

CAPTIVE ANZACS
AUSTRALIAN POWS OF THE OTTOMANS DURING
THE FIRST WORLD WAR

During the First World War, 198 Australians became prisoners of the Ottomans. Captivity caused these men to question their position as soldiers and their role in the war, while living under the rule of a culturally, religiously and linguistically different enemy also proved challenging.

Overshadowed by the grief and hardship that characterised the post-war period, and by the enduring myth of the fighting Anzac, these POWs have long been neglected in the national memory of the war.

Captive Anzacs explores how the prisoners felt about their capture and how they dealt with the physical and psychological strain of imprisonment, as well as the legacy of their time as POWs. More broadly, it explores public perceptions of the prisoners, the effects of their captivity on their families, and how military, government and charitable organisations responded to the POWs both during and after the war.

Intertwining rich detail from letters, diaries and other personal papers with official records, Kate Ariotti offers a comprehensive, nuanced account of this little-known aspect of Australian war history.

Kate Ariotti is a historian of war and society and a lecturer in Australian history at the University of Newcastle.

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KATE ARIOTTI



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PREFACE

The Australian Army has a long and admirable record in fostering serious research and publication about its history. For more than a century the army has seen the value of history to its future. From its outset ‘military history’ was part of the formal education of officers at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and for a time officers’ promotion depended upon candidates being able to give a coherent analysis of ‘Stonewall’ Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley campaigns in promotion exams. An understanding of the army’s history and traditions remains central to its *esprit de corps*, in its most literal meaning.

From the 1970s (as a consequence of educating officers at university level) the army has produced several generations of educated soldiers, several of whom became historians of note, including John Coates, Robert O’Neill, David Horner, Peter Pedersen, John Mordike, Bob Hall, Jean Bou, Bob Stevenson and Craig Stockings. The creation of an Army History Unit in the late 1990s demonstrated the army’s commitment to encouraging and facilitating serious history. Under Dr Roger Lee it exerted a profound influence on managing the army’s museums, on supporting research on army history and on publishing its history.

One of the most impressive demonstrations of the army’s commitment to history has been its long association with several major publishers, notably with Cambridge University Press. This has been a productive relationship, brokered by Roger Lee and the former long-standing general editor of the Army History Series, Professor David Horner.

The Cambridge Army History Series brings to an academic and popular readership historical work of importance across the range of the army’s interests and across the span of its history. The series, which I now have the honour to edit, seeks to publish research and writing of the highest quality relating to the army’s operational experience and to its existence as an organisation, as a part of its contribution to the national narrative.

The Army History Unit has created a community of writers and readers (including soldiers in both roles), the product of whose questions, research,

debate and writing informs the army's understanding of itself and its part in Australia's history. It is a history to be proud of in every sense.

Kate Ariotti's *Captive Anzacs: Australian POWs of the Ottomans during the First World War* constitutes the first full account of the experience of Australians captured on Gallipoli and in the Middle East. The doctoral thesis on which it is based was awarded the Army History Unit's C.E.W. Bean Prize, a reminder of how the army fosters historical talent. Dr Ariotti's book continues the recent move to redress the neglect from which prisoners of war (other than those of the Japanese) have suffered in our historical record. It reflects on an experience that, however much soldiers may wish to ignore it, can befall those who enter battle. It also takes the historical exploration of these Australian soldiers' experience into the heart of the Middle East, a region to which Australian troops were to return repeatedly in the course of the ensuing century. These men, who lived in the region and among its people, were the forebears of Australian soldiers who continue to forge relationships with them.

Professor Peter Stanley
General Editor, *Australian Army History Series*
UNSW Canberra

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This book is based on my PhD thesis, which was completed at the University of Queensland under the principal supervision of Associate Professor Martin Crotty. A supporter of my interests in the study of war and society since I was an undergraduate, Martin guided me through the PhD process with patience, humour, and generosity, and provided important advice as I finished the book. I greatly value his continued interest in my work and to him I extend heartfelt thanks.

I am privileged to work among an inspiring group of historians of the highest calibre at the University of Newcastle. For their support of this book and my other research interests, their advice on all aspects of academic life, and their enthusiasm for the practice and teaching of history I thank Dr James Bennett, Dr Kit Candlin, Professor Catharine Coleborne, Associate Professor Nancy Cushing, Dr Sacha Davis, Professor Philip Dwyer, Professor Victoria Haskins, Associate Professor Hans Lukas Kieser, Dr Julie McIntyre, Professor Roger Markwick, Associate Professor Wayne Reynolds, Dr Elizabeth Roberts-Pedersen and Professor Lyndall Ryan. Before I commenced my appointment at Newcastle I worked at the Australian War Memorial, and I will always be grateful for the insights into the world of military history offered during my time there by the dedicated group of historians and editors in the Military History Section.

Historical research of any kind is reliant on the expertise and assistance of hard-working archivists, librarians and curators, and thanks are due to the staff at the many museums, archives, memorials and libraries I visited in Australia and overseas during the course of my research. Here I also acknowledge the financial support provided by the Australian Academy of the Humanities in the form of a Travelling Fellowship, which

enabled me to visit various archives and libraries in the UK. Many of these institutions kindly granted permission to reproduce material from their collections in the book. I thank the Australian Army History Unit for permission to cite from official files held in the Australian War Memorial, as well as the National Archives of Australia and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for allowing me to use and quote from their records. The Australian War Memorial and the State Libraries of New South Wales and Queensland provided permission to reproduce material where appropriate. I also extend my sincere thanks to Jan Delpratt for providing me with photographs and other material related to her father. All efforts have been made to trace and acknowledge the copyright holders of other material quoted in the book; the author and publisher apologise for any errors or omissions and would be grateful to hear from any person who may have been overlooked or has further information that would redress this situation.

Parts of the book incorporate some material which appeared previously in the following articles and chapters: Kate Ariotti, 'Australian prisoners of the Turks: Negotiating culture clash in captivity' in *Other Fronts, Other Wars: First World War Studies on the Eve of the Centennial*, ed. J. Burgschwentner, M. Egger and G. Barth-Scalmani, pp. 146–66: Brill, 2014; Kate Ariotti, "'At present everything is making us most anxious": Families of Australian prisoners in Turkey' in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. J. Beaumont, L. Grant and A. Pegram, pp. 57–71: Melbourne University Press, 2015; Kate Ariotti, "'I'm awfully fed up with being a prisoner": Australian POWs of the Turks and the strain of surrender', *Journal of Australian Studies* vol. 40, no. 3 (2016) pp. 276–90, available online <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/14443058.2016.1199585>; and Kate Ariotti, 'International encounters in captivity: The cross-cultural experiences of Australian POWs in the Ottoman Empire', ed. K. Ariotti and J. E. Bennett, *Australians and the First World War: Local-Global Connections and Contexts*, pp. 47–6: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017 (reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature). The author and Cambridge University Press thank the publishers for their permission to use this material.

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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The nation known today as Turkey did not exist during the First World War. Technically, it was the Ottoman Empire against whom the Australians, British and other allies fought. The Ottoman Empire encompassed diverse territories and peoples, including Arabs, Kurds, Jews, and Greeks and Armenians. However, it was the ethnic Turks who dominated the political landscape and comprised the majority of Ottoman forces during the war. Contemporary accounts reflect this and generally refer to the Ottoman enemy as ‘the Turks’. Indeed, the Australian POWs believed they were in the hands of the Turks, and that they were in captivity ‘in Turkey’. In keeping with the correct terminology for the time periods discussed, however, the terms ‘Ottoman Empire’ and ‘Ottoman Army/soldier’ are used throughout the book until after 1923, when ‘Turkey’ is used.

The book makes significant use of letters, diaries, postcards, memoirs and other sources produced by the prisoners and their families, as well as newspaper articles and government and aid agency reports from the time of the First World War. Quotations from these sources have been incorporated to provide insight into the thoughts, feelings, outlooks and attitudes of those directly and indirectly affected by captivity in the Ottoman Empire. These quotations might include language that is today deemed racist or offensive. Such language and views do not necessarily reflect those of the author.

GLOSSARY

AGS	Australian Graves Service
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ARC	Australian Red Cross
AWL	Absent Without Leave
AWM	Australian War Memorial
CPWC	Central Prisoners of War Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IWGC	Imperial War Graves Commission
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAK	National Archives, Kew
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
PITC	Prisoners in Turkey Committee
POW	Prisoner of War
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RCPF	Red Cross Prisoner of War Fund
RSL	Returned and Services League of Australia
VD	Venereal disease
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association



Map I Key sites of capture for Australians in the Middle East

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Map 2 The main Ottoman prison camps in which Australian POWs were held

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