INTRODUCTION

Duncan Chapman enlisted as a lieutenant in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 21 August 1914, part of the first wave of enthusiastic enlistments that followed the declaration of war on 4 August that year. Born in 1888, he grew up in Maryborough, Queensland, and at the age of 26 set sail for war less than a month after enlisting. On 25 April 1915, he was the first man ashore when Australian soldiers set foot on the beaches of Gallipoli.[1] We know that he was promoted to captain the day after the landing and fought on the peninsula until he became sick with influenza in the final months of the campaign. In early 1916, he joined the 45th Australian Infantry Battalion, where he was promoted to major and transferred to France, arriving on the Western Front in the middle of that year during a period of intense fighting. Duncan was killed almost immediately upon reaching the front line at Pozières on 6 August 1916.[2]

At home in Australia, his family heard the news of his death weeks after he was killed. His father, anxious to learn of the exact date his son died and where he was buried, penned a poignant letter that surely echoed the sentiments of many parents of this generation: '[M]y son Major Duncan K. Chapman was killed in action. Kindly let me know the particulars. It is a great blow to me as he was my sole support. Still I gave him freely for the cause. Still we are human and would almost grudge what we gave, my heart is not very strong being 73 years of age.'[3]

Because Duncan had been 'very much knocked about' when he was killed, his place of burial was not precisely known. The official dispatch

vaguely stated it was 'approximately 400 yards East of Pozières'.[4] Both Duncan's parents died before knowing the exact place of his grave. His sister continued to write to Australian authorities requesting information about Duncan's death and final resting place. The family did not receive an answer until December 1924, when they learned that he was buried in the Pozières British Cemetery, Plot 3, Row M, Grave 22.[5] Duncan was one of 6800 Australians killed or wounded at Pozières between July and September 1916.[6]

Duncan's war was relatively brief and, like 60 000 of his fellow Australians, it cost him his life. But it was not unremarkable. In a letter to his brother that was later published in Mackay's *Daily Mercury*, he wrote about the great honour of being the first Australian to land on the beach at what would become known as Anzac Cove:

> To me was given the extreme honour of being actually the first man to put foot ashore on the peninsula, and to lead a portion of the men up the hill in that now historic charge. What a living Hell it was, too, and how I managed to go through it from 4 o'clock in the morning of Sunday, April 25, to Wednesday, the 28th, under fire the whole time, without being hit, is a mystery to me.[7]

In 2015, a hundred years after Duncan set foot on the peninsula, a bronze life-sized statue of him was unveiled in his home town of Maryborough – part of an outpouring of regional commemorative activities to celebrate the centenary of the conflict. The memorial captures Duncan, hand on his revolver, looking ahead as if stepping ashore on Gallipoli.[8]

The story of Duncan's experience on the peninsula is exceptional, and few men could claim to leave behind such a celebrated personal record or to have been so individually commemorated. For most soldiers who landed on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and the many Australians who served during the eight-month campaign, and in the Middle East and later on the Western Front, their war experience was commemorated more broadly and in a variety of forms. Some men appeared in official war correspondent and historian C.E.W. Bean's astounding twelve-volume history of the war. The experience of others was captured in their letters, diaries, poems, memoirs and collected artefacts sent home to their families or donated to and displayed in the Australian War Museum.[9] The nature of the circumstances in which these men fought and died was also depicted in visual media. Photography, film and art served an important role in capturing and commemorating their experience of war.

In fact, in painting, the men who fought in the Gallipoli campaign have been well remembered. Although he was killed before any officially commissioned Australian painter visited the peninsula, Duncan and other soldiers of the 3rd Brigade were immortalised after the war in official artist George Lambert's canvas of the landing on Gallipoli, *Anzac, the Landing 1915* (1920–22). In Lambert's rendering of the dawn scene, the men, Duncan presumably among them, are caught struggling up the steep cliffs. The peaks stand out starkly against the pale dawn sky, shell bursts scattering the background, the soldiers' khaki uniforms blend with the olive green of the scrub and ochre of the earth, making them appear almost at one with the landscape.

Lambert worked with the Australian Army, both during and after the war, to produce the canvas. No official artists were employed during the Gallipoli campaign, and Lambert was commissioned with painting the first moments of the fateful landing only in 1919. By then he had been working as an honorary officer in the AIF for two years as part of Australia's official war art program. In this role, he had seen first-hand the fighting in the Middle East and lived alongside Australian soldiers, enduring the difficulties and dangers of army life and sketching what he witnessed of the war. He was one of fifteen artists employed by the Australian official art program; under this scheme, government officials and military officers worked with soldier artists already serving in the ranks of the AIF as well as renowned expatriate artists who were given honorary commissions in the army to create a collection of images that captured an Australian experience of the war.

Lambert's canvas was the product of long and careful research. He was one of the members of Bean's party who returned to Gallipoli in 1919 to retrace the steps of those Australians who had fought there. He spent more than a month on the peninsula, walking the ground and making sketches of the contour and patterns, the light and mood, and details of the distinctive landscape. Back in Australia, he spent time reading accounts of the fighting and studying photographs from the campaign. Yet, for all this research, Lambert used some artistic licence in representing the scene. He painted the cliffs steeper than they appeared in reality, and the men were all depicted as wearing the slouch hat later typical of the Australian digger but not of the early AIF army uniform – a point Lambert debated with Bean at the time.[10]

The painting was an instant hit. When the Australian War Museum first opened in 1922 in Melbourne's Exhibition Building on the seventh anniversary of Australian soldiers landing on the beaches at Anzac Cove,

Lambert's canvas drew particular praise from critics, who thought it 'one of the finest' pieces in the museum's collection. Almost upon its unveiling, it became one of the most iconic images of Australians in the war.[11] Capturing the drama and pathos of a key moment in Australian military history, the painting represents an event that sparked a commemorative tradition, and a national myth that has endured for more than a hundred years. The artwork has hung ever since its unveiling in every iteration of the Australian War Memorial's First World War Galleries.

In the post-war years, the canvas – and indeed the exhibition within which it was displayed – was aimed at people, perhaps like Duncan's family, who sought solace in the objects and art displayed in the Australian War Museum in the absence of any hope of visiting the sites where Australians had fought and died. Lambert's image, like Duncan's statue in Maryborough, captures and commemorates one of Australia's most celebrated episodes of the First World War. Along with other paintings held in the Australian War Memorial's collection, it continues to be an important 'site of memory', and to play a significant role in how and what we remember of men like Duncan and their war.[12]

***

This book is about the creation of an official collection of war paintings during and immediately after the First World War and the role these images played in shaping a memory of the war for Australia. When it was officially established in May 1917, Australia's war art scheme was the most comprehensive government-funded art project the nascent nation had seen, comparable in scale only to the Historic Memorials Committee founded six years earlier in 1911, which commissioned paintings of eminent men in Australia's history.[13] Under the war art program, government officials and military officers worked with soldier artists and celebrated Australian painters to fundamentally define how the war was represented in sketches and paintings.[14] Their collective aim was to amass a national collection of paintings that would add to the visual record of the war, which they believed should consist of photography, film and art. From the scheme's inception, they imbued the images with a commemorative purpose, intending that the sketches and canvases would visualise Australia's part in the conflict for posterity.[15]

Australia's official war paintings had many makers beyond the artist, and this book focuses on the individuals involved in their commissioning and production, exploring the way in which what appeared in paint was

subject to and the product of the intentions and motivations of a range of actors.[16] Rather than exploring the paintings for their place in art history, this volume examines their creation as a case study through which to consider the politics at play in commemorating the First World War in Australia. It focuses on the men, the 'agents of memory', who initiated and managed the commissioning of the official art, tracing their role in shaping the character of the collection.[17] I contend that these men, primarily Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent (1914–19) and official historian (1919–42), Henry Smart, Publicity Officer at the Australian High Commission in London (1910–30), and John Treloar, officer in charge of the Australian War Records Section (1916–19) and Director of the Australian War Museum (1920–52), were responsible for amassing a collection that was inherently national in focus. I argue further that the commissioning of paintings that visualised an Australian narrative of the First World War was one manifestation of a wider commemorative trend that aimed to differentiate the Australian war experience from others within the British Empire.

The role and influence of the men involved in the production of Australia's official war art collection and the place of art in the formation of memory has hitherto been overlooked in scholarly writings in favour of analyses of the art and artists themselves. Art historians, including Anne Gray, Catherine Speck, Betty Churcher and Gavin Fry, have focused their attention on the artistic quality of the paintings and their place in Australian art history, finding that these images have not always been seen as an important part of the canon of Australian art. Others, such as Ross McMullin, have published more detailed studies of the significance of participation in the official scheme for artists' careers, exploring the influence of the war on artists' work.[18] Yet as Anne-Marie Condé suggests, 'the administrative effort involved in official and commissioned war art has to be recognised as part of the process of cultural production'.[19] Building on Condé's assertion, I examine not only the role of official war artists but also the part played by the politicians, government officials and military officers commissioning them. In so doing, I approach the creation of a collection of war paintings as one of the commemorative practices or 'acts of remembrance' of the war.[20] For the purposes of this book, the term 'commemoration' is understood to be the act of mourning, celebrating and preserving memories of people and events. The concept of a 'commemorative practice' is defined as a process through which an image or object – or indeed a tradition – is produced or invented to honour and celebrate people or events, a process involving the interaction

between individuals at various levels of society who assume positions of influence in narrating and shaping a memory for the collective.[21]

For any study of commemoration, who does the work of remembering and why, and how individuals assume positions of influence within such practices, are important questions.[22] Such questions raise further issues about who has the right to act as a witness to war and, more importantly, who decides who is a valid witness and who is not. Often what is collected and preserved has more to do with who assumes the role of witness and who has lived experience than whether a collection sufficiently captures a historical narrative or event.[23] The men who assumed positions of influence, or, in some cases, appropriated roles for themselves in the management of the official art scheme during the First World War, were responsible for determining which aspects of the war were represented in the collection and thereby for shaping a memory of the war for Australia.[24]

Exploring such questions can tell us much about the priorities and values of commemoration – and the individuals who shaped it – in this period. Memories are selective, often serving personal, political or ideological agendas.[25] The decisions of the men managing Australia's art program were based on a desire to present a narrative in the paintings that was distinctly Australian, thereby differentiating the dominion's war experience from that of others within the British Empire. This book traces the patterns of selection and rejection, inclusion and exclusion, that determined the character of the collection, specifically focusing on what these men deemed important to commemorate and what aspects of the war they did not.[26] It examines their choice – as well as rejection – of artists and the subject of their work, investigating the ways in which the official paintings came to depict a national experience of the war.

Agents of memory

Charles Bean has assumed a central place in Australian scholarly writings on the commemoration of the First World War. Seen as a 'colossus' who has shaped Australia's history and memory of the war, his dominance owes much to his role in shaping the myth or legend of Anzac through his official dispatches when war correspondent and his later official histories.[27] Although other politicians, military leaders and journalists during and after the war embraced and promulgated this version of Australian battlefront experience, it was Bean who expressed this myth most persistently and most persuasively.[28] When war broke out in August 1914, he

was working for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and was appointed Australia's first official war correspondent, a position he narrowly won over fellow journalist Keith Murdoch in a ballot taken by the Australian Journalists' Association. The Minister of Defence, George Pearce, expressed to Bean his hope that he would later write an official history of Australia's role in the war. Bean was given the honorary rank of captain, although he remained a civilian, and sailed to Egypt with the first contingent of the AIF. He was present on the first day of the landings at Anzac Cove and lived near the soldiers at the front for most of the war, experiencing the fighting on Gallipoli and closely observing it in France and Belgium.[29] He was deeply impressed by the fighting abilities of the soldiers of the AIF and by what he came to see as the inherently Australian virtues that underscored their prowess on the battlefield: their loyalty to their mates, their inventiveness and resourcefulness, and their almost playful disregard for authority – characteristics that had supposedly developed as a result of Australia's distinctive environment.[30] He articulated this vision of the AIF in his diaries, notebooks and editing of the twelve-volume official history – volumes 1 to 6 of which he wrote himself – as well as his numerous other publications. Further, in his editing of *The Anzac Book* in 1916, a collection of humorous writings and sketches created by AIF troops stationed on Gallipoli, his preparation for his writing of the official histories, and his work amassing a collection of records for a national war museum, Bean was able to shape a near-mythic narrative of Australians in the war.[31]

Bean's interwar writings and his role in developing the Australian War Museum have, to some extent, overlaid his wartime actions with a significance not entirely justified. Although his influence is undeniable, it was not inevitable that he should assume such an important place in the construction of Australia's memory of the war. While Bean played a key role in facilitating the construction of an Anzac myth, historians have overlooked the cultural processes happening around him.[32] This volume does not deny Bean's central role in Australia's commemoration of the First World War nor his progressive eclipsing of others, such as Treloar. Instead, by exploring his part in the direction and management of the art scheme as one example of his early commemorative activity, it reveals a more nuanced view of his rise as arbiter of Australia's memory of war. For all his acknowledged importance, there remain few studies solely dedicated to Bean as a subject.[33] Until the recent publication of Peter Rees's and Ross Coulthart's biographies, Bean's own diaries and collected writings were the major source on his intentions and motivations.[34]

Historians knew Bean *through* Bean and, in a sense, allowed him to control his own narrative. While much of the literature on Bean addresses his role as official war correspondent and historian, this book details the complexities of memory construction by examining how and why he was able to carve out a role for himself in the art scheme and where and when he was able to exert influence on the production of the paintings. In doing so, it seeks to cast his influence against the other men involved in the management of the art scheme, exploring the dynamic interaction between them.

When war broke out in 1914, Australia had been a nation for only thirteen years and its federal institutions were embryonic. Hence there were numerous opportunities for individuals to exert an influence on these still forming institutions. The art scheme presented one such opportunity. Bean was one of several men behind the production of the paintings and, although only an adviser to the scheme, his later dominance in commemorative activity has somewhat overshadowed the other men who shaped the program. Henry Smart and John Treloar were both directly involved in the management of the art scheme, and at different times and in various ways were responsible for shaping the character of the collection. Smart was a significant figure in the management of the art scheme during the war years. Although the art program was ostensibly under the supervision of Andrew Fisher, former prime minister and Australia's High Commissioner in London from 1916 to 1921, it was Smart, in his position as Publicity Officer at Australia House, who managed the art scheme.[35] Smart had a long record with the public service, having worked as a civil servant since 1892, with the exception of two years from 1900 to 1902 when he had served in the Boer War.[36] He was responsible not only for employing artists to work for the scheme but also for making arrangements for their visits to the front, including where they went and the supply of their materials and equipment.

John Treloar had joined the Department of Defence in 1911 and was employed as a military staff clerk. At the outbreak of the war, he enlisted in the 1st Division of the AIF and worked as a staff sergeant on Gallipoli from April until September 1915, when he fell ill with enteric fever and was invalided to Australia.[37] However, in 1916 he was well enough to take up a commission as lieutenant, working as equipment officer in No. 1 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) where he was stationed in Egypt.[38] He was transferred to France in July the same year to work in I Anzac Corps Headquarters as confidential clerk to Brigadier General Sir Brudenell White.[39] In 1917 he was encouraged by White to transfer to a

position in London that oversaw the establishment and running of an Australian War Records Section (AWRS), and it was in this role that he became involved in the war art scheme. Although Treloar was an important individual in the scheme, it was not until he took on the role of Director of the Australian War Museum that he made a significant contribution to the shape and character of the collection, where, during the early 1920s, he was responsible for commissioning and purchasing paintings that expanded its scope.

Commemorating the First World War in art

Collective memory or collective remembrance – terms that describe shared memory that exists beyond that of the individual – are expressions often used but infrequently and imprecisely theorised.[40] Many historians, as Timothy Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper explain, overestimate the unity and cohesiveness of nations and the ability of governing bodies to tap into popular perceptions held by individuals.[41] As Jay Winter argues, it is not states that remember but individuals. He contends that if '"collective memory" has any meaning at all, it is the process through which different collectives, from groups of two to groups in their thousands, engage in acts of remembrance together'.[42] I employ the term 'national memory' with the understanding that it is constructed through processes requiring the interaction and agency of individuals and institutions working at both a community and a state level who articulate and perpetuate it through, to use Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's phrase, 'invented traditions', such as commemorative rituals and practices.[43] National memory relies on a shared sense of a common history among people who have never met but whose collective imaginings define a nation's character.[44] This concept draws on Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' where the continuity of a nation is made certain through the 'ghostly imaginings' or connections that living generations feel to the dead as well as through a concerted forgetting or 'collective amnesia'.[45]

History and memory are, of course, significantly intertwined. For Tom Griffiths, while history is in many ways the discipline of memory, 'it is also a craft that has a strange, oppositional relationship to memory'.[46] History is based on examining the past through evidence, while memory is subjective and based on a feeling of connection to the past that cannot be scrutinised or analysed in the same way.[47] As Jay Winter explains, history is memory appraised through verifiable traces of the past – documents, artefacts and images – and '[m]emory is history seen through affect'.[48]

Bridging history and memory, this book uses archival sources to explore the processes by which an Australian war art collection was created and draws on memory studies – particularly the body of literature on war and memory – to analyse and interpret the shaping of a national memory that occurred during its development.

The processes of constructing national memory are always politicised. As Alon Confino argues, the 'politics of memory' is a phrase that 'reduce[s] memory, which is fundamentally a concept of culture, to the political'.[49] The inherently political elements of memory-making cannot easily be separated from its social and cultural elements. Commemorative activity is made up of a combination and synchronisation of individual as well as group memories that might seem harmonious, but they are often the result of deep contests and tensions.[50] In terms of war and memory, there is always a politics at work whenever collectives undertake commemorative practices or rituals.[51] Ashplant, Dawson and Roper suggest that a redefining of the politics of memory should include an analysis of 'the existence of cultural politics surrounding representation and meaning making'.[52] By exploring not only who wants whom to remember what and why but also *how*, my study of the creation of a collection of official art takes a broader definition of the politics of memory to include the politics of representation.[53]

The politics of representation – of meaning-making – are particularly important for a book on war art. War painting is largely unified by subject or theme rather than style and sits uneasily within the modernist trajectory of art history.[54] It remains difficult to classify as a genre within the art historical practice, not least because it draws on a variety of well-established genres, such as portraiture, landscape and still life.[55] The term 'war painting' encompasses both private responses to war as well as state-commissioned ones. Further, there is little distinction between aesthetically significant work and more pedestrian responses to war that endure because of their subject matter.[56] Yet, as sites of social remembering, the aesthetic qualities of a war painting matter less than the meanings imposed on or derived from it.[57] For the purposes of this book and its examination of state-commissioned art, a useful approach to the term is to consider the context and process of the production of war paintings; what is included in collections can tell us more about the values and priorities of those involved in creating them and the anticipated audience than it does about a genre or movement within art history.

The wider debate over the commemorative aesthetics of the First World War has centred on whether the conflict altered existing modes