanks are also due to the RSL for permission to use their invaluable collection. I have tried not to forget the New Zealand dimension of Anzac Pilgrimage, though I strongly believe only a separate history could do justice to this experience. I thank the staff of the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Auckland War Memorial and the Kippenberger Military Archive and Research Library for assisting this trans-Tasman project and Peter Dean for his assistance in accessing the same.

Histories are never written alone and a host of valued colleagues have offered advice, archival tips and encouragement. I acknowledge the fellowship of Joan Beaumont, Peter Cochrane, Martin Crotty, Graeme Davison, Joy Damousi, Peter Dennis, Lynne Dore, Stephen Garton, David Horner, Ian Kelly, Kevin Fewster, Bill Gammage, Paula Hamilton, Grace Karskens, Bev Kingston, John Lack, Mandy Leverett, Megan Martin, Karma McClean, Michael McKernan, John McQuilton, Hank Nelson, Bobbie Oliver, Melanie Oppenheimer, Naomi Parry, Michael Pearson, Robin Prior, Marian Quartly, Peter Read, Jill Roe, Peter Schrijvers, Peter Stanley, Lucy Taksa, Geoff Treloar, Julie Wells, Brad West, Richard White and Bart Ziino. Ken Inglis has been an endless source of inspiration and Rae Frances a tireless source of strength and guidance.

A transnational project such as this is bound to attract a number of overseas collaborators, Jay Winter (who now works on both sides of the Atlantic), Annette Becker (University of Lille), James Marten (New York University), Ana Carden Coyne (Imperial War Museum), Kenin Celik (Onsekiz Mart Çelik Universitesi) and my Kiwi colleague Jock Philips have all proved invaluable informants. I also thank Mehmet, Karina, Tomar and Mevlana Adil (who always reminded me of the Turkish view of Gallipoli) and Yves Fohlen (historian and custodian of Australia's war graves on the Somme).

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Over 700 Australians (and quite a few New Zealanders) responded to my pilgrimage survey. Their testimony was moving, thoughtful and generous beyond all my expectations. Constraints of space and, of course, issues of privacy prevent me from 'identifying' particular individuals. I can name (and thank) a number of my fellow travellers: Linda Boyle, Bob Shaw and Roz and Michael Goodwin (from North Mackay State High School), Ashley Ekins and Graeme Beveridge (from the Australian War Memorial); Richard Reid (Department of Veterans' Affairs), Toby Fleming, Sharona Coutts, Troy Henderson and their remarkable young companions. A national teaching award (shared with Rae Frances) enabled us to take a party of students to Gallipoli in April 2004. I thank Scott Cummin, Peter Dean, Alana Fagan, Colline Green, Greg Holden, Kirstin Hunter, Phil Ioannou, Alexandra McCosker and James Parfitt for all the things they taught their teacher.

Historians are accustomed to working in archives but creating an archive has posed an entirely different kind of challenge. I am particularly grateful to Kate Deverall, Louise Fraser, Tina Donaghy and Belinda Saunders who undertook the enormous task of cataloguing and transcription. Their labour will make the work of future historians so much easier. At the request of my respondents the Pilgrimage Archive will be lodged with the Australian War Memorial on the ninetieth anniversary of the Armistice. Until then, scholars are welcome to consult these records in the School of History at the University of New South Wales.

On that note, I thank my colleagues at UNSW who provided so congenial a working environment for this project and my amiable associates in the History Council of NSW. I am also indebted to my funding bodies, the Australian War Memorial, the Commemorations Branch at the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Army History Unit and the Australian Research Council. I was honoured to receive the New South Wales History Fellowship to research the life of Dr Mary Booth, one of the founders of Anzac pilgrimage.

Some of my closest colleagues were the research assistants employed on this project. Belinda Saunders undertook important archival research in addition to (too many) hours of transcription; Andrew Lord helped with the complex processing of Insane Asylum records, Peter Dean and Tina Donaghy were always dedicated and resourceful. None of this work would have amounted to anything were it not for the support of my publisher. Special thanks are due to Kim Armitage, Sally Chick, Karen Hildebrandt, Susan Keogh and Glen Sheldon at Cambridge, two anonymous and perceptive readers of the manuscript and Lee White, an extremely able and ever patient copy editor.

What this book argues is that pilgrimage is as much about family as it is about nations. My grandfather fought in both Gallipoli and France. He

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never spoke of his experiences, though his diary (kept at Quinn's) and a hacking cough I still remember seem eloquent enough testimony to war's brutal waste. He taught me the futility of Gallipoli long before I went there. My own family, Rae, Bill and Alex, were and are the best companions any travelling historian could ask for. I thank them for bringing me safely home.

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Introduction: journeys into history

On the eightieth anniversary of the Anzac landing, Jenny made her way to Gallipoli. It was the first of two such 'pilgrimages', journeys that would take her from 'the awfulness and beauty' of tiny graveyards in the gullies of the Gallipoli Peninsula to the 'huge cemeteries' that sprawl across Flanders. Prior to leaving Australia, Jenny had often attended Anzac Day services. They were 'small suburban events' and try as she might she 'did not find them very inspiring'. But Anzac Day at Anzac Cove was another matter entirely:

> We arrived about 4 am in the dark and the lapping of the waves sent shivers up one's spine. The crowd was noisy until the ceremony commenced [then we were all swallowed up by the silence]. I cried when the last post sounded, as did several of my . . . friends. To be at Anzac Cove at dawn on the 25th of April is one of the most moving experiences . . . We . . . stood there looking out to sea and you could almost hear the sound of battle.[1]

Well into her sixties, Jenny had read and travelled widely but 'nothing prepared [her] for the sheer awfulness of the landscape'. Nor was she prepared for 'the terrible sacrifice' entombed in Gallipoli's cemeteries: 'to walk along and read the names and inscriptions and ages of the soldier makes one feel so sad'. Jenny stood in the graveyards overlooking the bright blue Aegean and wondered how grieving mothers 'could justify the loss of their sons in far away countries'. At Quinn's Post, she found the grave of her own cousin; just a file from the archives before but now a real person, a relative, a loved one. 'I heard the "ghosts that march up and down the Gullies", [she told me]. I can still hear them'. Gallipoli, and then the Western Front, provoked a bewildering spectrum of emotion: 'pride' in her countrymen's 'bravery' and 'sacrifice' and 'anger at the waste of these soldiers'. She returned home appalled by the 'futility' of war, knowing thousands had died 'for what is now a piece of farmland'. And yet she had a memory of immeasurable value: 'no one who has stood at Gallipoli or seen the huge cemeteries in Flanders can fail to be inspired'. Jenny described her pilgrimage as a life-changing experience. Visiting the cemeteries of the Great War had 'opened a flood gate which has not abated', a powerful surge of

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history, memory and emotion. By journey's end, Jenny saw herself and others differently: at Gallipoli and on the Western Front 'no one feels ashamed at the tears'.[2]

Anzac pilgrimage

Jenny's experience is typical of many. At a time when it has become fashionable to forecast the demise of history, pilgrimages to the cemeteries of the Great War continue to grow in size and number. Every year thousands gather, as Jenny did, for the dawn service at Gallipoli; comparable numbers visit the Western Front annually. Such pilgrimages have been made possible by the explosion of modern tourism. Cheap airfares have shortened the distance between Europe and Australia and a visit to Australian war graves is now marketed as part of a recognised tourist itinerary. Travellers to Gallipoli drink at the Vegemite Bar at Eceabat, an Australian tour of the Somme takes luncheon at the Café Canberra or the Restaurant Le Kangaroo, backpacker hostels and 'Hotel Anzacs' mark a well-trod pilgrimage route through Europe. Of course, the distinction between travel, tourism and pilgrimage is bound to be 'slippery' and scholars have long debated the difference.[3] But travellers like Jenny are anxious to demarcate the time spent in 'pilgrimage' from other aspects of their journey. Visiting the graveyards of the Great War was not a matter of mere sightseeing. It was a journey to what many call 'a sacred place' and, as Jenny's experience suggests, involved an emotional ordeal that led ultimately to personal enrichment. Indeed, the emotional structure of Jenny's visit, charted so carefully in her response to the survey, exposes the common denominators of all pilgrimages, be they religious or secular. There is a sense of a 'quest', a journey 'out of the normal parameters of life [and] entry into a different other world', a visit to a landscape saturated with meaning, and a return home to an everyday world, exhausted but renewed by the experience.[4]

It is also a journey steeped in history, a reckoning with memory. Gallipoli marked for Jenny 'the making of a nation', in its tangled gullies and plunging ravines she sensed the stuff of legends. It was also the site where her cousin was buried, a place grieving family members had long imagined, mourned, remembered. Jenny's personal pilgrimage intersected with this larger public narrative of war; the Peninsula became a 'storied place', a family's unresolved grief enmeshed with the heroic saga of the 'landing'. And at another and perhaps more immediate level, Jenny was also 'walking history'. Her journey was part of a long tradition of Australian pilgrimage, a tradition curiously overlooked in all the history books she had read. From the

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moment the Great War ended, Australians had set forth to walk these foreign fields, to visit the distant lands that claimed the lives and bodies of their kinsmen.[5]

This book sets out to recover that forgotten history. In doing so it straddles the experience of four generations of travellers. It begins with the tragic story of the bereaved: mothers, fathers, wives, children who searched (often in vain) for the graves of their loved ones. And it ends with the modern-day odyssey of backpacker journeys to Gallipoli; a pilgrimage less to do with personal loss than the wanderlust of the young and an irrepressible desire to find the 'birthplace' of a nation. Such a history steps beyond the comfortable confines of the archives. This book owes as much to surveys, interviews and e-mail exchanges as it does to the neatly catalogued papers of library collections. It reaches out to those the conventional historical narrative so often excludes and invites them to tell the tale of their travels. Many (like Jenny) wrote with astonishing intimacy, as if there was a need to lay a memory to rest, as if telling her story might help to understand it. In all some 700 Anzac pilgrims were surveyed, young and old, from the bush and the city, as diverse in their politics as their occupations. In each and every case, I listened carefully, mindful that history is far too important a thing to be left in the hands of historians.

These travellers' narratives were the last step of a long journey: they wound their way through the landmarks of memory. Many of my respondents 'digressed' from the subjects set down for them – World War Two, Korea and Vietnam veterans read the Great War through the prism of their own experience; those who'd lost loved ones projected their grief on a previous generation; a good few railed at what they called 'politically correct questions' 'driven' by historians professionally disposed to be 'opinion makers'. These interventions have been at once disturbing and challenging: disruptive and enlarging, they made this book an act of collaboration and they stand witness to the power and poignancy of history.[6]

Stories as personal as these go well beyond flimsy speculation on the reason for Anzac Day's revival. In a ponderously secular society, we find a 'hunger for meaning', a craving for ritual, a search for transcendence very much at odds with the materialism of our age. In this increasingly globalised world, Anzac pilgrimage suggests a resurgence of national identity; paradoxically it teaches us of the folly of empires and the human cost of war. Finally, and most importantly, these journeys into history remind us of the persistent presence of the past. Gallipoli's shadow did not just fall on the generation who lost their loved ones. The grieving did not end with the deaths of those it most affected.[7] Some ninety years after the landing, Australians still seek out the graves of their countrymen,

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travelling (for most part with friends and family) to the killing fields of Europe.

I write this book with a great sense of urgency. No one recorded the testimony of the generation who raised Australia's war memorials in the 1920s and 1930s; I have retrieved their frail voices through newspaper reports, Red Cross files and long-forgotten correspondence with the military authorities. Today we are in danger of losing just as precious a record. It is not just that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission routinely destroys most of the cemetery visitors' books. Time is also against us. The children, nieces and nephews of men and women who were killed, those who grew up with the stories and the memory of them, are mostly now well into their seventies, eighties and nineties. Not to capture the memories of this generation is to lose part of our past, a keystone of a nation's collective memory. And not to compare their testimony with the responses of younger Australians, or investigate differences of gender, class and ethnicity, seems equally remiss. A cultural history of Australian pilgrimages to 'these distant hallowed places' offers a chance to reconstruct and understand what Jay Winter has called 'the languages of mourning'. It opens a window into a nation's enduring grief.[8]

A traveller's history

A possible subtitle of this book was 'A Traveller's History'. This involved much more than a historian's abstract interest in tourism and pilgrimage. It suggested a kind of guidebook. How had generations of Australians responded as they walked the cemeteries of the Great War? What routes had they followed, where had their journeys taken them? This book remains that 'traveller's history'. It begins with two chapters on the making of memory. As Jenny acknowledged that morning at Gallipoli, the vast majority of loved ones could never lay their sons to rest, they could never afford to make the journey. But they could imagine it. The first chapter looks at what might well be called surrogate journeys, elaborate attempts by loved ones to visualise a soldier's death, imagine his distant grave and send some 'final' message. A generation of grieving families offered up their own memorials: epitaphs, obituaries, monuments of stone and prayers to a dead man's memory. In households across Australia, fragile 'shrines' were fashioned from letters, photographs and the battered belongings of the dead. These became the pathway of a difficult, incomplete and ultimately imaginary journey. Retracing each faltering step, we relive the tragedy of a family's loss. The second chapter deals with the actual making of the Great War cemeteries.

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'No one who has seen the huge cemeteries of Flanders can fail to be inspired', Jenny wrote. But soldier's graves were not always so impressive; in the barren landscape of war comrades and mates covered the dead over as best they could. How and why did these scattered graveyards grow to the 'silent cities' that sprawl to this day across France and Belgium? Were the men buried there honoured equally or did the old equalities of rank, class and privilege prevail even unto death? The cemeteries of the Great War have been described as 'sites of memory', can we, in visiting them, 'hear' a mother weep?

It is often said that Australians discovered their nationhood on the killing fields of Gallipoli. This book takes that argument one step further, exploring the tensions between imperial loyalties and nationalist sentiments which shaped the Great War's cemeteries and memorials. Gallipoli's graveyards remain to this day a compelling statement of what it meant (and means) to be Australian. Here the men who followed the British into battle boldly took issue with the way the Empire would remember its dead.

Journeys are as much about travellers as they are about destinations. Chapters three and four focus on family journeys, the travellers of the 1920s and 1930s, who actually lost loved ones to war, are compared to those who leave Australia today in search of a name, a memory, a family memorial. What do these journeys have in common and how do they differ? Why does one generation follow in the footsteps of another and take up the 'unfinished business' of grieving the long-lost dead, in what ways and for what reasons do Australians seek some 'sense of connectedness' to their past? It is often argued that commemoration in the postwar period served a conservative political purpose; the quiet white stone of cemeteries sanitised the sordid business of killing, forgetting (at the very moment that they remembered) the dead. We need to test these arguments through the experience and attitudes of actual pilgrims. And we must wonder what relevance they have to a more recent generation of travellers. In a world still divided by prejudice and conflict, walking the graveyards of France or Gallipoli surely demonstrates the futility of fighting; row after row of butchered youth, German, British, Turkish, Australian, cry out at war's human cost.[9] Chapters five and six view the cemeteries of the Great War through the eyes of those who have seen (or prepared for) battle: diggers retracing their former trench lines and more recent (and in many ways more problematic) journeys by current and former servicemen and women. What does a Vietnam veteran make of the silent fields of the Somme? How does a nurse who lost her closest friends in Japanese prisoner of war camps respond to this stark and unrelenting waste? Why did survivors of the carnage at Pozières or Lone Pine long to return there? These 'soldier's stories' are spoken with a terrible clarity; they

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remind us of the vulnerability of men and women who live to this day with the death of their mates. Chapters seven and eight voice what I've called a testament of youth: senior schoolchildren 'walking with history' on an excursion across Australian battlefields, flag-clad backpackers rambling the ridges of Gallipoli determined to touch and feel their past. Here again the project turns to themes Jenny's survey response recounted; a sense of the sacred rediscovered in the feeble light of the dawn service, a patriotic fervour stilled by the terrible silence of Anzac's massed graves. In each of these chapters history is set on a kind of continuum, the archival testimony of the 1920s and 1930s resonates in actual voices spoken in our own age.[10]

Part of the uniqueness of this project is that it is a participant history. Over the last ten years I have been privileged to travel with families and backpackers, soldiers and schoolchildren, recording, observing and (as Jenny aptly put it) sharing the experience of pilgrimage. She described her travels as 'deeply emotional', inspiring, humbling, and very often disturbing. I am inclined to think of my own journey across the killing fields as well as through the archives, in much the same way.

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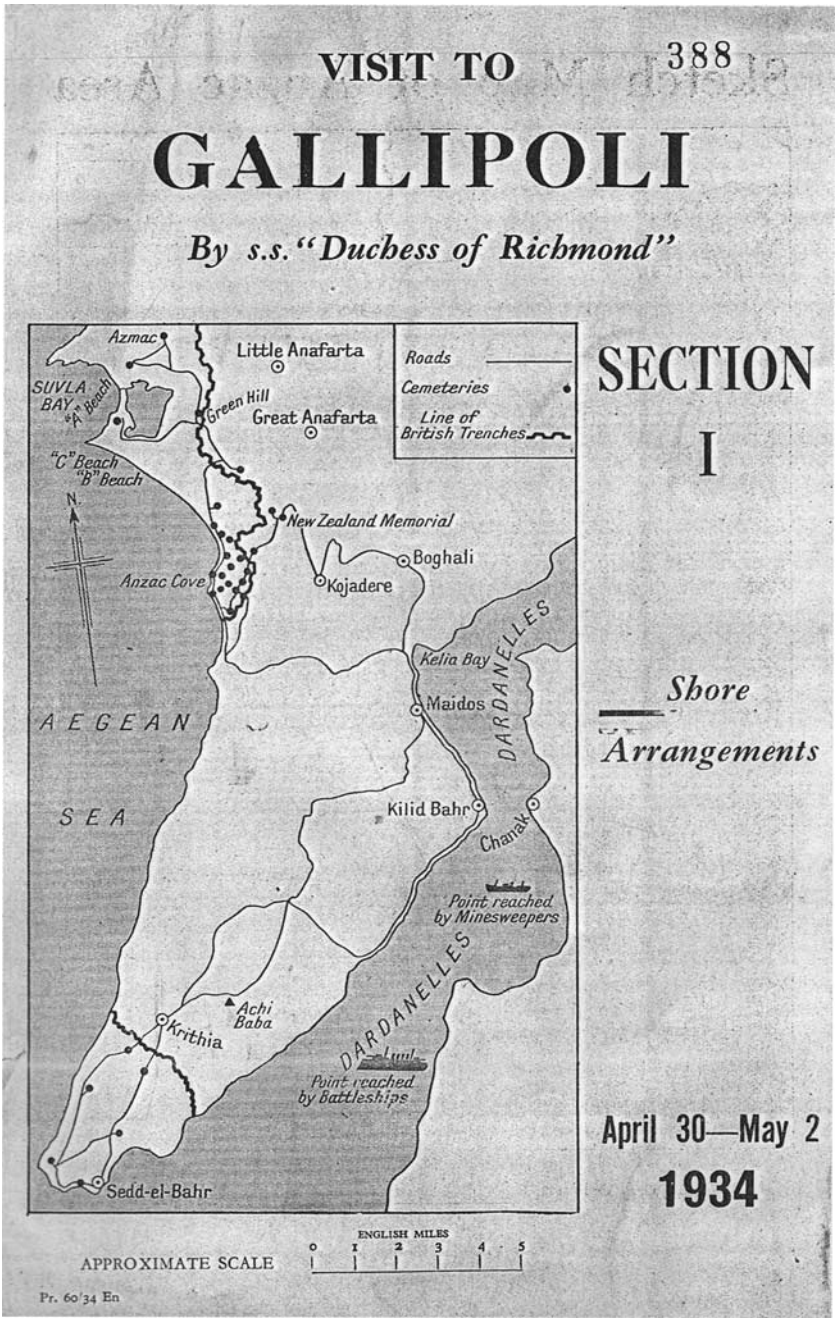

'bound for Gallipoli': map of the Peninsula issued to pilgrims on the Duchess of Richmond. *Under the Treaty of Lausanne, the Allies were granted ownership of the entire area known as Anzac. Its battlefields and cemeteries were seen as sacred to the people of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.*

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