MONASH University

'No other cause for my breakdown in health': the impact of wartime captivity in interwar Australia, 1918-1939

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For Olive, who first made me think about the legacies of captivity.

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Abstract

More than 3,600 Australian servicemen returned home after having been prisoners of war during the First World War. Their postwar lives have been subjected to far less detailed historical research than the experience of captivity itself. Drawing on the personal case files created by the Australian Repatriation Department – the organisation responsible for supporting and reintegrating veterans after the war – this thesis investigates the ways in which wartime captivity affected former prisoners of war, and how others understood and responded to their experiences. Repatriation case files are rich sources for investigating the impact of wartime captivity, but they are also fickle, fragmented and often unwieldy documents that require careful analysis. The historian must not only read against the institutional context in which these files were created, but must also consider how wider understandings of entitlement, masculinity, medicine and memory worked to shape these files and the position of wartime captivity within them. Employing a close and contextual reading of the repatriation case files of former prisoners of war, this thesis argues that while captivity was not overtly stigmatised, it was an ambivalent and poorly understood experience, which could constitute an additional burden for veterans seeking medical and material support from the Repatriation Department.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Julia Smart

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Introduction

Shortly before the end of the First World War, the Prisoner of War Department of the Australian branch of the British Red Cross published an account of their efforts to assist Australian soldiers in captivity. Just over 4,000 Australians were taken prisoner between the years 1915 to 1918 while fighting in France, Belgium, Turkey, Sinai, Palestine and Mesopotamia. The vast majority were taken prisoner by the German army, while 196 men were captured and held prisoner by Ottoman forces.[1] At war's end, more than 3,600 Australian service personnel emerged from prisoner of war camps. The Red Cross report suggested that, whatever the circumstances of their captivity, these men might need particular care after their release and return home. 'It is earnestly hoped that special attention will be given to those who have been prisoners of war,' the report noted, 'and that they will be looked after by someone who has made some study of the conditions of captivity and so may come to understand a little of the psychology of men who have suffered under it.'[2] Similar concerns for the well-being of former prisoners of war were echoed in 1918 by a Swiss physician, Adolf Vischer. In his book, *Barbed Wire Disease*, Vischer suggested that captives were prone to a particular kind of psychological disorder – after which he named his book – brought about by the experience of prolonged and uncertain captivity. Vischer argued that the millions of men who had become captives over the course of the war would return from captivity 'with a damaged mentality'. Nations, Vischer cautioned, would 'be infiltrated with individuals of abnormal psychical tendencies, who will not presumably be without influence on the collective psychology of the community.'[3]

Irrespective of the nature of their captivity, former prisoners occupied an ambivalent space in the social and cultural landscape of interwar Australia. In a nation that lionised the contributions and achievements of its fighting men, the experiences of

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[1] Aaron Pegram states that 4,044 Australians were captured during the war, 196 by Ottoman Turks and 3848 by Germany. Aaron Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War: Australian Prisoners of War on the Western Front 1916-19' (PhD, Australian National University, 2017), 9.

[2] Report, Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, September 1918, Australian Red Cross Society, University of Melbourne (hereafter ARCS UoM), 2015.0033 Unit 192 2015.0033.00465.

[3] A. L Vischer, *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War* (London: Bale & Danielsson, 1919), 25.

several thousand prisoners of war were inevitably marginal to Australia's story of war. Yet for many former prisoners of war, captivity was anything but marginal: the effects of this experience continued to reverberate through their lives well into the postwar years. While scholars have considered the nature and diversity of wartime captivity, and, to a lesser extent, its ambivalent relationship with idealised perceptions of Australian soldiers, the effects of wartime captivity on former prisoners after the war are yet to be the subject of a large-scale study.

The wellbeing and civil reestablishment of former prisoners of war, as for all veterans, fell within the remit of the Australia's fledgling repatriation organisation. Established in 1917, Australia's repatriation scheme was broad in scope and heralded by the Minister for Repatriation, Edward Millen, as both fair and generous; repatriation was, Millen claimed, 'a sympathetic effort to reinstate in civil life all those who are capable of such reinstatement.'[4] The repatriation scheme offered a wide range of services to returned men. These included financial assistance and pensions, medical care, preference in employment, training and education for soldiers and their dependents, in addition to soldier settlement schemes and war service homes.[5] Yet in 1939 Thomas Walter White, the federal member for Balaclava and a former prisoner himself, criticised the repatriation system as it applied to prisoners of war. Those former prisoners who were still alive, White argued, 'find the greatest difficulty in satisfying the authorities that their disabilities are associated with their war service'.[6] White's criticisms fell on deaf ears as Australia teetered on the brink of another calamitous conflict, one which would generate a new and much larger group of prisoners of war,

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[4] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 18 July 1917, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansards80/1917-07-18/0020/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

[5] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 18 July 1917, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansards80/1917-07-18/0020/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf. See also Clement Lloyd and Jacqueline Rees, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 3; Stephen Garton, 'Return Home: War, Masculinity and Repatriation', in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 194.

[6] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 15 June 1939, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1939-06-15/0106/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpd

with different experiences, narratives and legacies. The repatriation organisation did not actively discriminate against former prisoners of war, but nor did their plight generate any kind of significant repatriation policy response in the interwar years. Prisoners of war, like other veterans, experienced a range of physical and psychological conditions in the years after the First World War. Throughout the interwar period, they negotiated with the repatriation organisation over the war-relatedness of their various conditions in an effort to secure medical treatment or financial assistance from Australia's repatriation organisation. A myriad of physical, psychological and personal problems were described, diagnosed and debated in the pages of innumerable carefully compiled case files, created and maintained by the repatriation organisation in the years after the war. Drawing on the repatriation case files of 250 former prisoners of war, this thesis explores the impact of captivity on former prisoners in Australia between 1918 and 1939. It argues that articulating the postwar impact of captivity was often a challenging and complicated endeavour, contingent on wider understandings of captivity, war service, medicine and masculinity.

Prisoners of war during and after the First World War

Surrender and captivity challenged the very identity of the soldier. Capture was a jarring experience, and a sudden and unexpected reversal of fortune for many soldiers. Surrender was a difficult and often dangerous process, and surrendering soldiers contemplated an uncertain future.[7] Brian Feltman has argued that captivity stripped soldiers of their sense of dignity and agency, exposing them to the humiliation of casting aside their weapons, to being unmanned and submitting to the will of their enemy.[8] Surrender and captivity, furthermore, carried a lasting emotional and psychological burden for men socialised in ideals of military masculinity premised on a dichotomy between victory and death in warfare. Captured soldiers entered a fundamentally unfamiliar space that was culturally cast as passive, feminised and shameful, with little

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[7] For more on the difficulties of surrender, see Tim Cook, 'The Politics of Surrender: Canadian Soldiers and the Killing of Prisoners in the Great War', *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 3 (2006): 637–665; Brian Feltman, 'Tolerance As a Crime? The British Treatment of German Prisoners of War on the Western Front, 1914-1918', *War in History* 17, no. 4 (1 November 2010), 435–58; Dale James Blair, *No Quarter: Unlawful Killing and Surrender in the Australian War Experience 1915-18* (Charnwood: Ginninderra Press, 2005).
[8] Brian Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender: German Prisoners, British Captors, and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 2.

sense of how long their captivity might last; for soldiers captured during the First World War, captivity could endure over several long years.[9]

Over the past few decades, scholars have turned their attention to the study of wartime captivity of both soldiers and civilians throughout the First World War. These studies have increasingly placed captivity during the war within its historical context, arguing that in many ways captivity during the First World War marked a significant deviation from previous systems of wartime captivity. The scale of captivity was utterly unprecedented, and surrendering soldiers entered a vast transnational system of captivity. Between seven and nine million men were taken prisoner over the course of the First World War.[10] They were men from all over the globe, fighting for different nations and for different reasons; they were taken captive on different fronts, at different times, by different armies, and their experiences of captivity, and the legacies of this experience, were extremely diverse. The focus of most studies has largely tended to be on the experience of captivity, with particular emphasis on the treatment of captives – and the international agreements that regulated this – as well as the responses of governments and societies to the challenges of wartime captivity.[11]

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[9] Christina Twomey has argued that capture 'marked a metaphorical transition from the masculine world of action to a feminised sphere of passivity and containment'. Christina Twomey, 'Australian Nurse POWs: Gender, War and Captivity', *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (1 October 2004), 257.

[10] Alan Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', in *Prisoners in War*, ed. Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 76.

[11] See, for example: Joan Beaumont, 'Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War', *War & Society* 1, no. 1 (1983), 67–94; Richard Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990); Desmond Morton, *Silent Battle: Canadian Prisoners of War in Germany, 1914-1919* (Toronto: Lester Pub, 1992); Jonathan Vance, *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War through the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994); Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Neville Wylie, 'Prisoners of War in the Era of Total War', *War in History* 13, no. 2 (1 April 2006), 217–33; Heather Jones, 'A Missing Paradigm? Military Captivity and the Prisoner of War, 1914–18', *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, no. 1–2 (1 March 2008), 19–48; Matthew Stibbe, 'Introduction: Captivity, Forced Labour and Forced Migration during the First World War', *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, no. 1–2 (1 March 2008), 1–18; Matthew Stibbe, 'Civilian Internment and Civilian Internees in Europe, 1914–20', *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, no. 1–2 (1 March 2008), 49–81; Matthew Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany: The Ruhleben Camp, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008): Sibylle Scheipers, ed., *Prisoners in War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Brian Feltman, 'Captivity, Forced Labour and Forced Migration in Europe during the First World War', *First World War Studies* 3, no. 1 (1 March 2012): 120–22; Yücel Yanikdağ, *Healing the Nation: Prisoners of War, Medicine and Nationalism in Turkey, 1914-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*; Heather Jones, 'Prisoners of War', in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, ed. Jay Winter, vol. 2, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 266–90; Oliver Wilkinson,

Captivity during the First World War was governed by a series of international agreements, which were the result of evolving attitudes toward captives and captivity between 1864 and 1914.[12] Historically, captives have often faced an uncertain fate, and a potentially short-lived future. Depending on the value of the captive, they might be ransomed or exchanged, but they might just as likely be tortured, enslaved or face summary execution.[13] The Lieber code, implemented by Union forces during the American Civil War, established the basis of humane treatment of wartime captives.[14] The Geneva Conventions of 1864 and 1906, as well as the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, specifically outlined clauses to prevent ill-treatment of captive soldiers. The Geneva Conventions emphasised the protection and care of wounded prisoners of war, while the Hague Conventions protected non-wounded captives, setting the foundation for treatment and care in terms of food and housing, as well recognising the growing importance of prisoner of war labour by codifying rules in this regard.[15] While the conditions of military captivity were governed by a series of international agreements by 1914, that actual condition of captivity often fell short of international standards.[16] The revision of the Geneva Conventions in 1929 suggests that the experience of captivity during the First World War was certainly not benign.[17]

Scholars of captivity have shown that there was no one homogenous experience of either good or bad treatment in military captivity: the only thing that prisoners of war reliably had in common was the act of being taken prisoner. Captivity could vary

British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). In an Australian context, see Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, eds., *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015); Jennifer Lawless, *Kismet: The Story of the Gallipoli Prisoners of War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2015); Kate Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs: Australian POWs of the Ottomans during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and recently, Aaron Pegram, *Surviving the Great War: Australian Prisoners of War on the Western Front, 1916-18* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[12] Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 270; Sibylle Scheipers, 'Introduction: Prisoners in War', in *Prisoners in War*, ed. Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1–20.

[13] See chapter one 'War through the ages' in Arnold Krammer, *Prisoners of War: A Reference Handbook* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008); Scheipers, 'Introduction: Prisoners in War'.

[14] Scheipers, 'Introduction: Prisoners in War', 5–7; Stephen Neff, 'Prisoners of War in International Law: The Nineteenth Century', in *Prisoners in War*, ed. Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 57–73.

[15] Scheipers, 'Introduction: Prisoners in War', 5; Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 270–71.

[16] For an overview of treatment in captivity internationally, see Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War'; Jones, 'Prisoners of War'.

[17] Scheipers, 'Introduction: Prisoners in War', 6–7.

drastically for soldiers depending on their rank, their own nationality or that of their captors, when and where they were captured, where they were held and the sort of work – if any – that they were required to do. Cultural and religious differences or similarities between prisoners and their captors could also shape the experience of captivity.[18] British officers captured by the Ottoman Empire alleged that Indian prisoners of war – who had been captured fighting on behalf of the British Empire – suffered less in captivity, though Heather Jones points out that this is not borne out by evidence.[19] While in German captivity, however, Indian prisoners of war were subjected to a 'relentless' campaign to shift their loyalties from their British colonisers to that of their captors.[20] Andrew Jarboe has suggested this was part of a wider German war strategy to destabilise its enemies by targeting their colonial possessions.[21] While Indian prisoners' responsiveness to these efforts could improve the conditions of their captivity, it ultimately complicated their postwar experiences, as British military authorities suspected these men of disloyalty.[22] Oxana Nagornaja and Jeffrey Mankoff, meanwhile, have argued that the perceived 'cultural inferiority' of Russian prisoners of war legitimised particularly harsh treatment at the hands of their German captors.[23] By contrast, Kate Ariotti has argued that Australian prisoners of the Turks found it both psychologically and emotionally challenging to reconcile their capture by an enemy they perceived as culturally and racially inferior.[24]

Some prisoner of war groups experienced particularly harsh conditions, and higher death rates. Captives on the Eastern Front generally experienced different

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[18] See, for example, Heather Jones, 'Imperial Captivities: Colonial Prisoners of War in Germany and Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918', in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 175–93.

[19] Jones, 187–88.

[20] Andrew Tait Jarboe, 'The Prisoner Dilemma: Britain, Germany, and the Repatriation of Indian Prisoners of War', *The Round Table* 103, no. 2 (2014), 202–4.

[21] Jarboe, 202.

[22] Jarboe, 204.

[23] Oxana Nagornaja and Jeffrey Mankoff, 'United by Barbed Wire: Russian POWs in Germany, National Stereotypes, and International Relations, 1914–22', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 3 (2009), 478.

[24] Kate Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity: Australian POWs of the Turks and the Impact of Imprisonment During the First World War' (PhD, University of Queensland, 2014), 103. Ariotti has explored the cultural dimensions of captivity further in Kate Ariotti, 'International Encounters in Captivity: The Cross-Cultural Experiences of Australian POWs in the Ottoman Empire', in *Australians and the First World War: Local-Global Connections and Contexts*, ed. Kate Ariotti and James Bennett (Cham: Springer, 2017), 47–66.

conditions to those on the Western Front: according to Reinhard Nachtigal, 400,000 of the 650,000 prisoners of war who died in captivity died in Russia.[25] Just over 28 percent of Australians taken prisoner by the Turks died in captivity, compared to an 8 percent death rate for those taken prisoner by the Germans.[26] This disparity has led some scholars to conclude that the Turks treated their prisoners with 'ill treatment and outright brutality comparable to the experience of prisoners of the Japanese'.[27] Jennifer Lawless has argued that these inferences about rates of death amongst Australian prisoners of the Turks being due solely to poor treatment were based on wartime stereotypes that stemmed largely from a pre-existing, racialized perception of the Turk as vicious, inhuman, cruel and ultimately uncivilised and barbarous.[28] Recent studies of Australians in German captivity, meanwhile, have suggested that they experienced neither a benign nor a brutal captivity, but rather something that varied between the two.[29]

Numerous factors contributed to differential survival rates. Prisoners did not always have access to adequate food or medical services, and as such, they were susceptible to complications and even death from existing wounds, as well as bouts of illness that swept through both civilian and combatant populations during the war.[30] Disease was particularly problematic for Australian soldiers captured by the Ottoman Empire; the majority of Australians who died in Turkish captivity died of disease.[31] This was a problem for the Ottoman forces more generally, with more men dying from

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[25] Reinhard Nachtigal, 'The Repatriation and Reception of Returning Prisoners of War, 1918–22', *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, no. 1–2 (1 March 2008), 157.

[26] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 9, 23.

[27] Peter Stanley and Richard Reid, *Stolen Years: Australian Prisoners of War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2002), 94.

[28] Lawless' research on the 67 Australians captured during the Gallipoli campaign overturned existing historical interpretations of Turkish captivity, which she argued were based on the uncritical use of limited sources. See Jennifer Lawless, 'Kizmet: The Fate of the Australian Gallipoli POWs' (PhD, Macquarie University, 2010), 331-4; Jennifer Lawless, 'The Forgotten Anzacs: Captives of the Turks', *Southerly* 65, no. 2 (2005), 41; 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. Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 61.

[29] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 207.

[30] Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', 80–81. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 269–74.

[31] Thirty-three Australians in Turkish captivity died of disease that were rife throughout the Ottoman Empire during the war. Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 68, 81. See also: Lawless, 'Kizmet', 332-4.

disease than in combat during the First World War.[32] By contrast, the majority of Australian soldiers who died in German captivity died from complications arising from existing wounds, sustained prior to their capture.[33] The rate of death amongst these men was not necessarily the result of neglect or poor treatment, however. Aaron Pegram has argued that this figure would have been much higher had the Germans neglected wounded prisoners of war.[34]

During the early stages of the war, prisoners often experienced violence and inadequate living conditions as belligerents scrambled to construct adequate facilities in light of the large numbers of captives. However, Alan Kramer has argued that violence against prisoners in the early stages of the war was not merely a result of ill-preparation, but was fostered by the systematic policies of belligerent nations.[35] Prisoners of war could be subjected to different types of violence for a variety of reasons throughout their captivity; Heather Jones has argued that there was a correlation between violence and labour, exemplified particularly in the development of prisoner of war labour companies.[36] Prisoners of war could be subjected to illegitimate violence on the part of individual captors, but they also experienced the state sanctioned violence of reprisals. While belligerent nations did seek to make agreements with one another to improve their treatment of captives, when these methods failed, they resorted to reprisals designed to force better treatment of their own captives in enemy hands. Reprisals could be very serious for prisoners of war, and they were common practice amongst belligerents.[37] According to Pegram, 1,500 Australians captured by the Germans in 1917 were 'subjected to extreme reprisals' which constituted, 'the worst of German captivity in the First World War'.[38] Yet he also makes a point of noting that this treatment was not representative of the general experience of Australians in German hands.[39]

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[32] Hikment Ozdemir, *The Ottoman Army 1914-1918: Disease and Death on the Battlefield* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), 133.
[33] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 71.
[34] Pegram, 71.
[35] Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', 84–85.
[36] Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 125–251. See also Heather Jones, 'The Final Logic of Sacrifice? Violence in German Prisoner of War Labor Companies in 1918', *The Historian* 68, no. 4 (2006), 770–91.
[37] Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 274–75.
[38] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 77–78.
[39] Pegram, 77.

Working conditions also affected the experience of captivity. Officer prisoners of war were not required to work, so this factor disproportionately impacted upon the other ranks.[40] Prisoners of war from the other ranks, the non-officer class, could often encounter less than ideal working conditions. Russia, for example, used prisoners of war to construct the Murman railway in terrible conditions with limited food, clothing and shelter.[41] While Australian prisoners of war generally experienced working conditions superior to those working on the Murman railway, some of these men were injured and killed while working for their captors.[42] In direct contravention of the Hague Conventions, furthermore, some prisoners were forced to work in close proximity to the lines, or in industries relating directly to the war effort.[43]

Though officers were spared the dangers of work, scholars have noted that an idle life behind barbed wire could present its own challenges, and officer prisoners of war could often struggle against the boredom and monotony of captivity.[44] However, Australians of all ranks in captivity employed numerous techniques to shape and improve the conditions of their captivity, and maintain a sense of dignity and purpose.[45] In this way, Australians in captivity pushed back against the negative connotations of captivity as a passive and feminised space. Australian prisoners were not alone in these pursuits; Brian Feltman has noted that German prisoners similarly employed methods to shape and improve the conditions of their captivity, while Oliver Wilkinson has pointed to comparable efforts on the part of British prisoners of war.[46]

The high survival rate amongst Australian prisoners of war can be partly attributed to the substantial amount of charitable assistance directed toward captives during the First World War. The Australian Red Cross Prisoner of War Department

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[40] Beaumont, 'Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War', 70.

[41] Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 282; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 80–81.

[42] Kate Ariotti and Aaron Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War: Responding to the Challenges of Captivity and Return', *History Australia* 16, no. 1 (2 January 2019), 75; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 179–80. Jennifer Lawless suggests that relatively few of the Gallipoli prisoners she studied died while working on the Berlin-Baghdad railway. The majority died from disease or from injuries sustained prior to their capture. Lawless, 'Kizmet', 331-2.

[43] Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 274–7, 282; Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', 81–82.

[44] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 75.

[45] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 170–97; Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 58–104.

[46] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 106–35; Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*, 133–89.

distributed nearly 400,000 parcels to Australian prisoners during the First World War, which significantly alleviated the privations of captivity.[47] As such, most were regularly provided with parcels containing food, clothing and other necessities.[48] The importance of this material support for the survival of prisoners of war is partly indicated by its absence: the Italian government, for example, refused to send parcels to its captives, and the death rate of Italian soldiers in captivity was high as a result.[49] Captivity, in most other cases, provoked significant popular interest and concern amongst governments and civilian populations internationally during the war, and soldiers in captivity were 'the subject of a mammoth charitable aid effort during the war'.[50] While concern for prisoners of war generated international frameworks to ameliorate the conditions of captivity, the scale of efforts to assist prisoners of war was suggestive of the extent of anxiety over their wellbeing.[51]

In addition to elucidating the experience of wartime captivity, scholars have also examined attitudes toward both surrender and captivity prior to the First World War, pointing to the stigmatisation of this experience in both military circles and wider society. As Brian Feltman has noted, 'falling into enemy hand has rarely been considered a dignified fate for a soldier.'[52] In some cases, captives were stripped of their military decorations, or exposed to suspicion and interrogation. Returning prisoners of war in Austria-Hungary, for instance, were suspected of desertion, cowardice and ideological indoctrination, while Italian prisoners of war were similarly regarded by the state 'as traitors and cowards for having surrendered to the enemy' and experienced punitive measures both during and after their captivity, including imprisonment on their

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[47] This assistance took the form of both charitable assistance and family assistance, especially for prisoners of the Turks prior to 1916. Melanie Oppenheimer, '"Our Number One Priority": The Australian Red Cross and Prisoners of War in the World Wars', in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 79–80; Ariotti, 'Families of Australian Prisoners in Turkey', 63–64.
[48] Oppenheimer, 'Our Number One Priority', 79.
[49] Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 273; Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', 83–84.
[50] Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 273.
[51] Jones, 273.
[52] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 5.

return.[53] Returning British prisoners of war, meanwhile, faced a court of inquiry to clear them of any wrong-doing in having surrendered.[54]

Captivity has historically been constructed in opposition to the battlefield. As Feltman aptly notes, the experience of capture and captivity did not begin with the moment of capture, but rather began 'centuries earlier with the emergence of the parallel between surrender and cowardice.'[55] Examining the stigma of surrender for German soldiers captured during the First World War, he noted that discourses prior to the First World War framed the ideal fate of the German soldier as being either victory or death. Surrendering soldiers fell into neither category, and surrender 'did not merely physically remove soldiers from the battlefield; it severed their psychological connections to the higher purpose upon which their sense of manhood depended.'[56] Oliver Wilkinson has noted comparable patterns in British discourses of idealised military masculinity, which posited that soldiers should fight to the death rather than surrender.[57] Jonathan Vance similarly noted the impact of nineteenth-century military ideals in Canada on understandings of surrender during the First World War, whereby surrender and captivity were framed as a personal military failing on the part of the surrendering soldier.[58] Surrender could accordingly be understood in terms of emasculation, cowardice, military ineptitude and even desertion.

Despite some broad similarities in the negative associations with surrender in studies of wartime captivity, the stigma of capture and captivity was also shaped by social, cultural and historical factors. Feltman has argued that the stigma of wartime captivity 'functioned as the common thread that intertwined the phases and legacies of life in enemy hands', and that any study of wartime captivity – whether the experience or the legacy – cannot be properly understood without understanding the stigma

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[53] Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', 83–84; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 193.
[54] Oliver Wilkinson, 'A Fate Worse Than Death? Lamenting First World War Captivity', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 8, no. 1 (February 2015), 33.
[55] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 5.
[56] Feltman, 1.
[57] Wilkinson, 'A Fate Worse Than Death?', 33-4.
[58] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 26.

associated with surrender; implicit in this claim is the need to situate the stigma of wartime captivity firmly within its particular social and cultural contexts.[59]

The growing body of scholarship on wartime captivity during the First World War has done much to elucidate both the experience of wartime captivity and the scope and range of attitudes towards this experience. To a lesser extent, several scholars have also devoted some attention to the impact of military captivity after the war. While available source material on the postwar lives of former prisoners of war is often limited, extant literature suggests that returning from captivity was a difficult and troubling experience for many captives and postwar societies alike. Vance has argued, for instance, that Canadian prisoners of war felt they had been neglected by their government shortly after their release from captivity.[60] This sense of neglect was accentuated by the extent of popular concern over their wellbeing throughout the war.[61] Policies aimed at reintegrating veterans in Canada did not distinguish between ex-prisoners and other veterans, and many struggled to readjust to civilian life after years of confinement. Medical professionals displayed little understanding of how long-term imprisonment might impact upon returned prisoners, especially regarding the effects of prolonged food deprivation and the associated medical complaints that would continue to affect ex-prisoners. Vance argues that these men were not only overlooked, but also largely neglected throughout the interwar years, and during this period 'would come to feel increasingly marginalized'.[62] Feltman has argued, meanwhile, that the significant delay in the repatriation of German prisoners of war – and the seeming inability or unwillingness of the German government to attempt to hasten this process – in addition to the refusal of government to reimburse captives the wages they had lost while in captivity, left returning captives with a sense of having been neglected or forgotten. These factors were not necessarily reflective of any particular ambivalence, antagonism or shame toward prisoner of war, but rather reflected the weakness of the new Weimar government in the postwar world. Nonetheless, Feltman suggests that

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[59] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 1–2.
[60] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 79.
[61] Vance, 74–80.
[62] Vance, 80–82.

returning Germans veterans were left with a strong sense of 'abandonment and betrayal'.[63]

In an Australian context, scholars have suggested that the effects of wartime captivity could be diverse. Wary of overstating the impact of wartime captivity, and of emphasising cases of trauma or suffering at the expense of a more balanced picture, scholars have pointed to the fact that some former prisoners of war returned to civilian life relatively unscathed by their experience of life in enemy hands.[64] Moreover, captivity could, and did, provide some prisoners of war with skills that were relevant in the postwar period.[65] Officers were presented with diverse educational opportunities, while members of the other ranks – forced to work for their captors – could, albeit often unwillingly, learn or enhance skills that were useful in establishing a career postwar.[66] Captivity also prompted an array of creative and artistic pursuits amongst prisoners of war, particularly amongst officers.[67] However, while some former prisoners were able to return to civilian life with relative ease, for others, the physical, psychological and emotional burdens of captivity continued into the postwar years.[68] Kate Ariotti has suggested, furthermore, that the psychological burdens of captivity for former prisoners of the Turks may have been exacerbated by a lack of public recognition or interest in their experiences. In particular, public apathy intensified pre-existing personal feelings of shame or inferiority amongst these men.[69] While suggestive of the richness of this field of historical inquiry, however, few studies have focused specifically, or encroached substantially, on the postwar period to broadly consider the physical and psychological ramifications of wartime captivity over a longer period of time.

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[63] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 164.

[64] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 81–82; Lawless, 'Kizmet', 329.

[65] Ariotti and Pegram, 78.

[66] Ariotti and Pegram, 77–78.

[67] See Gillian Carr and H. C Mytum, *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity behind Barbed Wire* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Amanda Laugesen, *'Boredom Is the Enemy': The Intellectual and Imaginative Lives of Australian Soldiers in the Great War and Beyond* (Farnham: Ashgate Pub., 2011).

[68] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 212–23; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 204–5; Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War'; Lawless, 'Kizmet', 323-9.

[69] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 223; 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* 40, no. 3 (2 July 2016), 284–89.

Veterans in interwar Australia

The political, social, cultural and economic ramifications of Australia's involvement in the First World War have been the focus of a rich and growing body of scholarly literature. Scholars have poignantly highlighted the challenges faced by Australian society in the wake of the war and throughout the interwar period, including bitter social dislocations, economic recession, and industrial unrest.[70] A dominant theme of this literature has been the challenges that returning veterans faced, and posed to, Australian society. Australia's transition out of war was complicated and lengthy, for both veterans and wider society.[71] Inevitably, a key point of consideration in this literature has been the role and function of Australia's repatriation scheme, the primary remit of which was to facilitate the reintegration of all Australian veterans to civilian life.[72] Though historians disagree on the generosity of the repatriation scheme in practice, the benefits that veterans and their dependents received far outweighed those of their civilian counterparts. Stephen Garton has gone so far as to characterise this dual welfare system as a 'welfare apartheid'.[73]

The concept of repatriation was not new when it emerged in Australia in late 1915; Clement Lloyd and Jackie Rees have noted that repatriation was the result of a series of historical precedents when it came to the return and reintegration of soldiers into society after battle. In particular, the repatriation scheme implemented after the First World War drew on Australia's own history of the Boer War at the turn of the

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[70] For a particularly compelling exploration of the war and its legacies see Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013). For some more recent examples, see also Carolyn Holbrook and Keir Reeves, eds., *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019); Bart Ziino and Romain Fathi, eds., 'Coming Home', Special Issue of *History Australia* 16, no. 1 (2019).

[71] Romain Fathi and Bart Ziino, 'Coming Home: Australians' *Sorties de Guerre* after the First World War', *History Australia* 16, no. 1 (2019), 5–19.

[72] See, for example: Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, New edition. (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2013); Marina Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs: Living with the Scars of War* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 2009); Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson, eds., *Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010); Elizabeth Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities: The First World War and Domestic Violence in Victoria* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014); Kate Blackmore, *The Dark Pocket of Time: War, Medicine, and the Australian State, 1914-1935* (Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2008); Martin Crotty, 'The Veteran Challenge: Repatriation Benefits for Australian Soldiers', in *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration*, eds Carolyn Holbrook and Keir Reeves (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019), 58–68; Bruce Scates, Rebecca Wheatley, and Laura James, *World War One: A History in 100 Stories* (Melbourne: Penguin Group, 2015).

[73] Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85.

century just over a decade earlier.[74] Repatriation in the Australian lexicon referred to both the act of returning soldiers to Australia and the process of reintegrating those soldiers into the community.[75] In Canada, the process was called civil re-establishment or re-instatement, while in Britain it was referred to as rehabilitation or reconstruction.[76] The chosen terminology in Australia was somewhat peculiar: the term repatriation implied a kind of stasis, an ongoing return, as if veterans were always in the process of coming home rather than rebuilding their civilian life.[77] The influence of military personnel in what was ultimately a civil institution throughout the interwar years added to this sense of liminality, positioning the repatriation organisation perpetually between war and postwar.

A range of societal tensions and expectations were bound up in the concept of repatriation. As Stephen Garton has argued, in postwar Australia there were fears that soldiers would be unable or unwilling to reintegrate into society: that their experience of war would have damaged them physically and psychologically to such an extent that they were unable to fulfil their civic duties. Returning soldiers, in essence, represented a threat to an already unstable and divided society.[78] For soldiers, repatriation and return presented similar challenges and concerns. Soldiers returned to a fundamentally unfamiliar Australia, one which had been fractured by the strain of several years of war. Men with physical or psychological injuries faced particular challenges in their return to Australia, and despite the interventions of the repatriation organisation, the challenges of postwar disability tended to fall disproportionately on the wives and families of returned men.[79] However, as Garton has argued, returning to civilian life was also challenging for able-bodied veterans.[80] Years after their return to civilian life, many returned soldiers 'still considered their war years as the most meaningful of their lives,

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[74] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 14.
[75] Lloyd and Rees, 1.
[76] Lloyd and Rees, 1.
[77] Stephen Garton offers a detailed reflection on the peculiarity of the term. Garton, *The Cost of War*, 74–76.
[78] Garton, 'Return Home', 195.
[79] Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 267. Bruce Scates and Melanie Oppenheimer have also explored how disability added a significant burden to the challenges faced by soldier settlers, and their consequent reliance on their wives, mothers and children. See Bruce Scates and Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle: Soldier Settlement in Australia 1916–1939* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[80] Garton, 'Return Home', 191.

and ... such obsessions hindered the process of readjustment.'[81] Australia's repatriation scheme sought to alleviate the anxieties of both soldiers and civilians and facilitate Australia's smooth transition from war to peace.

While scholars have devoted significant attention to various aspects and legacies of the return of Australians from war, prisoners of war have tended not to feature prominently in this literature. The key exception has been Australian prisoners of the Japanese during the Second World War, for whom the legacies of wartime imprisonment have been the subject of considerable scholarly and popular attention.[82] Crucially, recent studies have suggested that attitudes toward surrender and captivity shaped the response of the repatriation organisation to these prisoners of war. While there was growing acknowledgement that captivity could engender or exacerbate psychological harm in both Britain and the United States, the role of captivity in cases of psychiatric harm continued to the subject of vociferous opposition and debate in Australia after the Second World War. Rather than developing a specific policy response to former prisoners of war, the repatriation organisation continued to treat the claims of former prisoners on a case-by-case basis, and denied that there was anything particular about captivity when it came to psychological harm.[83] This approach was driven partly by concerns that singling out prisoners of war might also encourage a sense of entitlement amongst these men: concerns, Christina Twomey has argued, that were strongly reminiscent of the army's view that former prisoners of war should not be given any measure of special treatment, lest it be construed as a reward for having surrendered.[84] Though Ariotti has made significant inroads into understanding the postwar impact of captivity for former prisoners of the Turks, fundamentally,

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[81] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 18.
[82] See, for instance, Garton, 208–27; Janette Bomford, '"A Wife, a Baby a Home and a New Holden Car": Family Life after Captivity', in *Anzac Legacies : Australians and the Aftermath of War*, eds Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010), 107–25; Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, 'Remembering and Rethinking Captivity', in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 9.
[83] Christina Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2018), 67–80.
[84] Twomey, 40–41.

repatriation history 'is yet to encompass the experiences of those taken prisoner during the First World War.'[85]

Methodology and chapters

The physical, psychological and personal effects of wartime captivity in the interwar years are the focus of this thesis. Drawing primarily on repatriation case files, the thesis explores interactions between the repatriation organisation and former prisoners, with a view to understanding how captivity was represented and interpreted as a wartime experience with ongoing physical, psychological and personal ramifications. The Australian repatriation organisation's response to POWs after the Second World War demonstrates that wider perceptions of captivity could influence how the repatriation organisation dealt with issues relating to captivity, and that military attitudes to surrender exerted an influence on repatriation policy and practice in the latter half of the twentieth century. As such, this thesis explores factors that shaped both how prisoners articulated their experiences and how the repatriation organisation responded to the needs of former prisoners of war.

Rather than treating the postwar period as a brief afterword to life in captivity, the thesis focuses wholly on how former prisoners and repatriation officials alike negotiated the aftermath of captivity in the interwar years. However, for many former prisoners, the legacies of their captivity did not cease abruptly in 1939. More than twenty years after their release from captivity, former prisoners of the First World War continued to apply for pensions and medical treatment. In their applications, these men often reflected on the ways in which captivity had impacted their lives in the interwar period, and the factors which influenced their decision not to apply for repatriation assistance earlier. For many, the choice to apply for pensions was contingent less on the physical and psychological impacts of captivity than on their ability to cope with the legacies of this experience in order to earn a living wage. As former prisoners of war aged and died, their widows increasingly approached the repatriation organisation for

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[85] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 73. While their research does not focus primarily on the postwar years, Lawless, Ariotti and Pegram all pointed to the value of repatriation case files as a means to consider the postwar legacies of captivity, and each made use of these files to varying extents in their doctoral theses.

assistance, crafting their own narratives of the postwar hardships borne out of their husbands' captivity. While the thesis does not seek to draw broad conclusions about the place of former prisoners of the First World War after 1945, broadening the analysis of these case files beyond 1939 further illuminates understandings of captivity, masculinity and repatriation during the interwar period.

Repatriation case files make up the dominant source base for this project. Personal case files were at the centre of Australia's repatriation system: they were the tool by which individual veterans' entitlement to financial and medical assistance from the repatriation organisation were determined and recorded. The personal case file, as a document, symbolically represented one of the crucial facets of Australia's repatriation organisation: that claims for assistance should be evaluated on a case by case basis, taking into account the specific and individual circumstances of each veteran. These files could include a vast array of personal and official documents: at a minimum, case files generally contained medical assessments, hospital case notes, income and employment details, military service records and general correspondence. The content of these case files ranged from tediously procedural and bureaucratic documents to intensely personal disclosures of difficult circumstances. The nature and content of each file, however, depended on the individual veteran and their relationship to the repatriation organisation. The richness of these case files is suggested by their recent popularity in studies of the diverse legacies of war, trauma, medicine, and memory in postwar Australia.[86]

Repatriation case files offer unique insight into the intersections between wartime captivity and postwar trauma. The particular value of these files for investigating wartime captivity lies in the relative paucity of other records for exploring this legacy in the interwar years. Diaries recounting captivity – kept carefully hidden from prying enemy eyes – and letters written to and from prisoners of war tend to record the experience of captivity and its immediate aftermath. Less is said about life after the war, and even less still about the impact and legacies of wartime captivity. Memoirs

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[86] Scates and Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle*; Scates, Wheatley, and James, *A History in 100 Stories*; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*; Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*; Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities*. Janet McCalman's forthcoming ARC-funded study drawing on repatriation case files 'Diggers to Veterans: Risk, Resilience and Recovery' also offers promising insights.

written by former prisoners were similarly oriented around the experience of captivity, normally ending with escape, freedom or arrival in Australia. By contrast, repatriation case files required a connection between war service and the postwar period, and these files reveal a dynamic engagement between memories of war and the postwar context – between the past being remembered and the moment of remembrance – as prisoners of war described how their postwar struggles were related to their war service.

Case files did not exist in a vacuum. These files were created within a specific organisational context, but also within wider social, cultural and political contexts. A range of additional sources, including parliamentary papers, government correspondence, newspaper articles, repatriation reports and correspondence, medical journals, returned services publications, personal papers, divorce papers, coronial inquests and published memoirs speak to both the organisational and societal contexts in which repatriation case files existed. Though focussed on the postwar years, a range of additional primary source material, including the files of the Australian Red Cross Prisoner of War Department and the Australian Imperial Force, also speak to the experience of wartime captivity for the men studied for this thesis.

In any broad study of case files, questions of sampling and representativeness are key. Over 4,000 Australian soldiers were taken prisoner during the First World War, and just over 3,600 of these men survived their captivity to return home. Working off a sample of over 400 former prisoners of war, or ten percent of those taken captive – generated by selecting every tenth name from an alphabetical listing of prisoners of war created and maintained by the Prisoner of War Department of the Australian Red Cross during the war – repatriation case files for 250 of these men were located and analysed.[87] As such, this study engages with the postwar experiences of seven percent of the population of returned prisoners of war, a sample that is reflective of the aim of the thesis to consider the general legacies of captivity. The thesis does not aim to compare

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[87] The initial sample was composed by selecting every tenth name on this list. Names were then cross-checked against AIF service records to confirm the veteran's status as a POW, and files for these names were requested from the National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA). The NAA were able to locate files for 250 of these men. The resulting sample was broad and general rather than specifically oriented around particular military units or groups of prisoners.

the experiences of former prisoners of war to the wider veteran population, and as such, the files of other veterans were not consulted.

The chosen sample of 250 men was diverse. In accordance with wider trends evident in analyses of enlistment, the majority of these men were young and unmarried, working in blue collar jobs prior to their enlistment in the AIF.[88] They served in the army, navy and air force, across a range of different theatres of war. They were men of differing military ranks, who were taken prisoner at different points in the conflict, and were held in different camps, in different nations, by different captors and altogether had vastly different experiences of wartime captivity. The vast majority, 94.8 percent, were captured and held prisoner by the German army, while just 5.2 percent – only 13 men – were prisoners of the Turks. The ratio of prisoners held by the Germans compared to those held by the Turks in this sample thus accords approximately to that of the ratio of soldiers captured by each belligerent during the war.[89] Given that Turkish prisoners of war experienced a substantially higher rate of death in captivity compared to their German counterparts, however, approximately only 3.8 percent of the population of returned prisoners of war were men taken prisoner by the Turks. The representation of former prisoners of the Turks in this sample is thus slightly greater than the proportion of these men amongst the total population of returned prisoners of war. The selected sample, however, does not allow for a comparative analysis of the postwar experiences of Australian prisoners captured by the Turks and those by the Germans. An explicitly comparative methodology, designed to consider the differences and similarities between these two groups of former prisoners in the postwar years, undoubtedly offers an exciting direction for future research.

The repatriation organisation was necessarily geared towards men and women experiencing a measure of difficulty in the postwar years. Indeed, Ariotti and Pegram

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[88] See Leslie Lloyd Robson, *The First A.I.F.: A Study of Its Recruitment, 1914-1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970).

[89] Ariotti notes that 54 men died in Turkish captivity and Pegram notes that 307 died in German captivity, though a further 20 former prisoners of the Germans died prior to 1921 after having been repatriated. Excluding those who died after repatriation – as this study understands those men as having survived captivity – 3,683 men survived captivity in total, 142 survived Turkish captivity and 3,541 men survived German captivity. Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 9, 71; Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 190.

have argued that the repatriation archive 'is inherently skewed towards tales of woe'.[90] In general, Pegram has observed that extant source material in the postwar period tends to be 'biased toward those who suffered physical and financial hardship or had altercations with the law', while those who resumed civil life without incident left little mark on the historical record.[91] If, by its nature, the repatriation archive was invariably oriented toward veterans who experienced difficulties adjusting to postwar life, then the use of these case files to explore the legacies of captivity risks erroneously emphasising cases of trauma or suffering at the expense of a more balanced picture.[92]

However, the sheer scope and longevity of Australia's repatriation system is suggestive of the range and diversity of issues that repatriation officials dealt with. Despite early assumptions that the work of the repatriation organisation would be temporary and transitional, veterans of the First World War continued to apply for repatriation assistance well into the post-Second World War period, and repatriation became a permanent fixture in Australian government administration.[93] By the end of the interwar period alone, more than a quarter of a million veterans and their dependents were receiving war pensions.[94] Furthermore, Australians required only a five percent margin of disability in order to be eligible for a repatriation pension, whereas both Canada and Britain required at least 20 percent.[95] As a result of the low threshold of pensionable disability, combined with initiatives such as the service pension, Lloyd and Rees argued that most Australian families had some interaction with 'the Repat'.[96] As such, this study captures more than the most desperate cases so commonly associated with repatriation case files. It captures men with mild disabilities, and older men who led full lives outside of the orbit of the repatriation authorities until age and worsening health brought their lives to the pages of a case file. Essentially, repatriation case files in the aggregate do not uniformly depict unrelenting hardship or

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[90] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 82.
[91] Ariotti and Pegram, 82; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 205–6.
[92] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 205.
[93] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 199.
[94] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 284.
[95] Stephen Garton, 'Demobilization and Empire: Empire Nationalism and Soldier Citizenship in Australia After the First World War - in Dominion Context', *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (1 January 2015), 133.
[96] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 411.

brutal captivity, but rather demonstrate a range of experiences and interpretations of the legacies of wartime captivity. Just as the conditions of captivity and responses to this experience varied amongst prisoners of war, so too did the legacies of this experience differ in the postwar period.

The significance of captivity in repatriation case files varied. Ariotti has noted a tendency for former prisoners of the Turks and their relatives to construct captivity in particular ways in their claims, emphasising 'poor quality and insufficient rations, substandard accommodation and health care, physically demanding work, and exposure to disease'.[97] Equally, however, some former prisoners did not mention their captivity at all in their claims to the repatriation organisation, or mentioned captivity in passing and only in relation to certain conditions. Evaluating the impact of wartime captivity and understandings of this experience in repatriation case files requires careful consideration not only of the spaces where captivity appears prominently, but also of its absences and omissions. The position of captivity in the case files studied for this thesis is evaluated on a claim by claim basis. Invocations of captivity generally fell into one of four categories: a passing mention; as a causative but not dominant issue; as a dominant factor; and finally, as the sole causative factor of postwar disability. This approach to evaluating the position of captivity in claims for assistance draws on the work of Alon Rachamimov. When analysing the letters of Austro-Hungarian prisoners of the First World War, Rachamimov identified what he termed the 'dominant conceptual environment' of each letter. Rachamimov's 'conceptual environments' included things such as 'complaining about nation discrimination' or 'accusing the state of either forgetting or not caring about its captive soldiers.'[98] Evaluating the strength of captivity as a 'conceptual environment' offers a clear picture of the overall prominence and significance of captivity in repatriation case files, and underpins the closer, narrative analysis of invocations of captivity in the pages that follow.

In addition to highlighting the relative prominence or absence of captivity in repatriation case files, this thesis also seeks to understand why former prisoners and their representatives invoked captivity in the ways that they did. Repatriation case files

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[97] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 213–14.
[98] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 202–3.

are not a straightforward record of the experience of captivity, but rather a version of that experience, mobilised under specific circumstances for a specific purpose. Where Pegram and Ariotti have suggested that former prisoners might be more likely to have applications accepted by 'tapping into wartime ideas of captivity and constructing their experiences of capture and imprisonment as a time of great suffering', this thesis suggests that, equally, many of these men struggled to articulate the impact of captivity on their postwar lives, or struggled to have this impact recognised by repatriation personnel.[99] The willingness of prisoners of war to construct narratives of captivity, and their ability to compose compelling accounts, were contingent on a variety of factors. Wider attitudes towards capture and captivity, interwar modes of masculinity, medical understandings of captivity, and the existence or absence of wider narratives about this experience all worked to shape and constrain if and how former prisoners wrote about their captivity. While there is little evidence to suggest that former prisoners of war were overtly discriminated against on the basis of their captivity, in interwar Australia captivity was not a well-known or well-understood wartime experience. Fundamentally, this thesis argues that captivity often functioned as an additional burden in what could already be a difficult process for First World War veterans.

The thesis is loosely structured as a thematic exploration of the factors which influenced, shaped and constrained the interpretation and representation of the impact of wartime captivity in repatriation case files. The first chapter considers understandings of surrender and captivity in both military and civilian contexts, analysing the representation of surrender and captivity in newspapers, published narratives of captivity and publications with a dominant readership of veteran soldiers, such as battalion histories. While temporally focused on the war years, considerable insight into how these wartime experiences were understood can be found in reflections published in the postwar years. This chapter suggests that, despite the efforts of former prisoner of war writers, there was a subtle stigma attached to wartime captivity throughout the interwar years, and the prisoner of war was an ambivalent and ambiguous figure.

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[99] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 88.

The second chapter explores the formation of Australia's first former prisoner of war veterans' organisation in the interwar period, and the role and significance of collective veteran advocacy in negotiating with Australia's repatriation authorities. It argues that the relatively late emergence of a specific prisoner of war group had its roots not only in the ambivalence of captivity as a wartime experience, but also in the process by which prisoners of war were recovered from captivity and returned to Australia. This chapter suggests that the absence of a sense of shared identity amongst former prisoners of war constituted a significant obstacle in garnering recognition or consideration of captivity through the collective expression of common interests amongst former prisoners.

The third chapter explores the process by which interactions between repatriation officials and former prisoners of war created case files and considers some of the ways in which ambiguities of captivity were reflected in the repatriation archive. While the oft-repeated need to read repatriation and other case files 'against the grain' is pertinent here, chapter three argues that, in order to understand what the 'grain' of any given case files is, we must situate these files firmly in the context of their creation. The purpose, form and function of these case files shaped and constrained articulations of the impact of wartime captivity.

Repatriation benefits, unlike contemporary civilian welfare benefits, were publicly construed as a right in recognition of service to the nation. Nonetheless, repatriation retained many of the vestiges of other forms of welfare and charity, specifically a fear of the potentially emasculating effects of charity or financial assistance, and a belief in the sanctity of work and self-sufficiency. Repatriation was thus a context in which masculinity became fraught. Chapter four explores how returned prisoners navigated these challenges to masculinity, and suggests that the emasculating connotations of surrender and captivity added an additional layer of complexity to this process.

Former prisoners of war experienced a range of physical and psychological health problems in the years after the First World War. Some of these conditions had a clear genesis in captivity, while others were less clearly defined. Chapter five explores understandings of captivity as the cause of postwar harm. Captivity, and its medical

implications, did not arouse sustained interest amongst medical professionals, nor did it prompt any specific policy response from the repatriation organisation. The dearth of medical literature linking captivity to particular physical and psychological health conditions complicated the process of applying for assistance from the repatriation organisation, as former prisoners of war lacked a compelling framework within which to understand and interpret the effects of their captivity.

The final chapter of the thesis takes a more reflective approach, exploring the ways in which former prisoners of war remembered their own captivity and acted as witnesses for other former prisoners in repatriation case files. This chapter suggests that former prisoners' ability and willingness to construct captivity in this manner was contingent on the availability of these narratives in other contexts; in essence, public and shared memories of captivity played an important role in facilitating or limiting depictions of captivity in repatriation case files. One thing that emerges powerfully from the chapters that follow is that there is no single narrative capable of adequately representing the impact of wartime captivity: just as the conditions of captivity and responses to this experience varied amongst prisoners of war, so too did the legacies of this experience vary in the postwar period.

Chapter 1

'It's better to be a live coward than a dead hero:' the ambivalent status of former prisoners of war

In 1932, the Melbourne *Age* published a glowing review of Joseph Maxwell's *Hell's Bells and Mademoiselles*. Maxwell's book described some of his experiences as a soldier during the First World War and was published as part of a series of war books by Angus & Robertson in the 1930s.[1] Joseph Maxwell was one of Australia's most decorated officers, holding the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the Military Cross and the Victoria Cross, and his book was eagerly received by the Australian reading public.[2] *Hell's Bells* received highly favourable reviews and was immensely popular; the *Age* described the book as among the most 'vivid and striking' accounts written about the war.[3] Amongst the excerpts from the book chosen to accompany the review was one that the *Age* described as an 'unusual experience', in which Joseph Maxwell was almost taken prisoner by German soldiers. In a frank manner, Maxwell described the moments leading up to his near-capture, and his thoughts and feelings as he realised that he might become a prisoner of war. As his weapon was taken from him at gunpoint by a German soldier, Maxwell recalled thinking: 'It's better to be a live coward than a dead hero.'[4]

While Maxwell stopped short of accusing Australian prisoners of war of cowardice, his depiction of a dichotomy between capture and heroism reflected the ambivalent response to imprisonment. The wartime experiences of captives sat awkwardly in relation to the heroic tradition of Australian soldiering that was

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[1] Carolyn Holbrook, 'The Role of Nationalism in Australian War Literature of the 1930s', *First World War Studies* 5, no. 2 (4 May 2014), 218.

[2] 'War Books', *Age*, October 29, 1932, 4; 'Lieutenant Joseph Maxwell', Australian War Memorial, accessed February 22 2019, https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P10676726; Holbrook, 'The Role of Nationalism in Australian War Literature of the 1930s', 218–19.

[3] 'War Books', *Age*, October 29, 1932, 4. Holbrook, 'The Role of Nationalism in Australian War Literature of the 1930s', 218–19.

[4] 'War Books', *Age*, October 29, 1932, 4.

prominent in the interwar years. Dominant understandings of Australia's involvement in the war centred firmly on the combatant soldier, emphasising his value, virtue and inherent military aptitude. This narrative 'celebrated the qualities of Australian soldiers … they were men who were courageous, resourceful, contemptuous of authority, loyal to their mates and, above all, natural and exceptional fighters.'[5] The surrender and capitulation of many of those same soldiers sat uncomfortably alongside a narrative premised so heavily on military proficiency.[6]

While captivity was not overtly denigrated, this chapter will argue that throughout the interwar years former Australian prisoners of war encountered a subtle stigma – like that discernible in Maxwell's book – associated with their captivity. They almost invariably fell short of the idealised image of Australian soldiering; as wartime captives, they stood outside this narrative, and yet, as veterans, they were also concurrently and implicitly understood within its terms. The subtlety of this stigma contributed, in part, to the ambivalent responses to former prisoners of war in the interwar years. As Heather Jones has shown, overt stigma, condemnation or neglect of former prisoners in different belligerent nations after the war prompted the formation of specific prisoner of war associations to refute the negative associations with captivity, and to advocate publicly for the rights of former prisoners of war.[7] The absence of any such groups in Australia until 1935 is suggestive of a relatively benign postwar culture, in which prisoners of war were neither overtly celebrated nor condemned.

Captives, and military captivity, have occupied a strange space within Australia's memory and history of the First World War. In Australia, as in other former belligerent nations, wartime captivity has tended to occupy a marginal space within the wider national memory of the First World War; until recently, Peter Stanley's observation that Australian prisoners of the First World War were 'invisible in the Australian story of the war' was remarkably accurate.[8] Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram have

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[5] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 'Rethinking Captivity', 1.

[6] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 1.

[7] This is particularly evident in the case of French former prisoners of war, who were treated with suspicion – and not categorised as combatants for the sake of compensation – by the French government and military elite after the war. Unlike British prisoners, French prisoners were comparatively vocal about their experiences in an effort to garner recognition and compensation. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 327.

[8] Stanley and Reid, *Stolen Years: Australian Prisoners of War*, 4.

suggested that such marginalisation was largely due, in the first instance, to the incompatibility of captivity with the dominant narrative to emerge from the war: that of the Anzac legend.[9] Furthermore, in the wake of the war, captives failed to articulate their experience in any significant manner, save for a few published memoirs of captivity.[10]

The incompatibility of captivity with the key tenets of the Anzac mythology goes some way towards explaining the lack of published accounts of captivity in interwar Australia. That said, this does not fully explain the reticence of former prisoners of war to publish accounts of their captivity, nor does such an explanation encapsulate the complexity and ambivalence of the prisoner of war story in the interwar years. Approaching memoirs of captivity as revealing a dynamic engagement between past events, recalled in memory, and at the time of writing, this chapter seeks to understand how perceptions of surrender and captivity in interwar Australia limited or facilitated public narratives of wartime captivity. It draws on published accounts of captivity, as well as newspapers and returned services publications, to elucidate both how prisoners of war understood their captivity, and how their captivity was understood by others. First, this chapter will consider the experience of surrender and capture and explore the nature of the stigma attached to this experience for Australian soldiers. It will explore perceptions of surrender and captivity primarily in the initial military context, then go on to examine the reception of Australian prisoners of war – and their narratives – in interwar Australia. It seeks to demonstrate how these narratives were positioned in relation to wider perceptions about war, soldiering, masculinity and captivity.

Surrender, captivity and shame

Joseph Maxwell never became a prisoner of war, but his depiction of the moment of surrender was a reality for just over 4,000 Australian soldiers during the First World War. Some were left vulnerable to capture when battle plans went awry. During the Battle of Bullecourt in April 1917, vulnerable troops were left unarmed and cut off from

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[9] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 'Rethinking Captivity', 1.
[10] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 1. By contrast, Australian prisoners after the Second World War wrote and published widely on their experiences. See Joan Beaumont, 'POWs in Australian National Memory', in *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming, and Memory in World War II*, eds Bob Moore and Barbara Hately-Broad (New York: Berg, 2005), 187–94.

the Australian trenches as the German forces advanced. One soldier recounted running out of ammunition and being separated from the Australian lines by a 'hellish death-trap of barbed wire' before being 'descended upon' and taken prisoner by a number of German soldiers.[11] Another described his comrades being shot and dying around him as he waited for his own death to come, when an officer ordered him and the few men alive in the trench 'to throw down our arms and surrender'.[12] While offering neither criticism nor endorsement of the officer's decision, the man conceded that 'there was no alternative but to surrender or be shot down'.[13] More than 1,000 Australian soldiers – the largest number of Australians taken prisoner in any one battle during the First World War – were taken prisoner in similar circumstances at Bullecourt.[14]

Many men emphasised injury and incapacitation in their postwar narratives of surrender and capture, and few prisoners of war acknowledged or publicised having chosen to surrender in less urgent or compelling circumstances.[15] One prisoner of war described returning to consciousness alone, freezing and severely wounded somewhere between the Australian and German lines. He had been 'shot through both lungs, the liver, the shoulder and left foot, and [was] bleeding all the time both internally and externally'. The extent and severity of his injuries were exacerbated by the fact that he 'had almost exhausted myself in frequent attempts to regain the lines'. In an ironic twist, his efforts to avoid capture left him exhausted and hopelessly vulnerable.[16] One officer

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[11] William Groves, 'Episode 3: Captured!: Things I Remember: A Prisoner of War Looks Back', *Reveille* 5, no. 6 (February, 1932), 23.

[12] Alfred Gray, *In the Hands of the Hun: Experiences of Private Alfred Gray, of Kyneton* (Kyneton: Guardian Office, c 1920), 2.

[13] Gray, 3.

[14] 'First Battle of Bullecourt', Australian War Memorial, accessed June 25 2015, https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84354.

[15] In his memoir, Thomas Taylor made it clear that, had he been physically fit, he would have fought rather than be taken captive. Thomas Edward Taylor, *Peregrinations of an Australian Prisoner of War: The Experiences of an Australian Soldier in Germany and Bolshevik Russia* (Melbourne: E.W. Cole Book Arcade, 1920), 5. The memoir of Herbert Horner was exceptional in this regard, in that Horner wrote that he was captured – indeed, that he had actually made a conscious decision to surrender to the enemy – in absence of severe wounds or the orders of a superior officer. However, Horner framed his decision to surrender in terms of another of the much-vaunted virtues of the Australian soldier: loyalty and mateship. Horner knew that both his officer and another man were sleeping in a nearby cellar as the Germans advanced on their position. Believing that the Germans would simply throw a grenade into the cellar rather than risk encountering several potentially armed men who would then need to be subdued, Horner wrote that he surrendered himself to save his comrades from certain death. Herbert Horner, *Reason or Revolution?: An Australian Prisoner in the Hands of the Hun* (Perth: Jones, 1920), 47.

[16] Arthur Dent, *Fourteen Months a Prisoner of War*, (*n.p.*: The North Western Courier Print, 1919), 5.

suffered extensive and imminently life-threatening injuries from a bomb blast. His right hip bone was blown away in the blast, his 'thigh and pelvis both shattered, and the lower part of the abdominal wall on the right side torn away, so that I was partly disembowelled.'[17] Realising the hopelessness of his own situation and that of the men under his command, the officer ordered his men to retreat, leaving him in a shell hole to face what he believed was certain death. Instead, he was taken prisoner 'with ... hope gone, and it seemed but little of life left'.[18]

Others articulated a personal sense of disappointment and shame at having been captured. For Reginald Lushington, who had barely seen combat before becoming a prisoner of war on April 25, 1915, captivity was such 'an ignoble ending to all our brilliant aspirations', that 'death seemed almost preferable'.[19] Shortly after being captured by Ottoman forces in 1915, Maurice Delpratt stated in a letter home that, for Australian soldiers, it was 'considered a disgrace to be captured'. While he believed his capture had undoubtedly been the result of his own 'bad soldiering', Delpratt wrote that he hoped his family knew it was not due to cowardice.[20] For both of these young men, capture early in the war was immensely disappointing. One soldier 'felt the keenest disappointment ... and the humiliation of being a slave to these people' upon being captured by the Germans, while another wrote that captivity 'was a terrible price to pay for life'.[21]

Feelings of shame or guilt associated with surrender and captivity are a common feature of the scholarly literature on wartime captivity in Australia and internationally. However, despite the near-inevitability of some degree of shame to the historical experience of surrender for soldiers, the feelings of shame articulated by Australian prisoners of the First World War were culturally and historically specific. While historians of emotion agree on a general working definition of shame, they also point to

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[17] William Cull, *Both Sides of the Wire: The memoir of an Australian officer captured during the Great War*, ed. Aaron Pegram. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2011), 100.

[18] Cull, *Both Sides*, 91.

[19] Reginald Lushington, *A Prisoner with the Turks 1915-1918*, (*n.p.*: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1923), 6.

[20] Letter, Maurice Delpratt to family, 12 July 1915, AWM, 3DRL/2153, Delpratt, Maurice George (Sergeant, b:1888-d:1957).

[21] Herbert Horner, *Reason or Revolution?: An Australian Prisoner in the Hands of the Hun* (Perth: Jones, 1920), 54; Cull, *Both Sides*, 90.

the specificity, diversity and historical contingency of this emotion in different contexts. Sharon Crozier-De Rosa has described shame as 'a highly versatile social emotion' that has served a variety of purposes historically.[22] Shame could be deployed in an effort to encourage members of a community to alter aberrant behaviour and return to the wider community, but could equally be used to firmly outline the appropriate rules and expectations of a particular community or group against the threat of deviant outsiders.[23]

The shame attached to captivity served an essential military purpose during the First World War. Surrendering soldiers threatened the vitality of Australia's fighting forces. Once captured, Australian soldiers could no longer contribute directly to the frontline military effort. Reflective of its strategic importance in damaging the enemy's fighting capabilities, battalion histories proudly recorded the taking of enemy prisoners as evidence of a successful military engagement.[24] By contrast, Australian prisoners of war represented a strategic and material loss, and were accordingly recorded amongst the casualties of war, 'their "incapacitation" from the fighting being used to equate them with the wounded and with the dead.'[25] Belligerent nations used a variety of different techniques to discourage the surrender of their troops throughout the First World War, ranging from shame and dishonour through to more punitive measures including the death penalty for surrendering soldiers.[26] Australian military authorities did not employ punitive measures to prevent soldiers from surrendering. Rather, due to the influence of remnants of nineteenth-century British military discourses, surrender was tacitly

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[22] Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890-1920* (London: Routledge, 2017), 15.
[23] Crozier-De Rosa, 12.
[24] For a typical example, see Newton Wanliss, *The History of the Fourteenth Battalion, A.I.F.: Being the Story of the Vicissitudes of an Australian Unit during the Great War* (Melbourne: The Arrow Printery, 1929), 347.
[25] Wilkinson, 'A Fate Worse Than Death?', 25. Historians also tend to cite the figure of 150,000 AIF casualties during the First World War without acknowledging that this figure includes Australian soldiers taken captive.
[26] See, for instance, Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', 83–84; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 193; Wilkinson, 'A Fate Worse Than Death?', 33.
[26] Wilkinson, 33.

understood as both a personal military failing on the part of the individual soldier, and a reflection of inherent weakness of character.[27]

While surrender and captivity were both commonly accepted aspects of warfare by the outbreak of the First World War, Australian soldiers were not given any training to prepare for captivity, in terms of how to conduct themselves or what to expect. [28] Any official discussion of captivity centred around appropriate procedure for taking enemy prisoners.[29] Formal discussion of surrender or captivity ran the risk of offering a degree of official acceptance, or, at least, making surrender and capture seem 'a not entirely dishonourable option'.[30] Soldiers might consequently be more likely to consider surrendering rather than 'fighting to the bitter end'.[31] Australian soldiers were thus largely unprepared for the possibility of surrender and captivity. John Halpin, an Australian soldier captured in Palestine in 1918, wrote in his memoir that 'of all possible eventualities, capture was never discussed … It was as a thing that simply could not come to pass.'[32] The silence surrounding the possibility of surrender or capture bolstered the perception of it as something shameful. Despite the absence of any outright condemnation of surrender or captivity, one Australian soldier later reflected in an article in *Reveille* that 'it was strictly against military discipline to voluntarily "surrender"'.[33]

The Australian military were also slow to respond to the growing number of Australians in captivity. It was not until early 1918, several years after the first Australians entered captivity, that the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) headquarters created a small sub-section of staff to manage matters relating to Australian prisoners of war. The

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[27] Jonathan Vance has observed the influence of these discourses amongst Canadian service personnel. Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 26.

[28] Aaron Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom: Escape and Australian Prisoners in Germany 1916-18', in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, eds Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 21.

[29] According to Aaron Pegram, neither the *Field Service Regulations* or the *Notes for infantry officers in trench warfare*, issued by the British War Office in 1916, gave any advice on how a soldier should conduct himself in captivity. Aaron Pegram, 'Informing the Enemy: Australian Prisoners and German Intelligence on the Western Front, 1916–1918', *First World War Studies* 4, no. 2 (1 October 2013), 170. See also: S.P. MacKenzie, 'The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War', *War in History* 15, no. 1 (1 January 2008), 1–16.

[30] MacKenzie, 'The Ethics of Escape', 2.

[31] Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', 21.

[32] John Halpin, 'Captives of the Turk', *Reveille* 7, no. 7 (March 1934), 25.

[33] M.G. Imlay, 'Without Loss', *Reveille* 8, no. 12 (August 1935), 6.

primary objective of the organisation was, ostensibly, to 'reply to the numerous queries with which this office is continually besieged.'[34] These queries were likely letters from the concerned family members of men in captivity, as well as letters from government officials and members of parliament. In general, however, issues relating to the care and repatriation of prisoners largely fell to the Prisoner of War Department of the Australian branch of the British Red Cross and the British military authorities respectively. The care and devotion of the Red Cross POW Department in particular stood in stark contrast to the ambivalence of the military during the war.

The feelings of shame expressed by prisoners of war cannot be solely explained by military ambivalence and tacit disapproval of surrender. Many were able to explain their surrender in terms of strategic inevitability rather than personal military failing. One such prisoner, captured during the Battle of Bullecourt, asserted that he was 'perfectly certain that we felt no sense of shame or personal guilt; but simply that … we had been let down – and that we hadn't deserved it.'[35] However, shame is fundamentally a social emotion, often experienced in response to the perception or fear that one has failed or fallen short of the expectations of a valued community, and the associated fear that one will be rejected or excluded from that group as a result.[36] Shame is internalised and personal; as Crozier-De Rosa notes, '[t]he fear of shame is the fear of failing not only one's valued community, but through that one's sense of self.'[37] Australian soldiers not only fell short of a military ideal when they surrendered, they also fell short of the perceived expectations of their fellow soldiers. While the present-day popular emphasis on the mateship of Australian soldiers may be somewhat exaggerated, scholars suggest that comradeship between soldiers was a powerful and valued feature of service for Australian soldiers during the First World War.[38] While prisoners were unlikely to be ostracised by their combatant counterparts, it is clear that many felt an acute sense of shame at having fallen short of a shared ideal of military prowess and comradeship.

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[34] Letter, Australian Imperial Force Commandant to Department of Defence, 14 June 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.

[35] Groves, 'Episode 3: Carrying On: Things I Remember: A Prisoner of War Looks Back', *Reveille* 5, no. 7 (March 1932), 44.

[36] Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, 14–15.

[37] Crozier-De Rosa, 14–15.

[38] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 49–50.

When one prisoner reflected on what his battalion might think of him and his captivity 'the thought was so bitter that for a moment I cared little whether I lived or died.'[39] For many prisoners of war, this fear was likely unfounded. Men of the 45th battalion, for instance, took up a collection to help the members of their battalion taken prisoner, suggesting that they felt concern, rather than derision, for their fellow comrades.[40]

Surrender also threatened the masculine, soldierly identity of Australian servicemen. For many Australian soldiers, war 'represented the attainment of an ideal manliness, physical action, bravery, self-control, courage and … male comradeship.'[41] Capture physically isolated prisoners of war from the masculine associations of the battlefield: surrender and captivity 'marked a metaphorical transition from the masculine world of action to a feminised sphere of passivity and containment'.[42] Distinctions between the masculine battlefront and feminine captivity were, of course, permeable: for instance, men on the front line, like those in captivity, engaged in a range of behaviours that were considered feminine, including sewing, cooking and cleaning. Furthermore, just as capture did not completely sever prisoners' ties with their masculine identity as soldiers, the experience of industrialised warfare itself could pose a threat to traditional notions of martial masculinity, as frontline soldiers grappled with the enfeebling and emasculating experience of modern warfare.[43] For many prisoners of war, however, the threat captivity posed to their masculine soldierly identity was particularly acute: John Halpin, captured by the Turks in 1918, wrote that he and his fellow prisoners had 'surrendered manhood'.[44] When shame is understood as a social emotion, through which one may lose one's sense of self, it is clear that capture and captivity could imperil prisoners' identity as soldiers and as men.

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[39] Cull, *Both Sides of the Wire,* 90.
[40] Ivan Allison's comrades raised money to help provide comforts in captivity. Letter, Corporal Dunlop to Red Cross POW Department, 16 September 1918, Australian Red Cross Society, Australian War Memorial (hereafter ARCS AWM), 1DRL/0428, personal file of Ivan Allison.
[41] Garton, 'Return Home', 191.
[42] Twomey, 'Australian Nurse POWs', 257.
[43] John Horne, 'Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850-1950', in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. John Tosh, Karen Hagemann, and Stefan Dudink (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 22–40.
[44] John Halpin, *Blood in the Mists* (Sydney: Macquarie Head Press, 1934), 122.

Battalion histories were generally careful to avoid negative associations with surrender and captivity when describing the capture of their own soldiers. When several men of the 14th battalion were taken prisoner, their capture was used as a vehicle to emphasise the military prowess of other soldiers in the unit, who carried out a 'bold... brilliant and heroic' raid to rescue their captured comrades.[45] Similar to accounts written by former prisoners of war, descriptions of the capture of particular soldiers in unit histories tended to point to wounds, surprise or the strategic inevitability of capture. The 24th battalion's history offered a detailed depiction of the capture of some its men:

> Our right flank party ... gained their objective, but found themselves without sufficient support, and the Germans, moving under the cover of the sunken road, gradually hemmed them in ... they put up a gallant fight against tremendous odds. They had crossed a low ridge and were out of sight, but we could hear their machine-gun firing desperately. For three hours they held on, although several of their number had been put out of action. The pressure gradually increased as the enemy closed in upon them under cover of hedges and banks, and the German machine-guns beat them down with cross fire. When the advance was continued later this party had disappeared. It was subsequently learned that the few who were not put out of action had been taken prisoners.[46]

For these Australian soldiers, 'the position was hopeless, as they were overwhelmed ... without hope of escape', thereby mitigating their culpability for having been taken prisoner.[47] They were represented as having been captured, rather than having surrendered, a distinction that took the agency and responsibility out of the process of surrender and capture. One former prisoner of war, writing in a returned services publication in the 1930s, refused to use the word surrender 'in the accepted sense of deliberately throwing down one's arms in war' to describe his capture. Rather, he described his capture as 'an unavoidable surrender of the body, but not the spirit, or the will'.[48]

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[45] Wanliss, *The History of the Fourteenth Battalion, A.I.F.: Being the Story of the Vicissitudes of an Australian Unit during the Great War*, 139–40.
[46] W.J. Harvey, *The Red and White Diamond: Authorised History of the Twenty-Fourth Battalion A.I.F* (Melbourne: A. McCubbin for the 24th Battalion Association, 1920), 267.
[47] Harvey, 268.
[48] Groves, 'Episode 3: Carrying On', 44.

Australia's official history of the First World War also largely eschewed the term surrender when referring to Australian soldiers. Only enemy combatants, it seemed, could surrender in battle. This was a key tactic deployed by the official war historian, Charles Bean, in his portrayal of the Australian soldier. Rather than ignore or refute instances when Australian soldiers fell short of the Anzac ideal – including when they surrendered to the enemy – Alistair Thomson has argued Bean framed these instances carefully and within the terms of his own positive perception of the character and conduct of Australian soldiers.[49] Aaron Pegram has argued that writing about captivity in this way – rather than ignoring it outright or overtly condemning or stigmatising the actions of captured Australians – 'meant the heroic archetype of the Australian fighting soldier went unchallenged' in the official history of the war.[50] Ultimately, however, the official history devoted little space to captive Australians in comparison to the surrender and capture of enemy combatants. The capture of Australian soldiers, for the most part, was described in brief footnotes and was treated as 'parenthetic to the main battle narrative'.[51]

Depictions of enemy combatants taken prisoner contrasted powerfully with depictions of Australian soldiers being taken captive and reflected a certain ambivalence attached to wartime captivity. German soldiers captured by Australians were described as 'eager to get away from the field', making their way to the Australian lines 'in abject misery,' with a 'look of terror on their faces' from the experience of an Australian

[49] Alistair Thomson, "Steadfast until Death? C.E.W. Bean and the Representation of Australian Military Manhood', *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 93 (1 October 1989), 477.
[50] Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 32.
[51] Pegram has noted that one volume of the official history does deal with captivity in somewhat more detail. The volume was written by Frederick Cutlack about the Australian Flying Corps and concerns the experiences of a handful of Australians' taken prisoner by the Turks at Kut. Bean's volumes, however, largely avoid or marginalise the capture of Australian soldiers. Pegram, 32. See also, Charles Bean, 'The First Fighting in France', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12th ed., vol. The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 205–6; Charles Bean, 'The Battle of Fromelles (Continued)', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12th ed., vol. The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 442; Charles Bean, 'The Battle of Dernancourt', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, 8th ed., vol. The Australian Imperial Force in France During the Main German Offensive, 1918 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 395–97; Charles Bean, 'The Story of Anzac', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, 11th ed., vol. The Story of ANZAC from 4 May, 1915, to the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 470; Charles Bean, 'Struggle for Krithia', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, 11th ed., vol. The Story of ANZAC from 4 May, 1915, to the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 39, 43.

artillery bombardment.[52] Some enemy prisoners were described as 'looking profoundly relieved at being captured', while others were reportedly 'glad their fighting days were over', singing together in their confinement behind the lines.[53] Of course, these depictions were likely not reflective of the experiences or emotions of surrendering enemy prisoners. As Feltman has noted, nationalistic songs amongst German prisoners of war served a number of purposes, one of which was to maintain morale amongst prisoners, and assert an ongoing connection to German national identity and the German war effort.[54] Nonetheless, the manner in which Australian soldiers interpreted the demeanour and conduct of surrendering enemy soldiers was indicative of their own perceptions of men who surrendered.

Despite a deliberate and often sympathetic portrayal of the capture of Australian soldiers, a subtle undercurrent of ambivalence often characterised references to prisoners of war in unit histories and returned services publications. Some battalions celebrated or emphasised the fact that few of their soldiers had been taken prisoner. After describing the capture of several of its soldiers, outlined above, the 24th battalion's unit history noted that until that point, they 'had not lost more than half a dozen men as prisoners during the war, in spite of the many tight corners in which sections of the unit had found themselves from time to time.' The relative scarcity of capture amongst its soldiers, the author concluded, 'speaks eloquently for the tenacity and bravery of our troops'.[55] After proudly noting that few of its men had been taken prisoner throughout the war, another unit history declared that 'the capture of these men brought no shame upon the Unit, for four had been badly wounded, and the fifth lost in the darkness of

[52] Harvey, *The Red and White Diamond: Authorised History of the Twenty-Fourth Battalion A.I.F*, 185.
[53] Australia's Official History contained similar depictions of enemy surrender, though these more commonly featured German prisoners rather than Turkish. Perhaps reflecting the changed relationship between Turkey and Australia after the war, Turkish surrenders were described in more matter of fact terms. Wanliss, *The History of the Fourteenth Battalion, A.I.F.: Being the Story of the Vicissitudes of an Australian Unit during the Great War*, 243; Harvey, *The Red and White Diamond: Authorised History of the Twenty-Fourth Battalion A.I.F*, 185; Charles Bean, 'The Taking of Pozieres', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12th ed., vol. The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 514; Charles Bean, 'The Raid at Armentieres', in *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12th ed., vol. The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 249, 254.
[54] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 106–35.
[55] Harvey, *The Red and White Diamond: Authorised History of the Twenty-Fourth Battalion A.I.F*, 268.

"No Man's Land," to unconsciously wander into the enemy territory.'[56] Even battalions that lost scores of men as prisoner were careful to highlight their experiences as an exception. While the 14th battalion was not reticent in acknowledging the loss of so many of its men during the Battle of Bullecourt, the unit history described the entire battle as a large-scale strategic failure, and noted that 'Bullecourt was the only occasion in the whole war in which the Germans captured any considerable number of Australian prisoners.'[57]

Encapsulated within assertions that capture was unavoidable, and therefore not shameful, was the unspoken opposite: that capture could be shameful, and indeed, that it was inherently shameful. The portrayal of surrendering enemy soldiers as cowardly, enfeebled, and eagerly embracing the safety of captivity, and the valorisation of Australian soldiers who continued fighting rather than allowing themselves to be taken prisoner sat in awkward tension with sympathetic portrayals of Australians being taken prisoner. 'I had mentioned that any man who wished to surrender was fully entitled to do so, for the chances of escape were almost nil,' read one story in a returned services publication. 'It was like expecting to run for hundreds of yards through a violent thunderstorm without being struck by any of the rain drops. Still they chanced it, and soon all had entered the fiery lane of blood and death.'[58] It was only the pluck and tenacity of Australian soldiers prior to their inescapable, unavoidable capture that saved them from the disgrace of capitulation. While Australian soldiers experienced the moment of surrender with varying degrees of discomfort or shame, as Brian Feltman has noted, 'falling into enemy hand has rarely been considered a dignified fate for a soldier.'[59]

Prisoners of war in Australia

Just as prisoners of war were not overtly rejected or condemned by their compatriots for having been taken prisoner, the Australian public demonstrated interest in the fate

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[56] Eric Fairey, *The 38th Battalion, A.I.F.: The Story and Official History of the 38th Battalion A.I.F* (Bendigo: Bendigo Advertiser and the Cambridge Press, 1920), 86.
[57] Wanliss, *The History of the Fourteenth Battalion, A.I.F.: Being the Story of the Vicissitudes of an Australian Unit during the Great War*, 211.
[58] H.W. Murray, 'Memories of First Bullecourt', *Reveille* 10, no. 4 (December 1936): 63.
[59] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 5.

and stories of captives both during and after the war. Throughout the war, there was significant support from the POW Department of the Australian branch of the British Red Cross, which was at least partly funded by public donations and by family members and friends sending money to help supply the parcels sent to loved ones in captivity.[60] As others have noted, for family members back home in Australia, captivity was preferable to death, and infinitely preferable to the dreaded knowledge that a loved one was missing. Captivity, for anxious relatives and friends back home, could come as a relief.[61] Many worked closely with the Red Cross to try to ease the privations of captivity and wrote regularly to the prisoners.[62] Not all friends and relatives were so diligent, however. Secretary of the POW Department, Mary Chomley, frequently exhorted friends and family members to write to their relatives in captivity when prisoners reported that they had not received any mail. 'It seems terrible that these misunderstandings should be allowed to arise between families,' Chomley wrote to a colleague, 'as I am afraid in some cases the men will never forgive their people for their seeming neglect.'[63]

Interest in prisoners of war continued upon their return. While Australian prisoners of war were not immediately distinguishable from other members of the AIF when they disembarked in Australia, local newspapers were careful to deliberately record the return of prisoners of war, most often at an individual level. In March 1919, *The Bundaberg Mail* reported the arrival of Private Unkles at Bundaberg station. In the 'Local & General' section, between reports of a delivery of eggs to a soldiers' hospital in Brisbane and a fatal car accident, *The Bundaberg Mail* reported that Private Unkles, 'the first prisoner of war soldier to return to Bundaberg', had been welcomed home by representatives of the Bundaberg Reception Committee.[64] In early April of the same year, the *Dungog Chronicle* similarly reported on the return of Corporal Bardsley, also

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[60] Ariotti, 'Families of Australian Prisoners in Turkey', 60–64.
[61] Ariotti, 58–59.
[62] Ariotti, 60–64.
[63] Letter, Mary Chomley to Philadelphia Robertson, 28 September 1917, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196, 2015.0033.00488.
[64] 'Local & General: Returned Prisoner of War', *The Bundaberg Mail*, March 24, 1919, 2.

the first prisoner of war to return to the area. Bardsley 'was given the most enthusiastic welcome that has yet been extended to any local soldier on his return'.[65]

Interest in captives and captivity continued throughout the interwar years, though without the same potency of the immediate postwar years. Newspapers occasionally published stories about captivity or local men who had been prisoners of war. Several prisoners took advantage of public interest in captivity, writing and publishing memoirs of their experiences in enemy hands. The first of these narratives were published in the early interwar period, and another series of memoirs were published during the 1930s. Prisoners of war also likely shared their stories in other formats and contexts. The son of one former prisoner of the Germans recalled that his father 'had many tales to tell and with a bit of prompting he would entertain my school mates'. He remembered proudly talking about his father's wartime captivity as a child and recalled that his father was occasionally asked to 'give a talk at smoke nights on his experiences'.[66] The personal papers of Thomas Walter White, a former prisoner of the Turks and later federal parliamentarian, contain notes and copies of speeches that he gave concerning his captivity.[67] The stories of prisoners of war evidently received a ready reception in different contexts and spaces throughout the interwar years, though they did not always leave a mark on the historical record.

Even though they were not numerous, the memoirs produced by former prisoners of war were part of a wider literary context of war remembrance and representation in interwar Australia. Scholars have suggested that this relative obscurity in terms of published accounts contributed to the marginalisation of the memory of captivity in interwar Australia.[68] This argument is premised on the theory that collective memories at a national level are shaped, influenced and dispersed by particular cultural agents. In the case of war memory, commemoration and memorialisation play a central role in shaping how a society remembers war, as do official histories and educational

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[65] 'Prisoner of War Returns', *Dungog Chronicle: Durham and Gloucester Advertiser*, April 8, 1919, 3. Numerous other examples of similar articles exist. See, for example 'Home Again: Corporal Ivan Allison', *Forbes Advocate*, August 12, 1919, 2; 'Two local prisoners of war: civic reception at West Wyalong', *Wyalong Advocate, Mining, Agricultural and Pastoral Gazette*, May 23, 1919, 1; 'Bulli and Woonona', *South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus*, April 25, 1919, 11.
[66] Robert Shiels, *The Kaiser's Guest*, (Mt. Eliza: Private publication by Noel G. Shiels, 1987), n.p.
[67] See MS 9148 Papers of Sir Thomas White, 1900-1992, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA).
[68] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 'Rethinking Captivity', 2–3.

institutions.[69] Popular culture, whether literary or cinematic, also influences and shapes national memories of war.[70] Multiple narratives are generated through these various cultural agents, and while remembering one particular set of images or narratives can obscure another, multiple competing narratives can exist simultaneously. National memories are shaped and renegotiated in relation to changing social, cultural and political factors, which result in shifting national memories over time and across different societies.[71] The Australian literary climate in the wake of the First World War, consequently, can be understood to have both shaped and reflected dominant narratives of Australia's involvement in the First World War.

Retrospective memoirs are particularly useful and illuminating sources of personal memory, partly because of their intended audience. As documents that are often published, memoirs can be understood not only as a kind of dialogue between personal and public memories, but also as a more direct effort to shape and influence prevailing narratives. Memoirs could also be used to facilitate a sense of psychological composure; Jessica Meyer has argued that the personal narratives of British ex-servicemen offered 'space in which men were able to reconstruct their masculine identities as soldiers through redefinitions of the masculine ideals that warfare challenged.'[72] While wartime captivity posed different challenges to masculine ideals, memoirs also offered a similar space of negotiation to former prisoners, allowing them to construct narratives of captivity that responded to prevailing expectations of them as men and as Australian soldiers. The rest of this chapter will explore how these memoirs were positioned in relation to dominant understandings of warfare, martial masculinity and Australian culture. It will suggest that rather than rehabilitate or restore the masculinity of former prisoners, these narratives contributed to the ambivalence of the prisoner of war in interwar Australia.

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[69] Graham Dawson and Richard Johnson, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method', in *Oral History Reader*, eds Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 76.
[70] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 'Rethinking Captivity', 2–3.
[71] Dawson and Johnson, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method', 26.
[72] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 141.

'Redemptive manhood' and the Anzac tradition

The dominant narrative to emerge out of Australia's engagement in the First World War became known as the Anzac legend. This narrative served as a way in which many Australians – both combatant and non-combatant – understood and made sense of the First World War, and the Anzac tradition became the primary frame through which the actions of the nation at war were interpreted and understood.[73] While Anzac was not the only narrative to emerge out of the war, and was certainly not uncontested, the power and cultural dominance of this mythology lay in its ability to give meaning and purpose to the devastation and destruction of the war.[74] In particular, the Anzac tradition positioned the First World War as the crux of Australian nationalism; in the fires of battle, Australian soldiers were understood to have demonstrated the superior virtue of their national character, and forged the Australian nation 'in spirit as well as in name'.[75] The Australian soldier at war gave shape to earlier preoccupations with national character, rather than creating them anew. In particular, the soldier drew on a pre-existing valorisation of the Australian bushman.[76]

The particular qualities that Australian soldiers were reported to have displayed in battle became almost synonymous with wider national character. The Australian soldier was 'enterprising and intelligent, loyal to his mates and to his country, bold in battle, but cheerfully undisciplined out of the line and contemptuous of military etiquette'.[77] Anzac was inherently masculine, premised as it was on the martial masculinity of Australian soldiers. Discourses which linked military masculinity and nationhood during the First World War were not unique to Australia. However, part of the potency of this link in terms of Australian masculinity was Australia's 'unresolved nationalist question' prior to the First World War.[78] The war did not merely mobilise

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[73] Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 25. Alistair Thomson has shown how veterans continued to remember and reinterpret their wartime experiences in relation to these narratives well into the latter half of the twentieth century. Thomson, *Anzac Memories*.

[74] Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 552; Beaumont, 'POWs in Australian National Memory', 187. On the contested nature of Anzac: Fathi and Ziino, 'Coming Home', 14.

[75] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 32. Australia's understanding of itself – its emergent nationalism – was both national and imperial, according to Stephen Garton. Garton, 'Demobilization and Empire'.

[76] Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 16.

[77] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 32.

[78] Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014), 89.

idealised masculinity to reinforce existing understandings of the nation: it mobilised them to create a new nation. As John Tosh notes, 'In periods of emerging national identity or of national resistance, this dominant masculinity is likely to become a metaphor for the political community as a whole and to be expressed in highly idealised forms'.[79]

Australia's postwar literary climate was shaped by the prominence of Anzac. In contrast to the modernist style of war literature favoured in Europe after the First World War, numerous scholars have argued that Australian writers tended to embrace the more traditional heroic style.[80] Such work emphasised the notion that war and battle was the quintessential test of manhood, which rendered it exceptionally suitable for communicating Australia's alleged baptism of fire during the First World War. Robin Gerster went so far as to characterise the common theme of Australian war literature as 'big-noting'; he argued that all Australian war writing – during and after the First World War – served 'as a twentieth-century embodiment of classical heroic virtue'.[81] Clare Rhoden, Christina Spittel and Carolyn Holbrook have suggested that Gerster's argument was slightly exaggerated: as Rhoden noted, even the protagonists of traditional Australian war literature could be victims as well as heroes.[82] Holbrook has suggested that Australian war literature generally – rather than simply facilitating a chorus of triumphal chest-beating over Australian military prowess – reflected both the strain and difficulty of war and the need to ease the 'anxious nationalism' of the new Australian nation. The Australian reading public, according to Holbrook, was interested in European literature in the modernist style, but ultimately 'wanted to remember the *Australian* war as something different – an event that was dreadful but not entirely without meaning.'[83] Australian soldiers, then, had to write about their experiences in a

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[79] John Tosh, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and Gender History', in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, eds John Tosh, Karen Hagemann, and Stefan Dudink (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 49.
[80] See, for example: Garton, *The Cost of War*; Robin Gerster, *Big-Noting : The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987); Holbrook, *Anzac*; Clare Rhoden, *The Purpose of Futility: Writing World War I, Australian Style* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2015).
[81] Gerster, *Big-Noting*, 5.
[82] Rhoden, *The Purpose of Futility*, 52–53; Holbrook, 'The Role of Nationalism in Australian War Literature of the 1930s', 216; Christina Spittel, 'Remembering the War: Australian Novelists in the Interwar Years', *Australian Literary Studies* 23, no. 2 (2007), 121–39.
[83] Holbrook, *Anzac*, 89.

very specific way: one which did not shy away from the difficulty and tragedy of war, but which was ultimately restorative, leaving readers secure in the endurance of the Australian military masculinity that had forged Australian national identity. It was within this literary context that Australian prisoners of war writers worked throughout the interwar years.

Memoirs of captivity were distinct from many of their literary contemporaries. From the outset, these captivity narratives were positioned outside of traditional or heroic war literature. While pointing to the historical value of his narrative, one former prisoner was careful to note that it was 'a story whose telling conjures up no memories of joy such as do other aspects of war life in retrospect but only memories of broken men, broken spirits, a broken enemy nation – melancholy memories, memories not to be brooded upon.'[84] The foreword of another former prisoner's memoir, written by a fellow ex-servicemen, made a point of asserting that 'no stigma should ever be cast upon those who have the misfortune to become prisoners of war'.[85] The almost apologetic tone of some forewords gives credence to Gerster's assertion that the 'POW's exclusion from the potent fighting elite did severe damage to his self-image.'[86]

Like other memoirists in the interwar years, former prisoners responded to and engaged with wider narratives about the war, and in particular with the Anzac tradition. Indeed, Gerster has suggested that the 'trenchantly masculine ideology' of Australian war literature powerfully shaped the prisoner of war writer and the memoirs these men produced.[87] Captivity was a wartime experience that sat awkwardly in relation to idealised notions of martial masculinity, and former prisoners carefully and deliberately negotiated this masculine context. One of the ways in which Australian soldiers asserted a connection to their identity as men and as soldiers – and thus, to the Anzac legend – was to emphasise what Brian Feltman has termed 'redemptive manhood' in their narratives. Redemptive manhood, according to Feltman, refers to acts made by prisoners of war to reassert or rebuild their masculine identities behind barbed wire. In

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[84] William Groves, 'Things I Remember: A Prisoner of War Looks Back', *Reveille* 5, no. 5 (January 1932), 13.
[85] William Cull, *At All Costs* (Melbourne: Australasian Authors' Agency, 1919).
[86] Gerster, *Big-Noting*, 20.
[87] Gerster, 20.

the case of the German prisoners of war studied by Feltman, acts of redemptive manhood extended from overt acts of resistance against captors, including violence, to subtle and personal acts of resistance, such as maintaining physical fitness, decorating and reclaiming personal space, marking national holidays and singing nationalistic songs.[88] In this way, German soldiers in captivity demonstrated their ongoing commitment to the German nation and to the war effort.

Acts of redemptive manhood took on particular significance in postwar retrospective accounts written by Australian prisoners of war. Many of these men sought to frame their captivity as a continuation of hostilities, highlighting their ongoing connection to the battlefield and the war effort. One prisoner of war memoirist, for example, observed that his fellow prisoners of war 'were still fighting the Bosche with an ingenuity and determination which puzzled even while it exasperated him.'[89] These men described varying forms of resistance to their captors, ranging from overt hostility to sabotage and subterfuge.

Sabotaging food supplies and material resources offered an indirect way to deplete the enemy's resources for battle. The significance of prisoner of war sabotage was more apparent in some memoirs than others. One former prisoner wrote about being placed in work that directly related to the war effort – working at an ammunition dump 'cleaning salvaged machine-gun ammunition a good deal of the time' – in direct contravention of the prevailing international agreements. This role posed a significant dilemma: contributing to the death of his comrades in such a direct fashion could only deepen the shame of his captivity. As such, the former prisoner wrote that he and his compatriots worked out a method to sabotage the ammunition: they discovered that 'the bullets could easily be removed, and the powder poured out, then the bullet replaced'. While the bullet would not bear any external signs of tampering, 'it would stop the machine-gun!'[90]

While memoirists recorded instances of refusing to work, particularly when their food rations were inadequate, these men more commonly detailed efforts to work

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[88] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 106–35.
[89] Cull, *Both Sides of the Wire: The Memoir of an Australian Officer Captured during the Great War*, 112.
[90] Horner, *Reason or Revolution?: An Australian Prisoner in the Hands of the Hun*, 62.

slowly or ineffectively. While less overt than outright refusal – and doubtless less likely to incur punishment – working slowly and inefficiently still enabled memoirists to demonstrate their active resistance to their captors. One memoirist claimed that he and his companions, 'did no work beyond rolling the stones we were intended to break, down the hill side'.[91] Another observed a group of prisoners of war planting peas under the watchful eye of their guards. While the prisoners appeared to be performing the task effectively – distributing a seed into each hole, covering the seed with soil and moving on to the next hole – he noted that the prisoners were actually placing all of the seeds into a single hole at the end of the row. The former prisoner wrote that 'when those peas grew it was the most amazing result in agriculture that a German farmer had ever known'.[92] Another memoirists recorded the prisoners in his camp being asked by their captors to give their pre-war profession, presumably to be placed in working roles that matched their existing experience. The men almost immediately 'smelt work' and promptly gave a wide array of peculiar professions: '"Caretaker" said one, "goalkeeper" said another, "golf caddy, diver etc.," were given by the cunning ones, who were not going to commit themselves in any way.' He noted with no small degree of amusement that 'The Turkish War office must have been surprised at the amount of talent they had at their disposal.'[93]

Less obvious forms of resistance were also commonly featured in prisoner of war memoirs. Some former prisoners wrote about feigning illness and injury to avoid work or to endeavour to be exchanged to a neutral country. One prisoner of war writer noted with dismay that his injured ankle 'had completely healed', which left him in the unfortunate position of 'proving fit immediately before the exchange season.'[94] He subsequently described trying to impede his recovery and worsen the injury, an endeavour that 'gave joy to my malingering heart.'[95] Another former prisoner gleefully calculated how much his feigned illness – which prompted a doctor's visit and absence

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[91] Reginald Francis Lushington, *A Prisoner with the Turks, 1915-1918* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1923), 19.
[92] Cull, *Both Sides of the Wire: The Memoir of an Australian Officer Captured during the Great War*, 113.
[93] Lushington, *A Prisoner with the Turks, 1915-1918*, 33.
[94] Thomas Walter White, *Guests of the Unspeakable: The Odyssey of an Australian Airman Being a Record of Captivity and Escape in Turkey*, 1st ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1932), 211.
[95] White, 211.

from work – might have cost his captors financially.[96] Other prisoner of war memoirists described loudly and defiantly singing nationalistic songs. One wrote 'we marched four-deep and in step, whistling "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Tipperary," just to show our Fritz guards that we could march' while another noted that he and his fellow prisoners made a show of singing regimental songs, 'loudly, though certainly without much joy, to the amazement and discomfiture of our guards.'[97]

Escape from captivity was one of the more extreme forms of resistance described by former prisoners of war. Escape stories proved highly popular in British postwar culture, and these narratives became an integral feature of the British cultural landscape in the interwar years.[98] Escape narratives recast military captivity as a lively adventure, and these narratives, as Aaron Pegram has noted, 'offered the possibility of transforming what was essentially a story of surrender, inaction, confinement and oppression into an exciting battle of wits between captive and captor.'[99] Mostly written by officers, Heather Jones has observed that these accounts of captivity 'were particularly noteworthy for their playful tone.'[100] Given the influence of British publishing houses on the Australian market, it is reasonable to suggest that these popular captivity narratives reached Australian audiences.[101]

Like their British counterparts, Australian prisoner of war memoirists also produced stories of their escape from captivity. In these narratives, captivity was posited as a challenge to military masculinity, and successful escapes effectively highlighted bravery, endurance, determination and enterprising intellect of the captives. As one newspaper article noted in 1935, 'Some of the greatest war books have been written about the escape from enemy countries of men of all armies who refused to accept the

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[96] Frank Hallihan, *In the Hands of the Enemy: A Record of the Experiences of Frank Hallihan, 21st Battalion, in German Prison Camps* (Ballarat: Baxter and Stubbs, 1920), 21–22.

[97] John Dawkins, 'An Aussie in Wooden Shoes: The Seriously Humorous Experiences of an Australian Prisoner of War in Germany', *Aussie: The Australian Soldiers' Magazine* (August 1921), 48.
William Groves, 'Episode 4: Early Impressions: Things I Remember: A Prisoner of War Looks Back', *Reveille* 5, no. 7 (March 1932), 65.

[98] Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', 20. See also: Ian Isherwood, 'Writing the "Ill-Managed Nursery": British POW Memoirs of the First World War', *First World War Studies* 5, no. 3 (2 September 2014), 267–86; 'A Fate Worse Than Death?'; Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*.

[99] Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', 20.

[100] Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 321.

[101] Holbrook, *Anzac*, 64–65.

safety of a prison camp for the remainder of the war.'[102] John Eldred Mott's *Experiences and Narrow Escapes of Captain J. E. Mott* emphasised the importance of escape by focussing solely on that feat: evidently, the challenge, adversity and ultimate success of Mott's escape was the only part of his captivity worth recording.[103] Thomas White's *Guests of the Unspeakable* was perhaps the most entertaining and popular example of Australian escape stories, and the account was reprinted in several different editions. White himself praised the virtue of escape literature in the 1930s as a necessary antidote to 'the squalid, the sordid and the vulgar aspects of war parading under the guise of war literature' exemplified by Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.[104]

Escape was a common preoccupation in prisoner of war memoirs, regardless of whether or not the writer had managed to successfully escape captivity. Former prisoners described their plans or desires to escape, as well as thwarted attempts at the same. One such writer, Frank Hallihan, went so far as to allude to having made a successful escape in a small note at the conclusion of his memoir. He wrote that 'it will be of interest to the reader to learn that we were ultimately successful in our escape', and suggested that the story of this escape would 'probably be published shortly'.[105] Neither Hallihan's service record, nor his compulsory repatriation statement make reference to his escape from German captivity.[106] It is possible that the escape Hallihan referred to was rather more a case of the indifference of his German guards, as revolution swept Germany in late 1918.[107] Nonetheless, Hallihan's decision to refer to this escape, if only in passing, is suggestive of the significance of escape amongst Australian prisoners of war. Indeed, the prominence of escape in the memoirs of former prisoners, in concert with newspaper reports on successful escapes like the Holzminden

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[102] 'Just Roamin' Around', *Western Mail*, May 2, 1935, 8.

[103] John Eldred Mott, *Experiences and Narrow Escapes of Captain J. E. Mott.* (London: Chiswick Press, 1917).

[104] 'War literature', *Canberra Times*, September 17, 1931, 4.

[105] Hallihan, *In the Hands of the Enemy: A Record of the Experiences of Frank Hallihan, 21st Battalion, in German Prison Camps*, 28.

[106] Hallihan's service record reports him having been 'repatriated' to England from Germany on 28 November 1918, while his repatriation statement simply notes that he crossed the border into Holland after the armistice, on 26 November 1918. Casualty report form, NAA, B2455, HALLIHAN F; Statement made by Repatriated Prisoner of War, Francis Hallihan, 29 November 1918, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM), AWM30, B6.16(1).

[107] Heather Jones has examined the breakdown of German discipline in considerable depth in: Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 280–84.

Tunnel escape – where several Allied officers escaped Holzminden prisoner of war camp by tunnelling under the camp's fortifications – gave the impression that escape was a relatively common phenomenon amongst Australian prisoners of war. In reality, very few Australian soldiers were actually able to escape captivity; Aaron Pegram has suggested that as few as 43 Australian soldiers successfully escaped from German captivity, and significantly fewer from Turkish captivity.[108]

In addition to offering a compelling and entertaining narrative, escape offered the most apparent way to rehabilitate the masculinity that surrender and captivity threatened. Escape was a daring endeavour that showcased the character, bravery and resolve of prisoners of war, as well as their commitment to the war effort and to their role as soldiers. Escaped captives, unlike those exchanged on medical grounds, were able to return to the front line to continue fighting rather than wait out the end of the war from behind barbed wire.[109] As one former prisoner wrote: 'Fancy a man earning the distinction of the Victoria Cross for escaping and carrying valuable information across to his own side – What glory!'[110] Escape, perhaps more than any other facet of redemptive manhood, offered a direct connection with soldierly identity and martial masculinity. Given that few Australian soldiers managed to escape captivity, however, the majority of memoirists could only point to their desires to escape and to their failed attempts to do so.

Australian prisoners of war writers composed narratives of captivity that refuted many of the negative connotations of this experience and emphasised an ongoing connection with soldierly identity and martial masculinity from behind barbed wire. Unlike their combatant counterparts, however, former prisoners of war were attempting to demonstrate appropriate martial masculinity in a context where this was inherently vulnerable and threatened. While they could point to their efforts to actively resist their captors, and assert a connection to their identity as soldiers, former prisoners could not avoid other aspects of their captivity that complicated this link. In particular, these men could not avoid also acknowledging – and indeed, emphasising – harsh, cruel

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[108] Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', 24.
[109] MacKenzie, 'The Ethics of Escape', 6.
[110] John Dawkins, 'An Aussie in Wooden Shoes: The Seriously Humorous Experiences of an Australian Prisoner of War in Germany', *Aussie: The Australian Soldiers' Magazine* (September 1921), 35.

or poor treatment at the hands of their captors, which complicated their efforts to articulate appropriate martial masculinity.

Harsh captivity and the prisoner of war as a victim

Allegations of mistreatment, cruelty and neglect were prominent features of interwar memoirs of captivity. One former prisoner of the Germans, Frank Hallihan, wrote, 'a lot of people wonder who was responsible for these crimes that the Germans committed. The prisoners know, and could bring thousands to book. But every German has the same hate for the English, so they are all responsible.'[111] Another former prisoner, after describing an experience of mistreatment and cruelty, noted that 'Many experiences in Germany helped to strengthen the point of view that the only good Hun is a dead Hun.'[112] Some former prisoners took this mission to the limits of credibility; one former captive noted hyperbolically that his fellow prisoners 'looked thin after only twenty-four hours in the hands of the Hun.'[113] Another highlighted a relatively inconsequential incident – when a German civilian shot the prisoners' unaccompanied camp dog – 'as a typical instance of the callous brutality and officiousness of the German.'[114]

Prisoners of the Turks similarly constructed a grim picture of Turkish captivity in the interwar period, one that was heavily premised on racist and orientalist stereotypes.[115] One former prisoner wrote that he had not expected decent treatment from a nation 'given only to the exercise of warlike pursuits and the extortion of money from its subjects'.[116] Another described the Turk as 'an uneducated, unreasonable human being, with a born heritage [of] innate cruelty'.[117] He portrayed his Turkish captors as ruthless and barbaric, murdering men after they surrendered, stealing from prisoners and sending them on long, forced marches while starving and semi-clothed.

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[111] Hallihan, *In the Hands of the Enemy: A Record of the Experiences of Frank Hallihan, 21st Battalion, in German Prison Camps*, 15.
[112] Cull, *Both Sides of the Wire: The Memoir of an Australian Officer Captured during the Great War*, 108.
[113] Horner, *Reason or Revolution?: An Australian Prisoner in the Hands of the Hun*, 56.
[114] Arthur Dent, *Fourteen Months a Prisoner of War* (Narrabri: The North Western Courier Print, 1919), 25.
[115] Jennifer Lawless has suggested that former prisoners of the Turks captured during the Gallipoli campaign deliberately emphasised cruelty and mistreatment at the hands of their captors in order to increase their readership and compete with other popular war books available at the time. Lawless, 'Kizmet', 317.
[116] White, *Guests of the Unspeakable*, 96.
[117] Lushington, *A Prisoner with the Turks, 1915-1918*, 29.

Another former prisoner of the Turks consistently implied that his Turkish captors were committing acts of sodomy, bestiality and perversion.[118] Robin Gerster's assertion that former prisoners of war tended to revenge themselves on their captor in post war memoirs holds true for Australian prisoners of the First World War, as many of these men actively encouraged a view of their captors as cruel and brutal in the interwar years.[119]

In depicting their hardship and suffering at the hands of their captors, Australian POW memoirists drew on wider public perceptions of captivity circulating at the end of the war and during the immediate postwar years. Emphasis on wartime atrocity was an important feature of wartime propaganda throughout the war, which aimed to dehumanise the enemy and offer legitimacy to the war effort.[120] Allegations of the mistreatment of vulnerable prisoners of war was a feature of propagandist discourse in several nations by 1916, including Britain, and Australian stories likely drew from this existing discourse.[121] Indeed, even before Australians landed at Gallipoli, Australian newspapers had run stories that alleged mistreatment of British prisoners of war at the hands of the Germans.[122] While Turkish soldiers were often represented in a positive light after late 1915 – which Ariotti aptly notes served to legitimise the failure and subsequent withdrawal of Australian forces from the Gallipoli peninsula – representations of Turkish captivity also became increasingly negative as the war progressed.[123]

In both cases, emphasis on the hardship and suffering of wartime captivity served particular purposes for the Australian government. Negative portrayals of both Turkish and German captivity were used to enhance recruitment in the latter stages of the war, while emphasis on the brutality of German captivity in the immediate postwar period reinforced wartime depictions of the German as a brutal, inhuman enemy, and justified

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[118] Halpin expressed this in terms of the plight of a young prisoner, 'Patsy'. John Halpin, 'Captives of the Turk'. *Reveille* 7, no. 1 (September 1934), 10.
[119] Robin Gerster, 'The Rise of the Prisoner-of-War Writers', *Australian Literary Studies* 12 (1985), 273.
[120] Emily Robertson, 'Propaganda and "Manufactured Hatred": A Reappraisal of the Ethics of First World War British and Australian Atrocity Propaganda', *Public Relations Inquiry* 3, no. 2 (2014), 249.
[121] Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 123.
[122] 'Treatment of Prisoners', *Telegraph*, February 1, 1915, 6.
[123] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 143–45.

both the prosecution of alleged German war crimes during the Leipzig Trials and the aggressive stance of the Allies in peace negotiations at Versailles.[124]

In the latter stages of the war and the immediate postwar period, repatriated prisoners bolstered negative depictions of wartime captivity, sharing stories of hardship and neglect behind barbed wire.[125] Newspapers too reinforced the idea that captivity had been a challenging experience. The *Forbes Times* reported that Corporal Ivan Allison had returned home, 'looking as well as could be expected after his trying experience'.[126] The *Dungog Chronicle* observed that Corporal Bardsley's experiences gave 'a good idea of the horrors of prison life in Germany'.[127] Shortly after the end of the war, the Australian government produced a report on the treatment of Australian prisoners of the Germans. The report, consisting of de-identified personal testimonies of repatriated prisoners of war, included several allegations of mistreatment at the hands of their captors.[128] Australian newspapers seized on the report as evidence that fears for the safety and well-being of Australians in captivity had been well-founded. A Tasmanian newspaper described the report as 'a damnable indictment of the Hun.'[129] Public portrayals of wartime captivity as characterised by hardship, suffering and mistreatment legitimised and facilitated depictions of captors as brutal, cruel and inhuman in memoirs written in the immediate postwar years.

Stories of suffering and hardship in captivity were gradually marginalised throughout the 1920s. Internationally, moves toward European reconciliation in some former belligerent nations, and an associated understanding of soldiers of all nations as common victims of war, limited the relevance and validity of narratives of hardship in

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[124] Ariotti, 149–50; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 29–30; Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 319–20; Alan Kramer, 'The First Wave of International War Crimes Trials: Istanbul and Leipzig', *European Review* 14, no. 04 (October 2006), 441.

[125] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 151; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 29–30.

[126] 'Corporal Ivan Allison', *Forbes Times*, August 15, 1919, 5.

[127] 'Prisoner of War Returns', *Dungog Chronicle: Durham and Gloucester Advertiser*, April 8, 1919, 3. See also: 'Prisoners of war: Private Jack Butters' experiences', *Camperdown Chronicle*, July 17, 1919, 4; 'Penalties of a War Prisoner', *Leader*, May 23, 1919, 6; 'More Hun Brutality: German Treatment of Australian Prisoners', *Area's Express*, March 21, 1919, 5; 'Told by a repatriated prisoner of war', *Camperdown Herald*, December 28, 1919, 65; '"We Are Back Numbers!": Liberated Anzacs speak of horrors endured at hands of Turkish captors', *Herald*, January 28, 1919, 15.

[128] Department of Defence, *How the Germans Treated Australian Prisoners of War* (Melbourne: Department of Defence, 1919).

[129] 'German Brutality', *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, February 12, 1919, 1.

captivity. In the case of British former prisoners, Heather Jones has suggested this move marginalised and silenced their stories.[130] Suggestive of this shift towards reconciliation, one former prisoner was careful to note in the 1930s that his memoir was 'not inspired by any desire to preach a hymn of hate against our former enemies and captors', as 'no decent Digger wants to do that; and, in any case the mind of the world is now turning in the opposite direction to that.'[131]

Burgeoning friendship between Australia and Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s presented particular challenges to former prisoners of the Turks. Positive portrayals of their former captors served to delegitimise and invalidate the experience of captivity for these men, and several memoirists sought to set the record straight. One noted that it was important to present an accurate narrative of Turkish captivity, as there were 'a benighted few who persist in believing that the Turk is a clean fighter. Surely a clean fighter should show consideration to his captives, and how do those who write about the good qualities of the Turks explain the 11, 000 missing on the Dardenelles? Do they know that the Turks killed hundreds of prisoners after being made captives?' The former prisoner continued, 'The Turk is a savage and the country is savage … throughout Asia Minor are the graves of our lads.'[132] According to another former prisoner, a large number of prisoners had died in Turkish captivity, but little was known about this as, 'the reputation that the Turk earned on Gallipoli as a stubborn foe and clean fighter, biassed [sic] the British public in his favour.'[133]

One former prisoner, John Halpin, wrote a vehement letter to the returned services magazine *Reveille* in response to an article praising Turkish soldiers. Halpin chastised the author for his description of the Turks 'as generous foes, splendid fellows etc. etc.'. Halpin wrote, 'Let those who wish to publicly express their appreciation of our erstwhile foes weigh the experiences of comrades in the conflict as a whole, not overlook the dead who fell, not as victims of the cleanly bullet or bayonet, but before unleashed savagery, brutality, and bestiality, and the onslaughts of which they were helpless to

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[130] Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 320–22; Wilkinson, 'A Fate Worse Than Death?', 36–37.
[131] William Groves, 'Things I Remember: A Prisoner of War Looks Back', *Reveille* 5, no. 5 (January 1932), 31.
[132] Lushington, *A Prisoner with the* Turks, 64.
[133] White, *Guests of the Unspeakable*, 95.

oppose.' Halpin went on to state, 'with some knowledge of fact, that *probably 85 per cent. of British prisoners captured by Turkish arms died of starvation, cruelty and neglect.*'[134]

Growing friendship and respect between Australia and Turkey clearly motivated several Australian prisoners of the Turks to write and publish accounts of their experiences to correct the perceived misinterpretation of their former captors. Relative to the total number of Australian prisoners held by the Turks and the Germans, Australian prisoners of the Turks produced a much greater number of published narratives than their counterparts. The conflict between memoirists' portrayal of their captors and wider representations of the Turk as an honourable foe may have affected the popularity and reception of these accounts.[135] However, it also lends credence to Jones' observation that negative – or in this case, purportedly false – depictions of captives or captivity could encourage former prisoners to speak and write about their experiences.

Nonetheless, in an Australian context, the emphasis on brutality and mistreatment of prisoners of war at the hands of their captors ultimately complicated memoirists' attempts to compose an appropriate masculine identity – which drew on idealised Australian military manhood – through their experience of captivity. Captivity was already burdened with connotations of enforced impotence and immobility; emphasis on victimhood only further reinforced the sense that captivity was not an appropriate place to foster military masculinity. Moreover, captivity was certainly not an appropriate vehicle through which to express the idealised Australian military masculinity which had been forged in the fires of battle. Narratives of atrocity and brutality could not assuage the uneasy nationalism of Australian society in the 1920s and 1930s by providing a redemptive tale of Australian military masculinity. Ultimately,

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[134] Original emphasis. Halpin's statistics are not supported by historians. Historians agree that the fatality rate for Australian prisoners of the Turks, while relatively high at around 28 percent, was significantly lower than those proposed by Halpin. John Halpin, 'Praise of the Turks: A "Captive" in Reply' *Reveille* 7, no. 11 (August 1934), 6.

[135] Despite the conflict between memoirists' representations and public perceptions of the Turk as an honourable opponent, Jennifer Lawless observed that historical writing about prisoners of the Turks tended to uncritically echo these memoirs and an official British report produced in the wake of the war, which Lawless describes as 'startling in its use of emotive and biased language'. Lawless, 'Kizmet', 335.

these accounts served to reinforce the awkward relationship between wartime and captivity and dominant understandings of Australian military masculinity after the First World War.

Conclusion

Capture by the enemy during warfare was an experience burdened with varying degrees of guilt and shame for combatant soldiers during the First World War. Even in the absence of outright condemnation or punitive measures being enacted against Australian soldiers who surrendered to the enemy, these men demonstrated an awareness of the negative connotations associated with capture by the enemy. Battalion histories and veterans' publications sought to frame the surrender of Australian soldiers as distinct from that of their enemy counterparts, often eschewing the term surrender itself and framing capture as an inevitable, unavoidable, and desperately undesirable consequence of battle conditions. Yet, even in the absence of outright condemnation, a subtle current of ambivalence undercut the sympathetic portrayal of the capture and captivity of Australian soldiers.

Concern for the well-being of Australian soldiers in captivity translated to a general interest in the stories and experiences of these men in the immediate postwar years, enabling some to write and publish accounts of their captivity. Yet these accounts were positioned awkwardly in relation to wider narratives and understandings of Australian soldiers at war and in particular the valorisation of Australian martial masculinity inherent in the Anzac legend. Former prisoners of war writing about their captivity emphasised the active and resistive nature of their captivity, pointing to various feats of opposition against their captors – refusing to work, working slowly or lazily, feigning injury or illness, as well as outwitting or mocking their guards – and used these acts of resistance to frame their captivity in terms of the wider Australian soldierly identity, emphasising the endurance, bravery, intellect and good humour of the Australian soldier in captivity. Yet these acts of redemptive manhood inevitably occurred in a context in which masculinity was fraught, where captives were at least partly at the mercy of their enemies, or the victims of poor treatment and outright cruelty. Despite the efforts of prisoner of war writers, the experiences of captives continued to be marked by ambivalence and relative obscurity, a cultural context that

would come in to play when former prisoners themselves began to seek help from the repatriation organisation in the interwar years.

Chapter 2

Shared identity? Release, return and veteran advocacy in interwar Australia

In 1935, a small group of former prisoners of war in Adelaide announced the formation of the first Ex-Prisoners of War Club in Australia. 'To the many varieties of Diggers' clubs now in existence' an article in *Smith's Weekly* stated, 'yet another is to be added.'[1] The club was targeted at former prisoners of the Germans, who made up the bulk of the veteran prisoner of war population in Australia. The purpose of the Australian club was twofold. On the one hand, the group provided a sense of camaraderie and companionship between former prisoners, and a chance to share stories of capture and captivity in the postwar years.[2] However, the club also provided a material function: it linked former prisoners of war to their fellow ex-prisoners for the purpose of supporting pension applications to Australia's repatriation organisation.[3] 'In addition to the social side of the new organisation,' the article in *Smith's Weekly* noted, 'these Diggers hope to help each other in the claims of any suffering sickness from war causes.'[4] While the original club included members from across Australia, in 1938 a specific New South Wales prisoner of war club was formed, and the South Australian branch attempted to encourage Victorian ex-prisoners to form a similar group in 1939.[5]

Veterans' groups were a prominent part of the social, cultural and political landscape in interwar Australia. While much historical attention has been devoted to the activities of the Returned Services League, then known as the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), smaller veterans' associations also played a role in promoting and advocating for the interests of specific groups of

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[1] 'Ex-Prisoners of War Club', *Smith's Weekly*, December 28, 1935, 16.
[2] 'Ex-Prisoners of War Club', *Smith's Weekly*, December 28, 1935, 16; Minutes, 23 January 1939, Minute books and associated reports, Records of the ex-POW Association of South Australia, State Library of South Australia (hereafter SLSA) SRG 869, 1.
[3] 'Ex-Prisoners of War Club', *Smith's Weekly*, December 28, 1935, 16.
[4] 'Ex-Prisoners of War Club', *Smith's Weekly*, December 28, 1935, 16.
[5] 'Ex-Prisoners of War', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 25, 1938, 5; Minutes, 28 November 1939, SLSA SRG 869, 1.

veterans.[6] Some were primarily social organisations, designed to bring returned men together and preserve the bonds created between soldiers during the war. Others existed to offer material support to veterans and their families, particularly those suffering from specific illnesses or disabilities that complicated family life.[7] Veterans' organisations could also play an important political role, lobbying to mobilise public sentiment and make changes to veterans' entitlements under the *Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act* in the interwar period.

Veterans' organisations reflected and helped to construct a shared sense of identity amongst their members. Whether it was a particular wound or condition, or their wartime company or battalion, members of specific veterans' groups shared a commonality that bound them together. The relatively late emergence of prisoner of war groups in Australia suggests that former prisoners took longer than some other groups of veterans to recognise and formalise this shared sense of identity. These groups remained relatively small and did not gain any political momentum until after the Second World War, when they were expanded and re-organised to accommodate the comparatively vast numbers of prisoners of war returning from Japanese and European captivity in the 1940s.[8]

Australian prisoners of war were not alone in their reticence to form a veterans' organisation that cohered around the experience of captivity. It was not until 1928 that British prisoners of war formed a specific group for former captives, in an effort to 'keep together those who suffered the trials of war prisoners and to foster the spirit of comradeship formed whilst in captivity.'[9] The Australian and British approach was out of step with other nations, where former prisoners mobilised quickly to form specific organisations. Scholars have suggested that the process of release and return, and the reception of returning prisoners, were significant factors that influenced the trajectory of formal organisation among returned prisoners. British prisoners of war, who were

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[6] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 52.

[7] Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 178–205.

[8] Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 30. In February 1939, the South Australian branch recorded that they had 22 paying members and encouraged these men to recruit other former prisoners. The New South Wales branch, meanwhile, had more than 60 members by November 1939. Minutes, 13 February and 28 November 1939, SLSA SRG 869, 1.

[9] 'Prisoners of War: Association', *Reveille* 4, no. 9 (May 1931), 23.

not subjected to harsh or adversarial repatriation processes, nor to a hostile or indifferent reception upon their return home, tended not to speak or publish widely on their experiences, and did not form a specific prisoner of war group in the early interwar period.[10] Oliver Wilkinson has suggested that stigmatic connotations of surrender and captivity left the bulk of former prisoners in Britain reticent to write about their experiences, while 'the postwar context denied them a language to speak about their experiences even if they had wanted to'.[11] By contrast, when confronted with the seeming indifference of the German government and their perceived unwillingness to advocate on behalf of prisoners of war – many of whom languished in enemy captivity until 1920 – German prisoners of war established influential veterans' groups to advocate for their rights and needs.[12] These organisations retained significant influence into the 1930s.[13]

The significance of return in shaping postwar attitudes is also manifest in studies of Second World War captivity. Australian prisoners of war interned throughout Europe were recovered from captivity far earlier than their counterparts in Japan and the Pacific. As a result, the men held in Europe were able to spend several months physically recovering from their experience of prolonged captivity, before embarking on a long journey home to Australia. By contrast, men taken captive by the Japanese spent a few weeks in recovery camps before a short journey to Australia. On their arrival, the poor physical condition of many of these men still spoke powerfully to a harsh and difficult captivity. Peter Monteath has argued that the coincidentally simultaneous arrival of these two groups of former prisoners of war in Australia shaped public perceptions of two very different experiences of captivity for these men: one of relative ease for European prisoners compared to one of hardship and suffering for prisoners of the Japanese.[14]

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[10] Heather Jones has suggested that a lack of overt stigma against prisoners of war or captivity can partly explain the absence of any prisoner of war group in the early interwar period. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 324.

[11] Wilkinson, 'A Fate Worse Than Death?', 37.

[12] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 149; Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 338–52.

[13] Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender*, 149; Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 338–52.

[14] Peter Monteath, 'Beyond the Colditz Myth: Australian Experiences of German Captivity in World War II', in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, eds Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 116–17. For more on

The processes of release and return can be understood as pivotal factors that shaped the ways in which wartime captivity was understood and remembered. Accordingly, this chapter will focus on how the means by which former prisoners of war were recovered from captivity and returned to Australia influenced their capacity to develop a shared identity as prisoners of war. The chapter will then turn to consider the function and significance of veterans' organisations in the postwar period, and the implications of the absence of a specific veterans' organisation for prisoners of war in interwar Australia.

Release, return and shared identity

Ideological, logistical and geopolitical factors shaped the experience of release and return in specific ways. In some cases, repatriation processes were overtly hostile, reflecting the belief that prisoners of war were cowards, deserters or even traitors. Many Italian prisoners of war were imprisoned upon their return to Italy.[15] Austria-Hungary grappled with fears of disloyalty amongst returning men. A fractured and multi-ethnic empire before the war, Austro-Hungarian leadership feared that its prisoners of war were particularly susceptible to indoctrination by enemy forces, particularly Bolshevik sympathisers.[16] As such, many of these men had to make their own way home, where they were subjected to particularly stringent and punitive repatriation processes – which included rigorous interrogation, and ten days of 'disciplinary re-education' – designed to identify and correct any potentially subversive elements.[17] While in captivity, Indian prisoners of war were met with concerted efforts on the part of their captors to shift their loyalties away from their British colonisers.[18] Regardless of the outcome of these endeavours, Indian prisoners were viewed as inherently suspicious, and were exposed to an adversarial repatriation process in an effort to eliminate

the role of repatriation and return in shaping perceptions, see also Seumas Spark, 'Dishonourable Men? The Australian Army, Prisoners of War and Anglo-German POW Repatriations in the Second World War', *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 2 (4 May 2014), 244; Bryce Abraham, 'Bringing Them All Back Home: Prisoner of War Contact, Recovery and Reception Units, 1944–45.', *Summer Vacation Scholarship Scheme, Australian War Memorial*, 2015, 33.

[15] Nachtigal, 'The Repatriation and Reception of Returning Prisoners of War, 1918–22', 176.

[16] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 194.

[17] Rachamimov, 194.

[18] Jarboe, 'The Prisoner Dilemma', 202.

disloyalty and potential threats to the British Empire.[19] After a disorganised repatriation, French prisoners of war received what Heather Jones has characterised as a 'muted welcome' on arrival in France, and the postwar status of these men was ambiguous.[20] Other prisoners of war experienced long, uncertain and psychologically discomforting delays before they were able to return home. Many German soldiers were forced to remain in enemy captivity well into the postwar period; French authorities refused to release these men until 1920.[21] This practice was not limited to the allies, and the German government similarly retained Russian prisoners of war for labour purposes after 1918.[22]

Relative to many of their international compatriots, Australian prisoners of war experienced a logistically and politically uncomplicated return to civilian life. Most had been recovered from enemy captivity by early 1919, and, consequent on the wider demobilisation of Australia's fighting forces, they proceeded to return home. They did not face overt scrutiny or condemnation for having been made prisoners of war; indeed, as the previous chapter noted, the return of individual prisoners of war to their communities was heralded by local newspapers across Australia throughout 1919 and 1920, often with a measure of pride. Yet return was not without difficulty. When Sergeant Frederick Allison wrote to Mary Chomley of the Red Cross POW Department in November of 1918 to enquire after the whereabouts of his brother, Ivan, Chomley cautioned him that return from enemy captivity might have taken a toll on his brother.[23] Corporal Ivan Allison had been wounded and taken prisoner by the German army in April of 1918.[24] In the process of travelling to England from German captivity, Chomley warned, Ivan and his fellow captives would likely experience 'great fatigue and exposure and discomfort'. As a result, she noted, 'none of these men will be quite in their usual state of health.'[25] Return, then, could be both physically and psychologically gruelling.

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[19] Jarboe, 202.

[20] Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 292, 327.

[21] Jones, 302; Jones, 'Prisoners of War', 289.

[22] Nachtigal, 'The Repatriation and Reception of Returning Prisoners of War, 1918–22', 169.

[23] Letter, Frederick Allison to Mary Chomley, 29 November 1918, ARCS AWM; Letter, Mary Chomley to Ivan Allison, 2 December 1918, ARCS AWM.

[24] Statement of service, 14 June 1917 and 5 April 1918, Ivan Allison SERN 1615, NAA B2455 ALLISON I.

[25] Letter, Mary Chomley to Ivan Allison, 2 December 1918, ARCS AWM.

Release and return were immensely significant to prisoners of war. Published memoirs suggest that these men focused on the prospect of their release, or escape, from the earliest moments of their capture. In varying degrees of eloquence and detail, they also commented on such matters in their letters to the Red Cross POW Department. Private Quiggan, for example, wrote to Mary Chomley of how he awaited 'that happy day when we receive our liberty and peace is declared,' while Private Gradwell wrote that he was 'waiting patiently for the Day of Release.'[26] Fixation on the prospect of release – in concert with the uncertain duration of captivity – were central to Vischer's identification of the psychological syndrome he called 'barbed wire disease'.[27] The physical strain and discomfort of Ivan Allison's return was likely offset, in part, by his relief at being released from captivity.

A small percentage of prisoners had been released via exchange agreements, which, in accordance with the provisions of the 1907 Hague Convention, enabled sick or injured prisoners of war to either return home or be interned in a neutral country for the duration of the war.[28] The specific form of any exchange agreement was the result of negotiations between individual belligerent nations during the war; as part of a wider Imperial force, Australian prisoners of war were covered under British agreements with the Ottoman Empire and Germany. Under these agreements, both belligerents periodically put forward lists of men they believed were eligible for exchange. These men were examined by a medical commission comprising of two medical personnel from a neutral country, and one from the captor nation.[29] Men who were approved for exchange were sent first to a neutral country, and the most severe cases were sent on first to England, then to Australia. By the end of the war, these agreements had expanded to include prisoners of war experiencing poor mental health as well as physical health, and included officers – though not men of the other ranks – who had

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[26] Letter, J Quiggin to Mary Chomley, 17 September 1917, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196, 2015.0033.00488; Postcard, J. Gradwell to Mary Chomley, 12 November 1917, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196, 2015.0033.00488.

[27] 'Barbed Wire Disease', *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3056 (1919), 107.

[28] Letter, Australian Imperial Force Commandant to Department of Defence, 14 June 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374; Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 64.

[29] Letter, Australian Imperial Force Commandant to Department of Defence, 14 June 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.

been in captivity for more than 18 months.[30] Overall, fewer than ten percent of Australian prisoners of war were liberated before the end of the war by virtue of these agreements, most of them in the latter stages of the conflict.[31] An even smaller percentage of Australian prisoners of war managed to escape their captors and make their own way back to the Australian lines.[32] The vast majority were released from captivity and returned home after the end of the war.

Formal responsibility for the release and recovery of all Australian prisoners of war fell to the British government. This precedent had been well-established during the war, when the British took responsibility for acting on behalf of all Imperial prisoners of war in negotiations for the exchange of sick and wounded captives. When Australian politicians pushed the government to confirm that captive Australians would be included in a proposed prisoner exchange in mid-1918, polite enquiries from the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, were met with a firm reply from the Right Honourable Walter Long, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies.[33] Long made it clear that Australian prisoners of war would not be considered distinct from their British counterparts in the process of exchange, and reinforced the extent of British control over all Imperial troops in captivity, noting that 'Any question of repatriation from overseas will be referred to this country for the views of the Imperial War Cabinet.'[34] Concerns from the Australian Red Cross POW Department that Australian prisoners of war were not being appropriately represented in prisoner

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[30] Letter, Australian Imperial Force Commandant to Department of Defence, 14 June 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374; Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 64.

[31] In October of 1918, Senator George Pearce, Minister for Defence, reported that ten officers and 222 other ranks had been exchanged to England by virtue of these agreements, while a further 17 officers and 57 men had been exchanged for internment in Holland and Switzerland, the majority of these from German captivity. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 2 October 1918, https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansards80/1918-10-02/0023/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf.

[32] Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom'.

[33] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 16 May 1918, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1918-05-16/0051/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 30 May 1918, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1918-05-30/0120/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf; Letter, The Right Honourable Walter Long, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Governor-General, 22 June 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.

[34] Letter, The Right Honourable Walter Long, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, 22 June 1918 Governor-General, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.

exchanges were met with firm assurances from the Australian Minister for Defence, George Pearce, about the efficacy of the existing system.[35] Pearce reassured the President of the Australian branch of the Red Cross, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, that 'everything possible is being done to ensure that Australians will participate in the exchange expected to materialise as a result of the recent Conference at the Hague'. Pearce also reminded Munro-Ferguson that ultimately, 'the right of selection of prisoners for repatriation...rests with the German Government'.[36] Though the final decision as to which prisoners of war were to be exchanged did rest with German authorities, it was clear that Pearce was unwilling to press either AIF Headquarters or the Imperial War Cabinet about the plight of Australian prisoners of war.

At the conclusion of the war, Australian civil and military authorities played a small role in the initial recovery of Australian soldiers from captivity, and only formally took responsibility for these men once they had been processed through British reception camps. The British Mobilization Directorate developed recovery protocols in 1917. Following the precedent of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, at the cessation of hostilities, prisoners of war were to be transported to either the nearest former battle line, or to neutral territory to be exchanged for enemy prisoners of war: for instance, those prisoners being kept in France would be exchanged across the former Western Front.[37] Each belligerent nation would be responsible for transporting enemy prisoners to these designated points of exchange. Plans for the reciprocal exchange of prisoners of war were never realised. The armistice with the Ottoman Empire in October of 1918 demanded the immediate transportation of all allied prisoners of war to Constantinople, where they would be 'handed over unconditionally to the allies.'[38] The signing of the armistice with Germany on 11 November 1918 nullified any previous repatriation

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[35] Though cautious in her wording, Mary Chomley believed blame for issues with exchange lay either with the British authorities, 'who may use their influence to urge the transfer of men in the British Army, whose relatives and friends may in their turn be bringing pressure to bear them,' or the Germans, who were perceived to be capable of attempting 'to create ill-feeling by keeping back the Australians and putting them at a disadvantage' when compared to other British troops. Both Chomley and Munro-Ferguson advocated for stronger representation on behalf of sick and wounded Australian prisoners. Report, Prisoner of War Department of the Australia Branch of the British Red Cross, September 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 211, 2015.0033.00635.

[36] Letter, Senator George Pearce, Minister for Defence to Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, 7 October 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.

[37] Mobilization Directorate: Demobilization Principle 7, 7 November 1917, NAA, MP367/1, 56/8/197.

[38] Terms of the Armistice, 7 November 1918, NAA, CP78/27, 1919/89/145/9.

agreements, and similarly demanded the immediate return of all allied prisoners of war.[39] Both agreements were pointedly non-reciprocal in their terms.

While no longer reciprocal, plans for the return of Allied prisoners still largely operated along the lines of the earlier proposal from the Mobilisation Directorate. Prisoners held by the Turks were transported to either Constantinople or Smyrna, or directly to Egypt. From there, some men chose to accept an offer to return directly to Australia, while others chose to travel on to England.[40] Prisoners held by the German forces in France and Belgium were transported to the former battlefront and handed over to allied troops. Those prisoners being held in Germany were transported to specific recovery points to await transportation to neutral territories, or directly to the United Kingdom. The order in which prisoners were transported to England was dictated by the physical and psychological health of the men, and by the length of their internment.[41]

The experience of return for many Australian prisoners of war, though not as arduous as that of many other prisoners of war internationally, was marred by delay, uncertainty, and, in some instances, physical hardship. Given the array of logistical, social and political difficulties presented by the end of the First World War, it is perhaps unsurprising that the recovery of prisoners of war was not always a high priority. Indeed, initial plans for the repatriation of prisoners specified that this process 'must be carried out without interfering in any way with the demobilization of our armies at home or in any theatre of war'.[42] The repatriation of prisoners of war was also a substantial logistical undertaking for both Germany and the former Ottoman Empire. Between seven to nine million men are estimated to have been taken prisoner throughout the First World War. Historians have posited that, by late 1918, Germany alone had captured approximately 2.4 million prisoners of war from a variety of nations, while the Ottoman Empire had captured over 30,000 allied soldiers.[43]

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[39] Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War*, 175.
[40] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 200–201.
[41] Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War*, 175–76.
[42] Mobilization Directorate: Demobilization Principle 7, 7 November 1917, NAA, MP367/1, 56/8/197.
[43] Heather Jones and Uta Hintz, 'Prisoners of War (Germany)', *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, accessed 20 February 2019, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/prisoners_of_war_germany; Yücel Yanikdag, 'Prisoners of war (Ottoman

The 'immediate relief' promised by the armistice was perhaps not as immediate as some prisoners might have hoped.[44] Alfred Gray, working in close proximity to German civilians, read in a local newspaper that the conditions of the armistice included the 'immediate relief of allied prisoners'. Eager to return to England and subsequently Australia, Gray made his way back to a larger camp in the area to await transport to England.[45] He finally arrived in England just shy of seven weeks after the signing of the armistice that had formally granted him his freedom.[46] While the delays Australian prisoners of war experienced were comparatively insignificant to many of their international counterparts, they still took an emotional and psychological toll on returning prisoners. Some men struggled to maintain morale as they waited for transportation. In late November Leslie Ward wrote in his diary that he was 'mad with delight' upon hearing that he and his fellow prisoners were to be transported back to England from Germany. After news that their return had been delayed, Ward wrote that he and his fellow prisoners were all 'feeling very much down in the dumps'. Ward's tone was more subdued in later entries. 'Orders this morning say we are to move at any moment,' he wrote in early December of 1918, 'but we have had so many of these orders that we can't raise much excitement now'.[47] After months and years of tedious and uncertain confinement, dreaming of the moment of their release, prisoners of war endured yet more doubt and uncertainty after their formal liberation from enemy captivity.

Not all Australian prisoners patiently awaited transportation. Some seized the opportunity for liberation when it arrived and attempted to make their own way back to England or Egypt. Others did not have a choice but to find their own way; at the end of the war, the Red Cross POW Department reported that in Germany, '[s]hortly after the signing of the Armistice and in some cases before, the camps were opened as a result

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Empire/Middle East)', *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, accessed 20 February 2019, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/prisoners_of_war_ottoman_empiremiddle_east

[44] Almost two months after the cessation of hostilities, more than 500 Australian prisoners of war were thought to still be in former enemy territory. Letter, AIF Commandant to Department of Defence, 8 January 1919, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.

[45] Gray, *In the Hands of the Hun: Experiences of Private Alfred Gray, of Kyneton*, np.

[46] Gray, np.

[47] Diary, Leslie Norman Ward, November - December 1918, AWM, PR83/230, Ward, Leslie Norman (Lieutenant, 68 Squadron, RFC).

of the revolution and the men told that they were free'.[48] Corporal Bardsley and his prisoner of war companions were reportedly 'turned adrift, and told to do the best they could for themselves' by their German captors at the end of the war.[49] This was also the case for some Australian prisoners of the Turks, who were abandoned by their captors and forced to find their own way to Constantinople after the signing of the armistice with Turkey.[50] These men often faced a taxing and dangerous journey – exposed to disease and starvation – that historian Jonathan Vance has described as 'far from the triumphant return that some of them might have envisioned.'[51] Robert Shiels was one such prisoner. He decided to leave the farm he had been working on just prior to the signing of the armistice. Many of the prisoners he travelled with died of disease, while Shiels suffered serious frostbite to both feet due to the freezing conditions, and very nearly died of disease himself. He arrived in Ripon on 11 December 1918, 'a bag of bones', having left the farm he had worked at over a month earlier.[52] He later reflected that he would not have attempted the journey had he known what it would cost him, physically and psychologically.[53] Despite assurances from the Secretary of State for the Colonies that the British government was working to repatriate all Imperial prisoners of war quickly and safely, and make provisions for men who had chosen to make their own way home, it was clear that plans for the return of former prisoners had not adequately apprehended the postwar reality.[54]

In contrast to the discomfort and uncertainty of their recovery from captivity, former prisoners were greeted eagerly by crowds of civilians on their return to England. For many prisoners, the rapturous enthusiasm of these crowds reflected their own sense of euphoria at having secured their freedom. Joy was written on their faces; on observing the return of former prisoners of war in England, Mary Chomley wrote that, '[t]here is such an expression of absolute happiness on the faces of repatriated Prisoners of War

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[48] Australian Red Cross Society Monthly Leaflet, January 1919, ARCS UoM, 2016.0055 Unit 1, 2016.0055.0000.
[49] 'Prisoner of War Returns', *Dungog Chronicle: Durham and Gloucester Advertiser*, April 8, 1919, 3.
[50] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 197.
[51] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 54–55.
[52] Robert Barrett Shiels, *The Kaiser's Guest* (Mt. Eliza, Victoria: Private publication by Noel G. Shiels, 1987), 29.
[53] Shiels, 26.
[54] Cablegram, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Prime Minister's Department, 20 November 1917, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374; Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 74.

such as I have hardly ever seen on the any other human being.'[55] Kate Ariotti has noted that photographers sent to capture the ravages that Turkish captivity had wreaked on hapless Australian prisoners were foiled by the jubilant expressions of these recently released men.[56] In a brief letter to his parents, one former prisoner described life after his release as 'one big whirl', and apologised for penning such a short, euphoric missive. 'But', he wrote, 'the breath of regained freedom has wafted my soul to the heights of untold emotions, and this is one of the eddies'.[57] In a retrospective account of captivity, another prisoner struggled to give voice to his feeling upon finally having been released. He wrote that, 'it would be impossible to describe our feelings. Something seemed to have snapped. The relaxation and relief, mingled with overwhelming joy … combined to bring about a peculiar emotion.'[58]

For some former prisoners, however, jubilant welcomes from crowds of civilians could also cause discomfort and anxiety. William Cull reflected with some uneasiness that, while it was 'overwhelmingly, humanly beautiful', one of the rousing welcomes he and his fellow prisoners received in Switzerland 'had more the air of a procession of heroes than the coming home of maimed, wasted, useless prisoners of war'.[59] Cull was one of the small number of Australian prisoners who was exchanged as a result of the severe wounds he had sustained prior to his capture. As part of the process of his return, Cull also had to come to terms with the fact that he could no longer serve as a frontline soldier. Prisoners of war released at the cessation of hostilities also had to accept this reality: they would end the war as prisoners, rather than soldiers. Release and return were consequently bound up with a complex mix of powerful and often contradictory emotions.

After their arrival in England or Egypt, the majority of Australian prisoners of war were transported directly to a designated reception camp before being returned to

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[55] Letter, Mary Chomley to Philadelphia Robertson, 17 January 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196, 2015.0033.00488.

[56] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 199–200.

[57] Letter, Patrick Auld to parents, 8 December 1918, AWM, PR2DRL/0072, Papers of Captain Patrick Howard Auld.

[58] Dent, *Fourteen Months a Prisoner of War*, np.

[59] Cull, *Both Sides of the Wire: The Memoir of an Australian Officer Captured during the Great War*, 200.

the command of the AIF.[60] Those who required immediate medical attention were hospitalised rather than processed through a reception camp. Some of these men were in poor physical condition. George Handsley noted that, after their release from Turkish captivity, most of his fellow prisoners 'were only fit for hospital on arrival'.[61] He himself experienced problems with his digestion which he attributed to 'the irregularity of our food during the term of our imprisonment'.[62] John Cowden, a prisoner of the Germans, arrived in England weighing less than 50 kilograms.[63] Cowden's poor physical condition on his release was later alleged to have been the result of periods of punishment whereby his captors withheld food parcels and correspondence from home.[64] However, the majority of Australian prisoners of war received regular care packages from the Red Cross throughout their captivity, and, with the exception of those who contracted illnesses like Spanish Influenza, which was rife in many prisoner of war camps, or those injured during their captivity, most Australian prisoners of war returned in relatively good physical health.[65] Indeed, one former prisoner was concerned that the apparent health of returning prisoners might cause awaiting civilians no small measure of consternation, as they attempted to reconcile the appearance of these men with 'the ill-treated, starved prisoners' that they had heard about throughout the war.[66]

Reception camps were primarily targeted at preventing the spread of diseases that prisoners of war might possibly transmit to civilian populations, managing hygiene and nutrition, reclothing men in the appropriate uniform, and obtaining statements and information about their captivity. On arrival, men were medically examined, supplied with a new uniform and given plenty of opportunity to attend to their personal hygiene: the Mobilisation Directorate advised camp staff that, '[a]blution arrangements

[60] Mobilization Directorate: Demobilization Principle 8: General Principles for Prisoner of War Reception Camp, 7 November 1917, NAA, MP367/1, 56/8/197.
[61] George Handsley and J.R. Foster, *Two and a Half Years a Prisoner of War in Turkey. Related by G.W. Handsley and Written by J.R. Foster.* (Brisbane: Jones & Hambly, 1920), 62–63.
[62] Handsley and Foster, 62–63.
[63] Statement in support of pension application, 22 June 1953, John Cowden, NAA, PP18/1, R12421.
[64] Statement in support of pension application, 22 June 1953, John Cowden, NAA, PP18/1, R12421.
[65] Heather Jones analyses the impact of the influenza pandemic on British prisoners of war in German captivity. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 269–74.
[66] Horner, *Reason or Revolution?: An Australian Prisoner in the Hands of the Hun*, 109.

should be on a liberal scale'.[67] It does not appear that any measure of special attention was devoted to helping these men to adjust to their newfound freedom.

While in reception camps, prisoners of war were required to provide information about their surrender and their time in captivity. The manner in which this information was collected depended on the army each prisoner served in; British prisoners of war, for instance, could face a formal Court of Inquiry to explain their surrender. Australian prisoners of war did not generally face such formal and adversarial proceedings, though they were interviewed about their time in captivity, and each produced a signed repatriation statement. These statements described capture, the conditions of captivity in terms of food, lodging, work and treatment by the enemy, as well as any information on prisoners who were unaccounted for. Repatriation statements were ostensibly for historical purposes – the AIF Commandant described them as having 'considerable historical value' – but they were also implicitly redemptive, offering prisoners of war the chance to highlight the inevitability of their surrender, and to emphasise poor treatment from their captors.[68]

Australian prisoners of war spent only a short amount of time in British reception camps, sometimes only a couple of days. The camps had only been designed to house 5,000 men, and, given that approximately 2000 former prisoners were estimated to be arriving each day in late 1918, space in reception camps was limited.[69] On release from the reception camp, prisoners of war were paid and given at least a month's leave before they were expected to report to the AIF to await demobilisation.[70] The speed with which prisoners of war were processed through reception camps also gave them little opportunity to recuperate and adjust, either psychologically or physically, to their newfound freedom.

The experience of freedom after months and often years of confinement was diverse. On his arrival in Switzerland from German captivity, William Cull described

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[67] Mobilization Directorate: Demobilization Principle 8: General Principles for Prisoner of War Reception Camp, 7 November 1917, NAA, MP367/1, 56/8/197.
[68] Letter, AIF Commandant to Department of Defence, 14 June 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 567/2/374.
[69] Letter, Mary Chomley to Frederick Allison, 2 December 1918, ARCS AWM; Australian Red Cross Society Monthly Leaflet, January 1919, ARCS UoM, 2016.0055 Unit 1, 2016.0055.0000,.
[70] Report, Final Report on the Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, 1919, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196 2015.0033.00490.

experiencing a 'complete nervous breakdown' that lasted for three weeks. During this time, Cull found that his heart was racing, and he was 'unable to either sleep or read'.[71] Working with the Red Cross in London in the latter stages of the war, Mary Chomley observed that returning prisoners like William Cull were all 'suffering from the mental depression or nervous excitability which seem to be the inevitable result of the terrible experience they have undergone.'[72] Of course, not all Australian prisoners of war reported difficulty adjusting to their freedom. Many treated their leave as an opportunity to explore and travel, visiting friends and family nearby. George Handsley wrote that he 'had the time of my life' while on leave in England. Handsley found that everyone he encountered 'wished to give me a good time, in some measure to compensate me for the ill treatment I had received at the hands of the Turks.'[73] While many men, like Handsley, genuinely enjoyed their time in London, scholars have suggested that sudden freedom could be both exhilarating and overwhelming for many former prisoners of war.[74] Even if they did not break down in ways similar to William Cull, it was apparent that some struggled to return to the confines of army discipline after the expiration of their leave. The service records of many returned prisoners document their failure to return from their leave within the allotted time frame, in addition to various other small infractions and breaches of military discipline, as they awaited return to Australia.

The Australian Red Cross POW Department served as an important touchstone for former prisoners of war navigating the transition from captivity to freedom, particularly for those prisoners who did not have family or friends nearby. The POW Department encouraged former prisoners to visit their London headquarters as often as they liked and provided designated space to read and write. They also offered assistance locating food and lodging for those who required it. While Mary Chomley's efforts to

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[71] William Cull chose not to write in great detail about his time in England after his release, and it is difficult to know more about his mental state at this time. Cull, *Both Sides*, 206.

[72] Report, Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, September 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 192 2015.0033.00465.

[73] Handsley and Foster, *Two and a Half Years a Prisoner of War in Turkey. Related by G.W. Handsley and Written by J.R. Foster.*, 63.

[74] Jonathan Vance has suggested that Canadian prisoners of war struggled to adjust to freedom after months and years spent in captivity. Kate Ariotti has made similar observations of Australian prisoners of the Turks. Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 68; Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 202–3.

secure a hostel specifically to accommodate former prisoners – 'to keep more in touch with the men and [help] the many young lads among them, or those who were in indifferent health,' – were unsuccessful, the organisation provided other opportunities for support, entertainment and socialising.[75]

The POW Department offered released prisoners of war opportunities to hear and share stories of their captivity with fellow prisoners and other interested bystanders. It held tea parties every Wednesday and Friday for former prisoners and any 'guests who were interested in meeting the Prisoners of War and in hearing their adventures and experiences'.[76] In this way, many former prisoners likely learned more about the experiences of their fellow prisoners, captured at different times and in different places. By encouraging the sharing of stories in this informal space, furthermore, the POW Department allowed former prisoners of war the opportunity to make sense of their experiences and identity as a prisoner of war in narrative form. It is possible that this opportunity emboldened former prisoners to share their stories more widely, either in newspaper articles or the longer narrative form of memoirs. Fundamentally, the POW Department tea parties were a space in which former prisoners could foster a sense of shared or collective identity on the basis of their experience of wartime captivity. This opportunity to foster collective identity was, however, brief. At the conclusion of their leave, former prisoners of war reported to the AIF to await their return to Australia.

Demobilisation and the AIF

Recently released prisoners of war were, like the wider AIF, demobilised with their combatant units.[77] This policy was intended to maintain, for as long as possible, the sense of community and comradeship between servicemen that was borne out of several long years of wartime service in the same fighting unit. Existing communities of support offered servicemen continuity and comfort through the liminal space of demobilisation, a transition which posed particular challenges for returning men. As Thomson has

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[75] Report, Final Report on the Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, 1919, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196 2015.0033.00490.
[76] Report, Final Report on the Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, 1919, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196 2015.0033.00490.
[77] General Instructions No. 7: Annexure A, 11 January 1919, NAA, MP367/1, 535/4/783.

argued, one of the challenges veterans faced after return to Australia was the loss of their established networks of support within the AIF; on returning home, veterans 'lost the security of army life and the everyday support network of the digger mates'.[78] This loss of security and comradeship, according to Thomson, impacted on individual servicemen's ability to reintegrate into Australian society. By demobilising men in their combatant units, the AIF had attempted to delay this loss of comradeship and support for as long as possible.

Many former prisoners of war likely experienced jubilant reunions with fellow soldiers on their return to the AIF. Amongst the soldiers of their battalion once again, released prisoners could reassert a connection to their own identity as soldiers, which had been challenged and disrupted by capture and captivity. Some former prisoners of war also returned to fighting units with a relatively high proportion of fellow prisoners of war. Those taken prisoner during the Battle of Bullecourt in April of 1917, for instance, undoubtedly came across other men who had also been taken prisoner.[79] For many of these former prisoners, bonds formed in both combat and captivity could serve to alleviate the stresses and strains of demobilisation.

The policy of demobilising men in their combatant units could also have the opposite effect for former prisoners of war. Some returned to units that were either largely devoid of former prisoners or markedly different after years of frontline combat.[80] Throughout their captivity, moreover, Australian prisoners of war had lived and worked alongside men from different units and different armies. One former prisoner, Robert Shiels, wrote that he owed his survival to the care and devotion of a British prisoner of war named George Burgess. After returning to England, the two men lost contact.[81] Other prisoners of war likely developed similarly meaningful bonds with their fellow captives. For these prisoners of war, the process of release and return was

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[78] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 127.
[79] Approximately 1170 Australian soldiers were taken prisoner during the First Battle of Bullecourt in April of 1917 – the largest number taken in any battle during the First World War – and their chance of meeting fellow captives during demobilisation was accordingly high. 'First Battle of Bullecourt', Australian War Memorial, accessed June 25 2015, https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84354.
[80] This was particularly acute for those men captured during the Gallipoli campaign, who spent several years in captivity. Lawless suggests that these men may have had trouble relating to the wider AIF. Lawless, 'Kizmet', 312.
[81] Shiels, *The Kaiser's Guest*, 29.

characterised by a gradual erosion of the support and community of fellow prisoners of war. While bonds created in captivity could serve the same function as those formed on the battlefield, the process of demobilisation gave more weight to the latter. As such, the policy intended to maintain existing communities of support and networks amongst servicemen throughout demobilisation could also separate prisoners of war from those same communities of support, and this policy could not always insulate returning captives against the psychological discomfort of the process of return. Furthermore, in these circumstances, the integration of former prisoners into their combatant units for the most part did little to foster a sense of shared or collective identity among them, limiting opportunities for sharing stories about captivity or making sense of this experience.

In a logistical sense, the process of demobilisation for former prisoners after this point was indistinguishable from that of their combatant counterparts, and they experienced both the difficulties and opportunities presented by demobilisation.[82] Men awaiting return to Australia occupied a liminal space, somewhere between war and home, characterised by conflicting and contradictory desires for home, with its comforting familiarity, and the allure of the freedom and possibility of this liminal space.[83] Some Australian prisoners of war took advantage of the opportunity to undertake employment or vocational training in an effort to prepare themselves for civilian life, while others enjoyed the various entertainments on offer for soldiers awaiting transportation back to Australia.[84]

Though Australian troops were demobilised with relative efficiency, for some former prisoners, the wait to return home could be long and mentally arduous. While there is little evidence to suggest that former prisoners of war were overtly discriminated against in the process of demobilisation, their captivity could also work against them when determining the order of return home. If too many men were eligible

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[82] Lawless observed that several of the men captured during the Gallipoli campaign took advantage of the social, cultural, educational and employment opportunities afforded by demobilisation. Lawless, 'Kizmet', 306-10.

[83] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 3; Meleah Hampton, 'Bringing the AIF Home: The Organisation of Repatriation, 1918-19', in *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration*, eds Carolyn Holbrook and Keir Reeves (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019), 45–57.

[84] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 3; Hampton, 'Bringing the AIF Home: The Organisation of Repatriation, 1918-19'.

for return at a particular point in time, the Demobilisation Regulations stated that, '[a]ctual length of service at the front may also be used to discriminate between men of equal total length of service in the A.I.F.'[85] Unlike many of their fellow servicemen, furthermore, return had already been a lengthy and sometimes logistically complex endeavour for former prisoners of war, and many of these men had already encountered delay and uncertainty after their initial release from captivity. As one former prisoner noted, 'the time hung very heavy' as he waited to return home.[86]

The repatriation organisation and veteran advocacy

When former prisoners of war arrived in Australia, they were indistinguishable from other members of the AIF. They were medically examined and, provided they were considered fit and healthy, discharged from the AIF. After the dislocation of their return, in concert with the powerful desire to resume civilian life, it is perhaps unsurprising that former prisoners did not immediately seek to make formal connections with their fellow captives in the form of a veterans' organisation. Like the rest of the AIF, former prisoners returned to their lives and communities across Australia.

Upon their discharge, veteran soldiers became the formal responsibility of the Australian repatriation organisation. Australia's repatriation scheme was established in 1917, and it was the first of its kind in Australia. Prior to this point, veteran soldiers and their families were not considered the responsibility of the state; no formal government schemes for postwar compensation or assistance existed, and veterans relied on charitable organisations in their local communities. The passing of the *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act* in 1917, however, signalled an important shift in understandings of the Australian state's obligations to its soldiers.[87] Australia's repatriation scheme was founded on a growing expectation, both socially and politically, that soldiers should be compensated for their voluntary service in war. During the war, this expectation was reflected in the growing number of charitable, local and informal repatriation efforts around Australia. In some sense, the *Australian*

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[85] General Instructions No. 3: Annexure B, 22 December 1918, NAA, MP367/1, 535/4/783.
[86] Horner, *Reason or Revolution?: An Australian Prisoner in the Hands of the Hun*, 114.
[87] *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act* 1917 (Cth).

Soldiers' Repatriation Act simply formalised and centralised the existing local systems of repatriation and shifted the financial and administrative burden of these schemes to the state.[88] When putting forward his scheme for a repatriation system in Australia, the Minister for Repatriation, Edward Millen, asserted that 'the nation put forward an organised effort to enrol these men in the ranks of the fighting army, and there must be an equally organised effort to secure their return to that civil life which at the call of duty they temporarily abandoned.'[89]

The Act created the central bodies responsible for the repatriation system: the Repatriation Department, and the Repatriation Commission. The Repatriation Commission, which formally commenced functioning in early 1918, was the central adjudicative body of the repatriation system. In its early stages, it was more of a legal body: interpreting and applying repatriation legislation in the form of regulations that governed the benefits and assistance available to veterans and their dependents. By 1920, however, the Repatriation Commission had also taken on a more direct and administrative role.[90] The repatriation system was geographically dispersed, but its functions were centralised around the guidance of the Repatriation Commission. The Commission distributed guidelines to the state boards and to repatriation medical officers on how to interpret and apply repatriation regulations to encourage consistency in the provision of repatriation. Repatriation boards in each state were responsible for applying regulations and precedents handed down by the Commission and, until 1929, the Commission also served as an appellant body, deciding on any decisions disputed at the state level.[91] The Repatriation Department largely existed to service the needs of the Commission and the state repatriation boards; they processed claims for assistance, 'interpreted benefits', gave advice to veterans seeking assistance, and occasionally drafted simple regulations.[92]

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[88] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 29.
[89] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 18 July 1917, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansards80/1917-07-18/0020/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf
[90] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 199.
[91] Lloyd and Rees, 94–95, 197, 236–37.
[92] Lloyd and Rees, 93.

Though the work of repatriation in Australia was initially envisaged as temporary, reaching a natural end once veterans were re-established in civil life, the scheme was never subject to a fixed end date and no time limit was set on when veterans were able to apply for assistance.[93] Rather than winding down, repatriation remained a feature of Australian public policy throughout the twentieth century. In this respect, as in many others, Australia's repatriation scheme was unique to many of its contemporaries. In Belgium, for instance, applicants could only put forward a claim for benefits up until 1928.[94] The Belgian government, while willing to compensate soldiers and civilians suffering war damage, reasoned that since it had been unable to reasonably predict and thus avoid entering the conflict, 'it could not be held liable to redeem all harm' caused by the war.[95] By contrast, the Australian government had voluntarily entered into a distant conflict, and relied on voluntary enlistment to meet its military obligations. While there were other factors driving the scope, longevity and relative generosity of Australia's repatriation scheme, this sense of obligation and moral responsibility sat at its heart.

The generosity of Australia's repatriation system in practice remains a topic of historical debate. Kate Blackmore has argued that, as a government body, every facet of the repatriation system was geared toward minimising expenditure of public money rather than assisting returned servicemen; she suggested that this ethos of minimising spending was entrenched at all levels within the culture of the repatriation organisation.[96] While the rate of pensionable disability was lower in Australia than in some other former belligerent nations – Australians required only a 5 percent margin of disability in order to be eligible for a pension, whereas both Canada and Britain required

[93] Crotty, 'The Veteran Challenge: Repatriation Benefits for Australian Soldiers', 63.

[94] Marisa De Picker, 'Nation's Compensation for War Wounds and Work Incapacities. The Creation of a New Welfare System for Physically Disabled Veterans and Civilians of the First World War in Interwar Belgium, 1918–1928', *Alter: European Journal of Disability Research* 13, no. 4 (2019), 3.

[95] De Picker, 5. Some other examples of studies of war compensation internationally include Deborah Cohen, 'Will to Work: Disabled Veterans in Britain and German after the First World War', in *Disabled Veterans in History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 295–321; Robert Goler and Michael Rhode, 'From Individual Trauma to National Policy: Tracking the Uses of Civil War Medical Records', in *Disabled Veterans in History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 163–84; Heather Perry, 'Recycling the Disabled: Army, Medicine, and Modernity in WWI Germany' (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 2001).

[96] Blackmore, *The Dark Pocket of Time*, 147, 156.

at least 20 percent – securing repatriation benefits was not always easy.[97] Indeed, Thomson has argued that repatriation in interwar Australia was, 'not beneficent nor its war pensions as generous as Australian politicians liked to claim'.[98] Lloyd and Rees characterised the Repatriation Commission as a 'careful administrator' of public funds, though they suggest that repatriation 'was a generous system once entitlement had been granted.'[99] Martin Crotty moreover, has argued that, by international standards, Australia's system was particularly generous, offering veterans 'more support than any other country'.[100]

One of the factors that influenced the range and rate of benefits available to Australian veterans was the uniquely public character of Australia's repatriation system. The conceptualisation of repatriation as a shared, public obligation in Australia exposed the repatriation scheme to considerable public and political scrutiny throughout the interwar years. 'In touching the life of the soldier and his dependants at so many points during a period of extreme public sensitiveness, it was inevitable that the Department should have encountered criticism both widespread and fierce,' noted a repatriation report in 1920. Rather optimistically, this early report concluded by suggesting that such criticism was largely based on 'misconceptions' about the scheme, and would ease, 'as the underlying principles of the scheme became better understood and the intrinsic difficulties of action appreciated.'[101] This evaluation proved to be somewhat naive. Just a year later, the repatriation organisation was again defending itself against public scrutiny and criticism of being unduly unsympathetic to the plight of veterans. In their annual report, the repatriation organisation pointed out that whatever their personal sympathies were with veteran soldiers, they were 'bound by the terms of the Act to insist that these benefits should be granted only where it could be shown that the claim was based on a disability that had originated in or been aggravated by war service.'[102] While

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[97] Garton, 'Demobilization and Empire', 133.
[98] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 284–85.
[99] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 242, 417.
[100] Crotty, 'The Veteran Challenge: Repatriation Benefits for Australian Soldiers', 61. Beaumont has also characterised the scheme as generous. See Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 524–30.
[101] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.: a summary of the work of the Department of Repatriation from April, 1918, to the end of June, 1920, with some account of the activities which preceded the Department's formation.* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1920), 31.
[102] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1921*, (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1921), 32.

repatriation personnel administering the scheme had initially been rather sanguine about the criticism the organisation received, this 'public discourse of criticism' became an entrenched feature of the scheme throughout the interwar years.[103] As a result of this ongoing criticism, the Act and its various provisions were repeatedly revised and amended throughout the interwar years and beyond; Garton has characterised the early history of Australia's repatriation policy as 'one of hesitant experimentation'.[104]

Veterans organisations, and other bodies representing the interests of returned soldiers, took full advantage of the public accountability of the repatriation organisation to push for changes to veterans' entitlements. In 1943, for instance, the *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act* was formally amended once again, and one of the key amendments concerned the plight of veteran soldiers suffering from tuberculosis. Previously, in order to obtain assistance from the repatriation organisation, these applicants had to demonstrate that their condition had direct links with their service in war, a task which proved particularly difficult for those whose symptoms had manifested years after their discharge. Under the amended legislation, any veteran suffering from tuberculosis – irrespective of when the disease had manifested – was entitled to have this condition compensated by the repatriation organisation as war caused.[105] This was a crucial shift, and one that made the lives of many veterans and their families somewhat easier.[106] The amendment concerning men with tuberculosis had been more than twenty years in the making, and was largely the result of a tireless campaign on the part of the TB Soldiers' Association, a veterans' organisation that had been advocating for tubercular soldiers since the end of the First World War.[107]

Collective advocacy, like that employed by veterans' groups, was a particularly useful strategy in part because it countered the repatriation organisation's emphasis on treating each serviceman's claim as an individual case, to be determined on its merits. Approaching each claim in its own right was largely intended as a way to ensure fairness

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[103] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 88.
[104] Garton, 78.
[105] *Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act* 1943 (Cth) s 19.
[106] Marina Larsson has written eloquently on the impact of tuberculosis on returned men and their families. Unlike many other war-caused disabilities, tuberculosis could be contracted by family members and loved ones, and it was, in so many ways, a family illness. Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 178–205.
[107] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 276.

of treatment – in theory, it allowed the repatriation system to be responsive to a diverse range of individual circumstances – however, treating each case on its merits also granted repatriation officials considerable power and exposed veterans to the discretionary judgement of repatriation officials.[108] As such, while guided by regulations and policy, repatriation authorities had substantial power as the arbiters of legitimate and illegitimate war trauma. In making their case to the repatriation organisation, individual veterans were rendered largely powerless, with limited recourse to contest and change the determinations of repatriation officials. Applicants could gather further evidence to support their claims and, after 1929, they could appeal to one of two independent appellant bodies for a review of the Repatriation Commission's decision. However, the success of both of these measures rested on the ability of claimants to make their claims fit within existing regulations governing the provision of repatriation benefits. Individual veterans had little power to shape or change the regulations themselves.

Despite some of the individual difficulties they faced when approaching the repatriation organisation, veteran soldiers also had significant social and political influence in the interwar years. Indeed, Lloyd and Rees described veterans' groups and returned services organisations as 'probably the most influential interest group in the nation' by the early 1930s.[109] Though focussed largely on the activities of Australia's dominant veterans' organisation, the RSSILA, Martin Crotty has also argued that strong and coordinated veteran movement was the key factor influencing the scope and generosity of war compensation schemes internationally.[110] Collective advocacy was a way in which veteran soldiers were able to counter the power of the repatriation organisation, and, like the TB Soldiers' Association in 1943, change the regulations applying to groups of veterans.

Unlike other groups of veterans, Australian prisoners of war were not represented by a specific veterans' organisation until 1935, and issues related to captivity

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[108] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 9.
[109] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 243.
[110] Crotty, 'The Veteran Challenge: Repatriation Benefits for Australian Soldiers', 64–65. This theme will be explored in greater detail in a forthcoming publication. See Martin Crotty, Neil J. Diamant, and Mark Edele, *The Politics of Veteran Benefits in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

received scant attention from the dominant veterans' group in Australia, the RSSILA. The Ex-POW Club was also primarily a social organisation, recording many an evening spent 'in a sociable manner'.[111] Its material function – linking former prisoners of war together for the purpose of supporting each other's pension applications with their first-hand knowledge of the conditions of captivity, and the mental and physical effects of that experience – largely formalised and streamlined an existing practice amongst former prisoners, many of whom had already been writing letters of support for their comrades throughout the interwar period. While the group was undoubtedly a step towards a collective expression of common interests amongst former prisoners, its aims were less political than contemporary veterans' organisations, and its membership was modest.

Conclusion

Australian prisoners of war were given limited opportunities to foster a sense of collective identity during and immediately after the First World War. After their release from captivity, the AIF quickly dispersed former prisoners of war amongst their fellow soldiers. Unlike prisoners of the Second World War, on their return to Australia after the First World War, former prisoners were indistinct from the wider AIF. Capture and captivity had been relatively rare; less than one percent of the enlisted AIF were captured and held prisoner for any measure of time. As such, former prisoners of war were less likely to encounter fellow captives as they waited to return to Australia after the war. While this did not preclude former prisoners from telling tales of capture and captivity to their comrades, it did inhibit them from creating or strengthening connections with fellow prisoners on the basis of their shared experiences, and, in turn, formalising these connections in a postwar prisoner of war organisation. Emerging late in the interwar period, and lacking a clear political impetus, Australian prisoner of war groups did not gain the social or political prominence of many of their contemporary organisations. Given the potential political expediency of veterans' organisations in interwar Australia, the lack of collective identity amongst former prisoners of the First World War also resulted in a lack of public representation and awareness on issues

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[111] Minutes, 23 January 1939, SLSA SRG 869, 1.

relating to captivity. In turn, this limited the capacity of former prisoners to advocate successfully for any measure of special consideration from Australia's repatriation organisation. For the most part, then, former prisoners approaching the repatriation organisation had to argue their case in isolation, without the support of a strong veterans' organisation. For the remainder of this thesis, I turn to consider interactions between former prisoners and repatriation personnel in light of both the ambiguity of wartime captivity and the lack of public awareness or advocacy on issues relating to this experience.

Chapter 3

Captivity in the repatriation archive

In March 1962, at his property in regional New South Wales, Ivan Allison committed suicide. A former prisoner of war, Ivan had been receiving repatriation benefits for gunshot wounds and a case of persistent pneumonia. His death was duly recorded in his repatriation case file: 'Died from the effects of a shotgun wound to his head wilfully inflicted by himself.'[1] The repatriation organisation sent a condolence letter to his widow, Phyllis, apologising for any 'further distress' it might have caused her to receive Ivan's pension cheque, which had been dispatched prior to receipt of the notification of his death.[2] Shortly after, the repatriation organisation once again expressed their condolences to Phyllis and assured her that her pension would continue at the existing rate.[3] It was not until June 1962 that the local registrar in Forbes informed the repatriation organisation that Phyllis Allison had died on the same day as her husband.[4] With nothing more noted about the death of either party, Ivan Allison's files were accordingly amended to cancel Phyllis' pension, and the repatriation case was closed.

Prior to his death, Ivan Allison's repatriation case files told the story of a man trying to manage the ongoing legacies of his war service. During the war he had suffered gunshot wounds to his back and chest, followed by capture and imprisonment for several months.[5] His file revealed a struggle with the effects of these physical injuries as he returned to his life as a farmer. Yet it also tells a story of determination to rebuild and carry on in postwar Australia. Keen to return to a life on the land, on his discharge from the AIF, Ivan stated that he felt, 'no disability at present if the effects [of] my wounds are such as to cause any disability when working on the farm I will report later.'[6] He and his family endured financial difficulties during and after the interwar period,

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[1] Search for particulars of death, 10 May 1962, Ivan Allison, NAA, C138, M55794.
[2] Letter, J.H. Greenwood, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation New South Wales to Phyllis Allison, 10 May 1962, Ivan Allison, NAA C138, M55794.
[3] Letter, J.H. Greenwood, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation New South Wales to Phyllis Allison, 15 May 1962, Ivan Allison, NAA C138, C55794.
[4] Advice of death, 12 June 1962, Ivan Allison, NAA, C138, C55794.
[5] Statement of service, 14 June 1917 and 5 April 1918, NAA, B2455, ALLISON I.
[6] AM Form D2, Ivan Allison, NAA, C138, M55794.

though they managed to eke out a living on the land up until 1962. Ivan Allison's file is, in many ways, a testament to the kind of idealised and much-vaunted returned soldier masculinity that politicians, returned services organisations and others were fond of proclaiming throughout the interwar years.

For all its detail, Ivan Allison's file is curiously silent on the factors that might have led to his sudden and violent suicide in 1962, and whether his war service, wounds and captivity played any part in his decision to end his own life. It has even less to say on how – if at all – Ivan's suicide was related to the death of his wife, Phyllis. There was little evidence of marital discord or difficulty contained within the file, and there was no sense that Phyllis was suffering from any illness or disease that might have claimed her life. Her cause of death, unlike her husband's, was not listed in the repatriation file. In the absence of any corroborating evidence, it is possible to surmise that Ivan's death, and perhaps even his wife's death, were related to lingering war trauma: an aging and partially disabled veteran, struggling to keep up the physically demanding labour required to run a farm and to support himself and his wife, decided to end his own life as well as hers. Historians have unearthed enough stories of veterans committing similarly distressing acts to lend the theory a certain amount of credibility.[7]

A reading of the deaths of Phyllis and Ivan Allison as a potential murder-suicide can be discounted by reference to other archival sources, outside the repatriation file. The coronial inquest into the pair's death tells a wholly different, though equally tragic, tale. On 22 March 1962, Ivan Allison and his wife were pursuing a snake on their property. Ivan was armed with a shotgun – a weapon he knew how to handle safely and effectively from both his time in the AIF and his many years as a farmer – while Phyllis, likely less adept with a firearm, was armed with a sharp stick. When the snake emerged from a woodpile near the house, Phyllis leapt forward just as Ivan fired a round from the shotgun. The shotgun blast hit Phyllis in the chest, and she was killed instantly. Knowing there was nothing more he could do for his wife, Ivan went inside the house and wrote two brief letters. One, to his sons, Bill and Allen, and the other to another

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[7] See, for instance: Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities*.

man, asking him to help Bill and Allen to manage things.[8] The letters were short and direct, without punctuation or pause. 'Please excuse me for doing what I did,' Ivan wrote hurriedly to his sons. 'I shot mum by accident we were after a snake under a heap of posts it came out and she jumped right in front of gun.'[9] Ivan rapidly proceeded to list the particulars of his and Phyllis' will and to suggest to his sons how they should look after the place and sell the relevant assets, and then signed off, 'Dad.' Ivan then called the local police in Forbes, told them that he had shot his wife accidently, and that he was 'going with her'.[10] He hung up the phone, proceeded outside to where Phyllis lay, and turned the shotgun on himself.

Ivan and Phyllis Allison's deaths bore no relationship to Ivan's war service or to his time as a prisoner of war. As historians, it is tempting to conclude that Ivan was suffering from the trauma of his war service – from an antecedent of what we might now call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD – and suicided. An application for repatriation benefits, after all, implied a degree of difficulty readjusting to postwar life. This interpretation owes much to the cultural prominence of the traumatised veteran, a phenomenon that has exerted considerable influence on both scholarly and popular interpretations of the First World War.[11] Further research into Ivan Allison's death, however, reveals a more complicated story, and a story that was unrelated to war. While silences and omissions are a common feature of repatriation case files, corroborating evidence is not always readily available, or possible to locate, in order to test or challenge our assumptions about the meaning and significance of these silences, or indeed, to tell the difference between the two.[12]

This chapter explores the purpose, function and process of creating repatriation case files, examining the various stages at which information was added to the file, from initial applications for assistance, investigations, evaluations and reviews, appeals,

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[8] Police officer's statement, 4 April 1962, Inquest files for Phyllis and Ivan Allison, New South Wales State Archives and Records (hereafter NSWAR), NRS 345, B8733 768.

[9] Letter, Ivan Allison to Bill and Allen Allison, 22 March 1962, NSWAR, NRS 345, B8733 768.

[10] Police officer's statement, 4 April 1962, NSWAR, NRS 345, B8733 768.

[11] See Christina Twomey, 'Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac: An Argument', *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013), 85–108.

[12] Warner emphasises the significance of contextual sources to make sense of medical case files. John Harley Warner, 'The Uses of Patient Records by Historians: Patterns, Possibilities and Perplexities', *Health and History* 1, no. 2/3 (1999), 102.

complaints and general correspondence. While repatriation officials included a vast array of different documents when compiling case files, information that was not considered directly relevant was excluded. Without evidence of any connection between Ivan Allison's death and his war service, for instance, the particulars of his death had little bearing on his repatriation case file. However, missing information was not always deliberately excluded. Repatriation case files were documentary records, and sometimes, relevant documentary evidence simply did not exist. Prisoners of war, in particular, could often struggle to produce the necessary evidence to support their claims.

Closer consideration of the structural factors that influenced the inclusion and exclusion of material in repatriation case files throws into sharp relief elements of deliberate inclusion, exclusion and framing, on the part of both repatriation officials and former prisoners of war. Repatriation case files told particular stories about the physical and psychological legacies of wartime captivity; both claimants and repatriation officials crafted particular narratives that included, excluded and emphasised particular aspects of a narrative in favour of others. Indeed, Mark Peel has suggested that the narratives composed in case files should be taken as 'dramatizations' of reality rather than reflections of it, revealing for the ways in which they highlight, emphasise, obscure and even omit information.[13] This chapter explores the extent to which the processes by which case files were made, and the assumptions underpinning these processes, created or encouraged particular silences. It also seeks to situate claims on the basis of captivity specifically within the process of creating repatriation case files. It argues that the structural factors involved in creating, evaluating and recording claims were not necessarily driven by ambivalence towards wartime captivity or former prisoners, though they sometimes amounted to a kind of passive discrimination against claims based on captivity.

Case files as a historical source

Repatriation case files are not unique in the difficulties they pose for the researcher. Case files, as Peel has noted, impress upon the researcher both their incredible potential

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[13] Mark Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 5.

and their inevitable pitfalls and limitations.[14] Originally developed as a documentary technique for containing and cataloguing individuals in institutions from prisons and asylums, to schools and hospitals, case files have been created by a variety of organisations over time.[15] Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson have characterised case files as, 'the records generated by political, social, legal, and other institutions entrusted with the task of categorising and assessing certain populations, usually with the purpose of supervising, treating, punishing, servicing, and/or reforming individuals or groups deemed in some way deviants or victims.'[16]

Case files have historically tended to tell one-sided narratives about the people contained within their pages, posing particular challenges to historians attempting to recover something of the subjectivities of those catalogued in the files. Interactions between veterans and the repatriation organisation were still shaped by unequal power relations, but veteran soldiers cannot be understood as being, 'traditionally dismissed or ignored as marginal, inarticulate, and powerless' like many other groups catalogued within institutional case files.[17] Veteran soldiers occupied a uniquely powerful position in postwar Australia. Indeed, Clement Lloyd and Jackie Rees attributed the power of veterans as a 'client group' to the ongoing centrality of repatriation and its continued funding even throughout the economic crisis of the 1930s.[18] Veterans were fuelled by a public discourse of entitlement, which characterised repatriation benefits as a deserved recompense for service and sacrifice to the nation. The collective power of veterans in postwar Australian society did not necessarily alter the scales of power in interactions between individual veterans and repatriation officials, but it did ensure that these men had considerable voice and agency in their interactions with the repatriation organisation. This chapter explores the creation of the repatriation file, and the subsequent battle over the legacies of war service, through the lens of these dynamic power relations.

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[14] Peel, 14.
[15] Warwick Anderson, 'The Case of the Archive', *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 3 (March 2013), 533.
[16] Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson, 'Social History and Case Files Research', in *On the Case: Explorations in Social History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 3.
[17] Iacovetta and Mitchinson, 7.
[18] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 243.

Case files invariably reflected the individuals and organisations that created them. Indeed, they often reveal more about these individuals and institutions than they do about the people they catalogue, and historians are beset by 'the twin challenges of understanding the observers and of mining effectively their observations for the observed.'[19] Attempting to recover something of the people contained in the pages of institutional sources, particularly case files, can be a remarkably challenging feat.[20] Iacovetta and Mitchinson have pointed to the need to situate case files firmly within the context of the organisation that made them in order to analyse them effectively and attempt to read against the grain; they argue that historians 'need a sense of the whole in order to make sense of the part we are examining, to be able to talk about its typicality (or not), and whether it is illustrative of certain historical patterns.'[21] Though different historians emphasise different methods of contextualising case files, depending on their own theoretical and methodological inclinations and the nature of their source material, the importance of historical provenance is apparent; Eric Sager argues that, 'If the records are to reflect anything of the people who were institutional subjects, the first duty of the historian is to attend to the provenance of the records.'[22] Historical provenance, as Sager uses it, refers to 'the nature, structure, and intent of the records in the context of their creation.'[23] The rest of this chapter, accordingly, turns to consider the provenance of the repatriation case file: its purpose, structure and function.

The repatriation organisation and the case file

The personal case file imposed order on the monolithic task of administering the repatriation scheme. Where other repatriation schemes internationally applied limitations on who could apply for pensions and assistance – excluding, for instance,

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[19] Iacovetta and Mitchinson, 'Social History and Case Files', 12.
[20] Several scholars have debated the extent to which historians can reasonably read institutional sources, particularly case files, against the grain to get a sense of the lives of those catalogued within their pages. Iacovetta and Mitchinson, 14. The debate between Joan Scott and Linda Gordon is illustrative here: Joan Scott, review of *Review of Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence*, by Linda Gordon, *Signs* 15, no. 4 (1990), 848–52; Linda Gordon, 'Response to Scott', *Signs* 15, no. 4 (1990), 852–53.
[21] Iacovetta and Mitchinson, 'Social History and Case Files', 14.
[22] Eric Sager, 'Employment Contracts in Merchant Shipping: An Argument for Social Science History', in *On the Case: Explorations in Social History*, eds Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 50.
[23] Sager, 49.

dishonourably discharged soldiers – Australia's repatriation scheme 'considered it wiser to assign no limits to the right to apply, preferring to leave all doubtful cases for consideration on their merits.'[24] As a result, the organisation received a large number of applications for varying kinds of assistance. Between 1918 and 1920, the repatriation organisation had received 525,165 applications for vocational training, employment and general assistance.[25] In 1935, just prior to the introduction of the service pension, the organisation was administering 264,061 war pensions to deceased or incapacitated servicemen and their dependents, and received 7,401 new claims for assistance that year.[26] In the early stages, claims to the repatriation organisation were dominated by applications for vocational training and education, employment, loans to establish houses or businesses, and claims for free or subsidised passage to Australia for dependents from overseas. Much of the assistance provided in this period was in accordance with the assumption that repatriation would be transitory and temporary, and no longer required once the vast majority veterans had been re-established in civil life.[27] Rather than winding down, repatriation became a central feature of Australian public policy and government expenditure throughout the twentieth century, and by 1935, the repatriation organisation largely dealt with claims for medical pensions from veterans and their dependants.

The provision of repatriation benefits was ordered and organised by an array of different forms and official documents. Claimants applying for benefits were expected to fill out one form, those requiring sustenance payments while undergoing medical treatment another, and so on. The format and content of these forms varied over time and across different branches of the repatriation organisation. The fundamental purpose of these forms – to organise and manage the potentially vast quantities of information that could be generated in relation to repatriation claims – remained the same even as the forms themselves changed. The use of standardised forms rendered cases legible to multiple parties within the repatriation organisation, enabling

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[24] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 9.

[25] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 40.

[26] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1935* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1935), 23.

[27] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 199; Crotty, 'The Veteran Challenge: Repatriation Benefits for Australian Soldiers', 63.

repatriation officials to efficiently discern the type of application, and what it would involve to evaluate and administer the claim. Repatriation officials, armed with this series of forms, sought to streamline and make sense of the array of complex problems presented to them. The use of standardised forms, however, did more than impose order on repatriation cases. It also served to order and arrange information according to the perceived significance and relevance of the information contained within the file.

Repatriation case files functioned as a tool for carefully determining the merits of each veteran's case, and for monitoring the provision of any assistance granted. In this sense, they were akin to other contemporary case files; as Peel has suggested, for charity workers in interwar Melbourne, the case file 'was the hallmark of professional investigation and the guarantee of a just outcome'.[28] At a minimum, case files generally recorded the nature of the claim for assistance, and contained a range of documents related to the claim, from medical assessments, to income and employment details, to military service records and correspondence. These case files linked together the various stages and sections of the vast and geographically dispersed repatriation process, with relevant information from a variety of locations and sources gathered together in a series of files that were comprehensible to multiple parties over the course of a veteran's interactions with the repatriation organisation. By the early twentieth century, this was a key feature of the case file as a document: Warwick Anderson notes that hospital case files in this period 'necessarily accompanied patients along their "illness trajectories," circulating with them through the modern clinics.'[29] Repatriation case files were not medical case files, however, and rather than accompanying patients along an illness trajectory – impacting on the provision of treatment – repatriation case files accompanied claimants on what we might call a 'repatriation trajectory', impacting on the ongoing 'diagnosis' of a claimant's entitlement to repatriation benefits.

The case files of former prisoners of war reflected the diversity of their postwar experiences. Some were sites of debate, discord and bitterness, where an extensive column of rejected disabilities visually overpowered a simple 'nil' under accepted disabilities, while others detailed a stabilised pension and regular medical treatment for

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[28] Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, 4.
[29] Anderson, 'The Case of the Archive', 533.

an accepted disability. Some case files told the story of struggle, adversity and poor health, written on the bodies of former prisoners who were aged and worn before their time: 'He looks older than 64 years,' one doctor noted of a former prisoner of war; a medical evaluation of another prisoner noted: 'Pensioner looks debilitated and older than stated age.'[30] 'No attendant would be needed if consumption of alcohol was reasonable,' another repatriation doctor noted of a former prisoner with a chronic, debilitating and degenerative condition, 'but his life is very depressing.'[31] Others were dominated by the voices of wives, widows and other relatives, struggling to articulate links between war service and postwar disability in an effort to care for desperately ill veterans and their families.

Some repatriation case files were merely a few sheets of paper containing sparse details of service and perhaps an application for vocational training. Others were comprised of several weighty tomes, dominated by records of ongoing and intensive hospital treatment, tests and medical evaluations, prefaced by a long list of accepted disabilities. Some spanned consistently from demobilisation right through the interwar years until the veteran's death, while others left large sections of time unaccounted for. Others still consisted mainly of regular income and asset reporting forms, bank deposit receipts and change of address notifications, and had precious little to say about war service. A small number of case files ended abruptly a few short years after the end of the war with the untimely death of the veteran, while others continued well into the 1970s and 80s and recorded a long, fruitful and relatively healthy life. A medical referral for a 91-year-old former prisoner in 1973, for instance, simply read: 'This magnificent old man says he cannot read without some spectacles.'[32] While scholars have cautioned that the repatriation archive is geared more towards 'tales of woe' rather than toward stories of healthy readjustment to postwar life, it is clear that it is also an archive capable of revealing a diverse array of postwar experiences.[33] Former prisoners of war approached

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[30] Medical evaluation by Doctor W.P. Harris, James Hall, NAA, PP872/1, M18855; Medical evaluation by Dr J Smythe Yule, 1 December 1925, John Augustine Flynn, NAA, PP18/1, M13379.
[31] Medical evaluation by Dr M.S. Bell, David Scott, NAA, PP864/1, M12687.
[32] Referral, 25 July 1973, William Wells, NAA, B73, H60251 PART 2.
[33] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 82; Garton, *The Cost of War*, 86.

the repatriation organisation with a variety of different needs and concerns, and the records of these encounters are accordingly varied.

Applying to the repatriation organisation

In 1927, George Gigg presented to a repatriation hospital in Randwick with painful swelling around his left ear and face, so severe it prevented him from properly opening his mouth. Gigg told doctors that he had experienced less severe bouts of pain and swelling in the region since his time serving in the First World War. [34] He was diagnosed with a parotid cyst. Despite his assertions, Gigg was transferred to a civilian ward for treatment after doctors ruled that the cyst had no relation to his war service, or to either of his accepted disabilities of conjunctivitis or otorrhoea, a condition that affected his ears.[35] In a frustrated letter to the repatriation organisation, George Gigg argued unsuccessfully that his condition was related to his war service, claiming that it first manifested during 1917 while he was a prisoner of war in German hands.[36] Though Gigg had not formally applied for the condition to be linked to his war service, his request for treatment at a repatriation facility, and subsequent letter of complaint at having not received said treatment, was interpreted as an application.

Some applicants, like George Gigg, sought medical treatment for disabilities they believed were related to their war service or to any existing pensionable disability, while others applied for medical pensions when their postwar disabilities rendered work and providing for themselves and family members difficult or impossible. Some were recorded as having a pensionable disability in their final medical review just prior to their demobilisation, and these men were not required to formally apply for repatriation assistance on this account. In some cases, former prisoners were unable or unwilling to lodge an application themselves, leaving the task to family members or representatives of veterans' organisations like the RSSILA. Some wrote letters to apply for assistance, while others preferred to present to their local repatriation medical officer or to the nearest repatriation office.

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[34] Application for medical treatment, 2 April 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.
[35] Evaluation by Medical Officers K Smith and C.C. Minty 13 April 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293; Repatriation memo, J.H. Greenwood, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 7 January 1963, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293
[36] Letter of appeal, 19 April 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.

Applying for a pension gave former prisoners of war the opportunity to construct particular narratives about the links between their war service and their postwar disability. The narratives former prisoners and their representatives composed were shaped by the intention of securing assistance from the repatriation organisation; they drew on their personal experiences and beliefs about their disability, but also crafted narratives they hoped would result in a positive outcome. Deliberate framing was not unique to repatriation claimants. Peel has suggested that the case files of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) formed 'an archive of interaction, debates, and competing versions of the truth' as poverty-stricken Australians sought to explain their position in such a way as to secure much-needed assistance.[37] Like recipients of charitable assistance, many of the men applying to the repatriation organisation were experiencing difficult financial circumstances. While financial need placed claimants in an uncomfortably subordinate position, conferring considerable power on the repatriation organisation as the arbiters of relative financial security, it also encouraged repatriation claimants to construct compelling explanations of postwar harm. The prominence, or absence, of captivity in applications for assistance cannot be divorced from the pragmatic considerations that shaped these applications.

The issue of captivity featured in diverse ways in the case files of former prisoners. From the sample studied for this thesis, less than a third of claims by former prisoners were based on their time in captivity, and on average, these men were more likely to invoke their captivity in addition to their frontline service, rather than basing their claims on captivity alone. While subsequent chapters will explore how invocations of captivity were also influenced by other external factors, it is likely that some former prisoners believed, from a purely pragmatic standpoint, that invoking both captivity and frontline service – or negating to mention their captivity at all – improved their chances of securing a pension.

The introduction of the general service pension in 1936 negated the need for some claimants to assert a link to their war service. Prior to this point, the only way that a veteran could obtain a pension and repatriation-funded medical treatment was on the

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[37] Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, 5.

grounds of a war-caused disability.[38] The service pension was the result of increasing awareness that war service and its associated stresses could speed up the degenerative effects of aging.[39] All servicemen over the age of 60, or those who were, for whatever reason, permanently unemployable, regardless of war-relatedness, were eligible for a service pension. Unlike a disability pension, the service pension was means tested.[40] The introduction of a service pension undoubtedly eased the financial burden experienced by many servicemen from the late 1930s onward. Eligible servicemen rejected for medical pensions could go on to apply for a service pension, which did not require direct links to war service. The fact of war service, rather than any specifically harmful aspect of service, was the basic requirement for a service pension. A successful claim for a service pension largely negated a reference to captivity – or indeed, to war service at all – in the files of former prisoners. While George Gigg felt compelled to provide a long and detailed description of his hardships in captivity and their links to his postwar health problems to secure medical treatment in the late 1920s, he ceased to mention his war service at all after successfully claiming a service pension in the 1950s.[41]

Conversely, the introduction of the service pension also threw into sharp relief the centrality of captivity in applications for medical pensions after 1936. While some applied for medical pensions because they were ineligible for service pensions, others likely sought the legitimacy of having their captivity formally recognised as a contributing factor in their postwar disability. When Lilian Hyslop's application to have her husband's death attributed to his war service – securing her a war widow's pension – was rejected, Lilian was informed that she was eligible for an equivalent pension 'even though the death is not attributable to war service'. The benefits, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, J.D. Leathart assured Lilian, would be 'exactly the same'.[42] Lilian declined the offer and chose to lodge an appeal instead 'as it is my firm belief that the death of my husband was caused by his war service'. She argued that her husband's heart condition and reoccurring bouts of illness from 1934 onwards were

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[38] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 285.
[39] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 255.
[40] Lloyd and Rees, 255.
[41] See George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.
[42] Letter, J.D. Leathart, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation to Lilian Hyslop, 13 Feb 1959, William Henry Hyslop, NAA, C138, M13085.

caused by the strain of having his leg amputated at a point too high to allow him to wear a prosthetic leg, which placed 'considerable strain on his heart' as it required him to use crutches to move around. 'Apart from these disabilities the period of 18 months that he was prisoner of war in Germany took its definite toll,' Lilian wrote, 'and it was whilst a prisoner of war that he was operated upon and his leg amputated.' In concluding her letter, she wrote, 'on sympathetic grounds I desire it to be recorded that the disabilities which caused his death are the result of his service to his country.'[43] While Lilian Hyslop was not offered a service pension in place of a war widow's pension, her case demonstrates that formal recognition of the deleterious effects of war service, and particularly captivity, could be a powerful motivator in applications to the repatriation organisation.

An application for repatriation benefits generated a series of files, depending on the nature of the application. Personal case files were categorised into four separate classifications 'R' files, 'C' files, 'H' files and 'M' files. Each file served a slightly different purpose, and each contained different types of information. 'R' files were registration files, intended to record the details of the ex-servicemen and register any subsequent assistance granted. These files were created when servicemen were demobilised, and originally contained little more than a single sheet of paper with some basic personal details and particulars of service. If a serviceman did not apply for benefits, or applied in a different state, then this file remained a single sheet of paper. If a veteran did apply for benefits, 'R' files contained basic personal information, records of claims and some general correspondence. In general, these files tended to be brief, and much smaller than the other file categories. 'C' files were designated as pension files, detailing the amounts and payment details of each pension and how and where the pension was paid. 'H' files were hospital files, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, bore the most striking similarities to traditional medical case files. They recorded hospital visits, patient notes and subsequent case notes, any prescriptions, medical tests and exams conducted. 'M' files were also medical files, but they dealt with more than just in-patient treatment and encompassed a wider variety of documents, including doctors' visits and assessments,

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[43] Record of evidence for appeal, Lilian Alma Hyslop, 3 March 1959, William Henry Hyslop, NAA, C138, M13085.

applications for assistance, summaries of decisions and correspondence from claimants, their representatives, family members, employers and character witnesses. The precise purpose of each of these files varied somewhat over time and across state borders, as different repatriation offices employed slightly different record-keeping and organisation techniques.

Investigation and evidence

Applying for repatriation benefits also triggered a process of investigation and evaluation by repatriation officials. Knowingly or unknowingly, repatriation claimants exposed their bodies, livelihoods and families to significant scrutiny. Repatriation officials commonly sought verification of employment details – quality of work, any illness or absences – from employers, and evidence of medical treatment from previous doctors. Occasionally, the repatriation organisation sought character references from friends and neighbours. Some claimants provided their own additional evidence, whether it was a personal statement of evidence or a corroborating letter from a fellow captive, friend, doctor or respected member of their local community. While they were exposed to considerable scrutiny, however, former prisoners in interwar Australia were spared the indignity of the home visit, which was a common feature of contemporary charitable aid provided to poverty-stricken Australians. Nonetheless, the surveillance and evaluation to which former prisoners of war were subjected served a similar purpose: to discern which applicants were deserving of assistance and which were not.

In order to confirm the existence and severity of any disabilities, repatriation claimants were required to undergo a medical examination. Medical evaluations were at least partly guided by the testimony of claimants, as former prisoners described to doctors both their disabilities and how they believed these disabilities were linked to war service. In their reports, medical officers paraphrased or summarised the main complaints of the ex-servicemen, and what remained of these interactions was a mediated version of the claimant's voice, shaped by the perceived clinical relevance of their beliefs and concerns. While one former prisoner insisted that he had first noticed a particular medical problem 'at the latter end of 1917 while a prisoner of war in Germany', an evaluating doctor simply noted that the 'Patient states there has been

swelling in this region since 1917.'[44] In contrast to the testimony of claimants – which was personal, subjective, and potentially suspect without corroborating evidence – the medical assessment was framed as objective, clinical and reliable. Medical evaluations offered decisive accounts of the cause and severity of postwar disability and were particularly influential evidence in repatriation case files.

Documents relating to military service were also central to pension claims. These documents included key service records, which documented the movements of each soldier, and any wounds, illnesses or periods of hospitalisation and medical treatment. For former prisoners of war, service documents could also include a repatriation statement, produced after prisoners had been recovered from captivity. Equally influential were the surviving medical documents relating to each veteran's military service: as Lloyd and Rees have noted, 'medical documentation, or its absence, was decisive in the processes of determining eligibility for war pensions and repatriation benefits.'[45] Reliance on these historical documents proved problematic for many veterans. Key medical documents from during the war were destroyed in 1919, and, despite the care and thoroughness with which soldiers had been examined and catalogued throughout the war, 'the surviving paper-work offered a partial and often inadequate account of a soldier's wartime medical history'.[46] The incomplete nature of the medical records available could skew the representation or perception of illnesses or injuries. Particularly powerful were the documents generated on demobilisation and discharge, which required soldiers to state their condition and identify any illnesses or injuries. These medical assessments were intended to make sure that servicemen were fit to travel, free from any illnesses that might infect their comrades or civilian populations, and fit to be formally discharged from the AIF. However, they were also intended to provide a final evaluation of whether any illness or disability present was attributable to or aggravated by war service, detailing the extent and severity of the condition, in order to 'assist the Pensions Department in assessing claims for Pensions

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[44] Letter of appeal from George Gigg, 19 April 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.
Medical evaluation by Doctor Bell, 8 April 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.
[45] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 134.
[46] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 285.

in respect to Disability due to Military Service.'[47] Soldiers were required to review and sign off on their medical assessment, including their own assessment of their health.

These documents were intended, in part, to establish repatriation needs, however, many returning soldiers were not cognisant of their significance and, impatient to return home to their families and loved ones, reported themselves fit and well.[48] John Cowden was doubtless anxious to return to his young family: wife Jean, six-year-old Stanley and four-year-old Doreen. On arrival in Australia on the 21st of April 1919, Cowden answered that he had no illness or injury as a result of his war service, and stated his present condition as 'Good'.[49] Yet his medical record while on service recounted two bouts of influenza, serious enough for hospitalisation, and on his capture on 16 November 1916, Cowden was 'reported a Prisoner of War and sick (Bronchitis and frostbite feet)'.[50] He was hospitalised shortly after having been discharged from the AIF, 'for treatment for stomach trouble brought about by the privations suffered whilst P.O.W.' These privations included regular periods of starvation, and the withholding of all-important Red Cross food parcels. When repatriated to England, Cowden had 'weighed 7½ stone as against his normal weight of 12 stone', and, after his treatment in 1919 he, 'continued to suffer from stomach trouble and for many years was unable to follow a normal diet'.[51]

Though former servicemen were informed that signing their final medical evaluation would not prevent them 'from instituting a subsequent claim for disabilities considered attributable to Military Service', these forms could cast significant doubt on later claims for pensions.[52] On arrival in Australia, Joseph Darlington signed his name to having '[n]o disability'. In April 1930, he made a claim to the Repatriation Commission to have a chest condition and rheumatism accepted as due to war service. In support of his claim, he stated: 'The bad conditions prevailing in the Prisoners' of War compound seriously affected my chest and general state of health ... as the result of treatment

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[47] General Instructions No. 11, 24 January 1919, NAA, MP367/1, 535/4/783.
[48] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 126.
[49] Medical Report on an Invalid, 24 April 1919, John Cowden, NAA, PP18/1, R12421.
[50] Statement of service, NAA, B2455, COWDEN J A.
[51] Statement in support of pension application, 22 June 1953, John Cowden, NAA, PP18/1, R12421.
[52] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 126; General Instructions No. 11: Annexure A, 24 January 1919, NAA, MP367/1, 535/4/783.

accorded prisoners generally, I have suffered with Chest and Rheumatism troubles ever since.'[53] While Darlington's claim lacked compelling postwar evidence, he was also hampered by existing military medical documentation. When assessing his claim, one of the medical officers emphasised the lack of an existing medical history, noting that Darlington, '[c]laimed no incapacity on discharge,' and that there was '[n]o illness or wounds recorded' in his history with the AIF.[54] Joseph Darlington's claim was rejected.

While the reliance on evidence produced during military service proved problematic for many veterans, it was particularly problematic for former prisoners of war. These men tended not to have evidence of medical treatment while in captivity, save for those who were exchanged from captivity due to their wounds. At their Annual Congress in 1935, the RSSILA resolved to request that the federal government give special consideration to former prisoners of war when assessing their claims.[55] The acting Minister for Repatriation, Thomas White – himself a former prisoner of war – responded that he was 'assured by the present Commission that all such cases will be sympathetically dealt with' and that, '[e]very effort is made to secure all possible information – even from enemy countries – of men who were prisoners'.[56] He also requested that the RSSILA should contact the Commission directly to take up any specific matters where prisoners had not received appropriate consideration.[57]

Seeking documents from enemy countries was a partial and controversial solution to the problems posed by a reliance on documentary evidence. It relied heavily on the record-keeping of both Germany and the Ottoman Empire, but also on the fact that if war prisoners reported medical issues to their captors, they were given appropriate, documented medical treatment. Medical treatment was not always readily available in captivity. Furthermore, the strategy of seeking medical documentation from enemy countries was not looked upon favourably by former prisoners. An article in *Smith's Weekly* in 1936 warned former prisoners that the repatriation organisation 'have

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[53] Statement by claimant, 14 April 1930, Joseph Darlington, NAA, BP709/1, M19585.
[54] Medical evaluation by Doctor T.K. Allen, 5 June 1930, Joseph Darlington, NAA, BP709/1, M19585.
[55] Letter, Thomas Walter White to General Secretary RSSILA, 5 Feb 1936, NLA, MS 6609, 1 Numbered Files 'Prisoners of war – pensions' 1936 8151b.
[56] Letter, Thomas Walter White to General Secretary RSSILA, 5 Feb 1936, NLA, MS 6609, 1 Numbered Files 'Prisoners of war – pensions' 1936 8151b.
[57] Letter, Thomas Walter White to General Secretary RSSILA, 5 Feb 1936, NLA, MS 6609, 1 Numbered Files 'Prisoners of war – pensions' 1936 8151b.

long been aware of the Teutonic thoroughness with which the enemy kept its ... prisoner of war records. When any doubt arises as to the veracity of the claims of a Digger appearing before these tribunals, a cable is despatched to Germany for verification.'[58] The Ex-POW Club was moved to write a reply to the *Smith's* article, 'to say that this Club strongly resents the Authorities taking the word of ex enemies, against the word of reputable diggers,' and the secretary of the organisation, T.W. Aistrope, accordingly drafted a response.[59] 'We quite agree that the Teuton was very thorough in many ways, especially in dealing with prisoners of war who did not do exactly as they were told,' he wrote. 'But many ex-Diggers can testify that their method of keeping records of the illnesses of prisoners of war was, to say the least, very desultory, and in many cases cannot be relied on.' Aistrope went on to suggest that the repatriation organisation 'should view with grave doubt reports from German sources' and 'should take the word of the Digger against those coming from such a biased source.'[60] Many former prisoners felt understandably resentful that the advice of their captors and former enemies was taken as more reliable than their own version of events. The decision to rely on medical records – even enemy medical records – over personal testimony was symptomatic of a general distrust and suspicion with which the repatriation organisation viewed claimants' testimony, and the opposing faith they placed in medical evaluations. 'In view of the length of time since discharge, the diagnosis ... & <u>the absence of any confirmation</u> of the man's statement,' a Senior Medical Officer noted of one former prisoner's claim, 'it is recommended that the application for treatment be rejected.'[61]

The RSSILA clearly believed that former prisoners of war were at a disadvantage when dealing with the repatriation organisation in the interwar years, and, despite his diplomatic response in 1935, so too did Thomas White. In 1939, White criticised existing repatriation legislation when addressing the House of Representatives. He noted that despite various reforms and amendments to the act since its inception, 'its terms are altogether too rigid for present day conditions'. White argued that the inflexible conditions of the act relating to evidence and the burden of proof particularly impacted

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[58] 'Ex-Prisoners of war beware! Teutonic Thoroughness', *Smith's Weekly*, January 4, 1936, 10.
[59] Minutes, 20 January 1936, SLSA SRG 869, 1.
[60] 'That "Teutonic Thoroughness"', *Smith's Weekly*, February 22, 1936, 16.
[61] Original emphasis. Minute paper, Senior Medical Officer, 4 March 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.

upon former prisoners of war, and stated that prisoners who were still alive found it particularly difficult to prove that their postwar disabilities were due to their war service. White detailed the case of one former prisoner, who had suffered with malaria and dysentery while in captivity. His illness had been such that the Ottoman government had agreed to release him, under the provisions of an arrangement between the belligerents to allow for the exchange and release of seriously ill and wounded prisoners of war. When this former prisoner of war died in the 1930s, his widow was denied a war widow's pension on the grounds that there was no evidence that his death was due to war service. In relaying the story to parliament, White noted critically that, '[e]ven the enemy showed the man some compassion, but … his own country, for which he fought, has denied justice to his widow.'[62]

Former prisoners of war often could not support their applications with the relevant documentation, as this evidence simply did not exist outside of their personal testimony. Yet the particular difficulties associated with documentary evidence also encouraged many former prisoners to seek alternative forms of corroboration, and placed new emphasis on other forms of evidence. In particular, former prisoners of war – and often their wives and widows – came to rely heavily on the supporting testimony of fellow former prisoners. *Smith's Weekly* proved a willing ally in seeking appropriate former prisoners to corroborate stories of hardship in captivity, and the Ex-POW Club was itself partly founded out of a desire to facilitate these connections between former captives. Nonetheless, it is likely that the difficulties associated with supporting a claim for benefits on the basis of captivity deterred some former prisoners from basing their claims on wartime captivity.

While repatriation personnel conducted thorough investigations, there were clear limits to their scope and reliability. The repatriation organisation did not have unfettered access to survey and report on claimants' lives, and their powers of surveillance were not retroactive; only when an application was lodged did claimants consent to expose themselves to the scrutiny of the repatriation organisation. The day-

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[62] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 15 June 1939, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1939-06-15/0106/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpd

to-day lived reality of veterans, furthermore, tended not produce much in the way of documentary evidence to support a later claim for assistance. While both parties attempted to create compelling and decisive narratives of war service and its legacies, neither party could realistically produce such comprehensive narratives, supported with the required evidence. The resulting historical record was invariably fragmented and incomplete. While the case file often masqueraded as a complete and decisive account, Iacovetta and Mitchinson have cautioned that researchers cannot treat case files as a 'monolithic whole', but rather need to embrace and navigate the disjointed and incomplete trajectory of the file.[63] Each document contained within the case file needs to be understood and analysed within the context of its own specific purpose, circumstances of its creation, and place within the wider trajectory of the file, including the silences and spaces around it.

The case file was a documentary record that necessarily privileged documentary evidence, and, despite its shortcomings, documentary evidence was central to the success of failure of a claim. The information contained in a repatriation case file – or, indeed, the lack of information – could also have decisive and ongoing implications for later claims for assistance. Available evidence shaped veterans' 'repatriation trajectory' – their future interactions with repatriation authorities – and by extension their chances of successfully applying for or appealing decisions. Anderson has noted that, '[c]ase files are ... evolving ... documents, oriented toward the future, shaping the prognosis', but repatriation files were both evolving and static.[64] New information could shift and change an assessment, but so too did the existing catalogue of evidence powerfully influence decision making.

Accepted as due to war service: evaluation and review of pension claims

Repatriation boards in each state were assigned the responsibility for evaluating claims for assistance. In addition to accepting or rejecting claims, state boards were required to establish the rate of pensionable disability as a factor of employment impact.

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[63] Iacovetta and Mitchinson, 'Social History and Case Files', 5–6.
[64] Anderson, 'The Case of the Archive', 536.

Repatriation board decisions were based on the evidence presented, and on guidelines and regulations drafted and distributed by the central adjudicative body of the organisation, the Repatriation Commission. Notes on decisions were often brief: 'recommend acceptance' or 'recommend rejection'. Occasionally, repatriation officials included a reference to a particular section of legislation under which a claim was accepted or rejected. The absence of detailed reasoning from repatriation state boards gave their decisions an air of certainty or inevitability, as if the conclusion reached was the only one feasible in the circumstances. It also served to reduce an array of complex medical, social and personal issues cases to simple designations of war-caused or not. As Anderson has argued, the bureaucratic case file tended to narrow and contain subjectivities, serving as 'part of the machinery for making individuals into normative collectives'.[65]

For all the certainty implied in their decision making, however, the repatriation organisation worked for the most part in shades of grey, dealing with the mire of complexity that was the physical, psychological and financial ramifications of war service. Despite the existence of a central policy, no two claims for assistance were the same, and both the state boards and the Commission had to scrutinise claims individually. Repatriation officials often had different understandings of what constituted a legitimate claim. Iacovetta and Mitchinson caution against treating the individual officers of any institution as 'faceless' representatives of the system, as their 'varied backgrounds, front-line work, relations with superiors' influenced the ways in which they understood and carried out their duties.[66] Like the claimants they interacted with, repatriation officials were different ages, and had different life experiences; some were veterans, others were civilians in the public service. Former prisoners of war were less likely to come across a fellow former captive assessing their claim, though, as Christina Twomey has shown, a fellow prisoner of war was not necessarily more likely to offer a sympathetic judgement.[67] Over the course of their interaction with the repatriation organisation, former prisoners of war dealt with numerous repatriation officials working in different parts of the organisation, and the type and frequency of

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[65] Anderson, 536.
[66] Iacovetta and Mitchinson, 'Social History and Case Files', 11.
[67] Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 44–47.

contact with claimants likely influenced the evaluations and decisions of repatriation officials when there was partial or inconclusive evidence. Indeed, Lloyd and Rees have suggested that the local repatriation committees, 'often sought to present borderline cases favourably, provided the applicant was considered deserving.'[68] The decisions recorded in the case files of former prisoners of war were the product of a dynamic interaction between claimants and the various individuals working within the repatriation system.

Former prisoners of war were informed of whether their claim had been accepted or rejected in writing. During the interwar years, these standardised letters did not provide claimants with any information as to why their claim had been accepted or rejected, or why their pensionable disability had been assessed at a particular rate. Institutional archives have tended to rely on privacy and confidentiality; as Anderson notes, 'access to the institutional archive is limited, circulation of the file restricted, and personal information is regarded as confidential'.[69] The repatriation organisation guarded the files of claimants closely, disclosing information in personal case files only to 'approved authorities'.[70] Claimants themselves were not considered an approved authority, and there was little opportunity for veteran prisoners of war to challenge or correct the versions of themselves catalogued in these personal case files. While the process of applying for repatriation benefits allowed former prisoners to compose particular narratives about their war service and postwar disability, these men ultimately did not know, and could not know, how they were represented in their repatriation case files.

Rejected disabilities: appealing to the repatriation organisation

Veterans who were dissatisfied with the outcome of their application were given the right to appeal. Until 1929, these appeals were reviewed by the Repatriation Commission.[71] However, growing criticism directed at an appeal process not considered

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[68] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 96.
[69] Anderson, 'The Case of the Archive', 534–36; 545.
[70] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 232.
[71] Lloyd and Rees, 94–95; 236–37.

to be appropriately impartial resulted in the creation of two new appellant bodies: the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal (WPEAT) and the War Pensions Assessment Appeal Tribunal (WPAAT). The former dealt with claims for pensions that had been rejected as not due to war service, while the latter dealt with disputes over the rate of pension supplied. After 1929, the Commission remained the first avenue of appeal for veterans, with an option to appeal to one of the independent appellant bodies if the Commission chose to uphold the state board's original designation.

The appeals process, perhaps more than any other aspect of repatriation, was pointedly adversarial. The repatriation system was generally somewhat adversarial; as Stephen Garton has argued, repatriation 'pitted returned men and women against the Department'.[72] However, rejection of a claim provided unambiguous evidence that the repatriation organisation did not find former prisoners' stories of war-caused harm compelling, and powerfully reinforced the existing dynamic which set repatriation officials up in opposition to claimants.

Reflecting this adversarial context, the tone of some claimants changed markedly in the process of appealing a repatriation decision. In initial applications, former prisoners adopted a humble, respectful, deferential and conciliatory tone. In this sense, early correspondence between former prisoners and repatriation officials can be classified as what Martyn Lyons calls, 'writing upwards', a genre of letter writing characterised by 'social or political inequality between the correspondents.'[73] Lyons has suggested that when 'writing upwards', letter writers tended to adopt a tone that reflected their own 'inferior status'.[74] Though repatriation claimants were not 'inferior' in the sense that Lyons intended – former prisoners were certainly not commoners addressing a monarch, or even an employer – the tone of these applications reflected an evident power differential between repatriation claimants and officials. Repatriation officials were, after all, often the gatekeepers of legitimacy and financial stability. However, where applications for assistance were generally polite, formal and measured, frustration and bitterness with what some former prisoners evidently regarded as unjust

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[72] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 86.
[73] Martyn Lyons, 'Writing Upwards: How the Weak Wrote to the Powerful', *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 2 (2015), 317.
[74] Lyons, 317.

decisions often crept into appeals, suggesting that the textual performance of deference and humility were not always entirely sincere.[75] Lodging an appeal when his claim for a pension was again rejected in the 1960s, one elderly former prisoner bitterly reflected on his decision not to apply for a pension while he was still able to work. He claimed that a doctor in the 1920s had strongly advised him to apply for a pension and told him that the repatriation organisation 'would give me no medals' for continuing to work in spite of his disability. 'It seems as if he was right' the disgruntled former prisoner wrote in 1963.[76]

Correspondence, whether personal or official, is never written without some consideration of audience and reception.[77] Former prisoners of war may not have personally known the repatriation officials they were dealing with, but their perception of the organisation and those working within it was shaped by their own experiences in dealing with the organisation, and public discourses about the repatriation system. Former prisoners of war approaching the repatriation organisation had been primed by a public discourse of criticism, which framed the organisation as a cold and ruthless administrator with little regard or sympathy for the wellbeing of Australian veterans. One of the more popular monikers for the repatriation organisation was the *Smith's Weekly*'s 'Cyanide Gang', which described the repatriation organisation as the place where legitimate claims went to die.[78] This public discourse of criticism, as the last chapter argued, served a crucial purpose in advocating for better provisions for veterans and their dependents. However, it also shaped claimants' perceptions of the organisation, the kind of treatment they might expect, and the manner in which they interacted with the organisation.

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[75] James Scott suggests that the performance of deference could often mask subtle forms of resistance. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4–16.

[76] Letter, James Shaw to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 23 January 1963, James Shaw, NAA, J26, M22903 PART 2.

[77] David A. Gerber, 'Epistolary Masquerades: Acts of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters', in *Letters across Borders*, eds Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber, and Suzanne M. Sinke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006), 143; Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 88.

[78] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 196.

Unlike recipients of state and private welfare prior to and during the interwar years, veterans also approached the repatriation organisation with a tacit assumption of entitlement. In the wake of the war, there was an active push on the part of both the government and returned servicemen's organisations to insist that soldiers' repatriation benefits were different to those of civilians: they were, 'an earned right or recompense for sacrifice'.[79] While the repatriation organisation aimed to encourage financial independence, and discourage reliance on state benefits, repatriation was ultimately built on the premise that a soldier's participation in war rendered them deserving of the assistance of the state. Of course, veterans' conception of what that assistance looked like and the terms on which it would be granted were often different to those enshrined in repatriation policy and practice. Some former prisoners of war drew explicitly on this discourse around service and entitlement in their appeals. 'In view of all of the circumstances,' one former prisoner wrote, 'I feel that I am justly entitled to the best medical treatment the Department can provide and I trust you will advise me that my application has been favourably considered.'[80] After a detailed description of his hardships in captivity, another former prisoner wrote, 'I think I am entitled to some recompense for my service overseas. I did not apply before for a pension as I thought I could carry on, but now having to pay men to do everything and medical expenses to pay I cannot do so, and I am justly entitled to better consideration than the first one you have given me.'[81] Medical staff noted that a former prisoner who presented for treatment in 1937 claimed he had been irritable for several years, and that, 'he exhibits it here by demanding justice and treatment'.[82] The language of entitlement did little to advance the claims of former prisoners of war. However, it was suggestive of the power of this rhetoric in shaping the expectations and conduct of veterans in the interwar years.

Appeals often generated substantial material and debate about the links between war and postwar, and about the responsibility of the state to its veterans. Former

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[79] Garton, 'Return Home', 193.
[80] Letter of appeal from George Gigg, 19 April 1927, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293.
[81] Letter, Charles Hobbs to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 15 April 1936, Charles Hobbs, NAA, B73, M57814. In response, Dr Crowe wrote, 'No further comment. Recommend appeal be disallowed' on 27 April 1936.
[82] Minute paper, 21 April 1937, George Gribbon, NAA, C138, M54212.

prisoners were able to reinforce narratives about their war service and its postwar ramifications, while repatriation officials reviewing the case often gave an account of their reasoning. In an effort to support a claim that his heart condition was due to his war service, one former prisoner supplied a detailed statement from a non-repatriation doctor on the medical links between chronic bronchitis – one of his accepted conditions – and heart problems.[83] Another former prisoner offered a point-by-point objection to the rejection of his claim, focussing on the medical legitimacy of his claim and its links to war service, complete with a reference to contemporary medical literature.[84] Few prisoners chose to approach the rejection of their pensions from a medical standpoint, however. Some altered the grounds of their claim slightly on appeal, placing more weight on their frontline service rather than their captivity, or vice versa, testing out the limits of what could be considered a valid claim for assistance. In this way former prisoners, like other veterans, attempted to improve their chances of a successful claim.[85] Most simply tried to clarify or expand on their initial claim by providing further evidence in the form of personal testimony or corroborating evidence from other sources. Perhaps perceiving the rejection of their claims as delegitimising the hardships they had experience in captivity, in their appeals, some former prisoners stridently reiterated the harsh treatment they had received in captivity.

Consequently, these liminal spaces – where causation and attribution were most hazy – often produced greater discussion over the role of captivity as a cause of postwar harm. By contrast, accepted claims did not tend to generate debate, discord or extensive reflection on the links between war service and postwar disability from either claimants or repatriation officials. Like service pensions files, the facts of service or the causation of disability ceased to be of relevance after a claim had been accepted, and files detailing the treatment of accepted disabilities tended to focus mainly on managing the medical ramifications of a given disability in the present, rather than ruminating on its links to the past. The record of wartime captivity and its physical and psychological impacts is thus geared more towards sites of debate and discord, and to physical and psychological

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[83] Report by Doctor Millar, 14 November 1966, Cecil Anderson, NAA, BP709/1, M20036 PART 2.
[84] Appeal, 3 April 1963, Frederick Haig, NAA, B73, M88740 PART 1.
[85] Alistair Thomson has explored the ways in which veterans learned to negotiate with the repatriation organisation over time and to frame their complaints in more compelling ways. See, for instance, Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 294–311.

disabilities with more tenuous and contested connections to captivity and war service more broadly. Despite their evident value for the historian of wartime captivity, there is a consequent risk in over-stating or over-emphasising these cases at expense of a fuller picture of the legacies of wartime captivity, one that encompasses narratives where captivity was not considered to be the cause of postwar harm; after all, fewer than a third of claims made by former prisoners studied for this thesis were based on captivity.

Despite the absence of any justification for the acceptance or rejection of a claim, repatriation outcomes conveyed particular meanings to claimants. In addition to the potential financial security an approved claim could provide, acceptance of a claim for assistance could also convey a sense of validation and legitimacy of both the struggles of disability and the wartime experiences former prisoners believed were responsible for their condition. Conversely, rejection of a claim could delegitimise wartime and postwar experiences and struggles.

Conclusion

The presence, absence and significance afforded to captivity in repatriation case files was partly contingent on the nature of the case file itself, and the processes creating it. Applications on the basis of captivity could be difficult to support with the required standard of evidence, and the documents sought from enemy countries were often unhelpful to former prisoners' claims. The vagaries of documentary evidence plagued all veterans to varying extents. Yet these burdens were particularly acute for former prisoners, for whom the absence of supporting documentation was compounded by the relative obscurity of their wartime experiences, compared to other experiences of war service. The difficulties of supporting a claim for captivity likely deterred some men from invoking their captivity at all, while others chose to shift the emphasis of their claims away from captivity, to their experience of frontline service. By contrast, the appeals process could generate substantial material and debate regarding wartime captivity. Though former captives did not know the reasons their applications were rejected, many felt that they needed to reiterate, clarify or expand on the deleterious effects of captivity, apparently assuming that these were the grounds on which their claims had been rejected.

The processes by which repatriation case files were made may have influenced the information these files contained, but so too did the deliberate inclusion, exclusion and framing of material by former prisoners of war. The challenges of documentary evidence and the generative potential of the appeals process were not the only factors governing the presence, absence and significance of captivity in repatriation case files. The remaining chapters of the thesis, accordingly, consider the role of masculinity, medicine and memory respectively in shaping if, when and how former prisoners and their representatives talked about captivity.

Chapter 4

Double jeopardy: captivity, compromised masculinity and the repatriation system

When her husband's pension was reduced in 1926, Emily Elliott wrote to the repatriation organisation. Her husband, Victor Elliott, had ongoing heart problems that made it difficult to keep up work: 'I can honestly state that my Husband has not done one weeks hard work since his return from the war', she wrote. The family had been allocated land as part of the Soldier Settlement Scheme, and Emily described the difficulties her husband experienced managing the physical labour required to run a farm. While doctors repeatedly told Victor to rest and take it easy, Emily noted sceptically that, in light of their circumstances, 'it seems ridiculous to tell him that'. The family was struggling financially, and the reduction in Victor's pension caused further strain. 'As it concerns me, as well as my Husband, and as my children and myself are the main sufferers I think I am justified in appealing for justice,' Emily wrote. 'I know my Husband would never ask for anything, he has never asked for an increase, the last medical inspection he attended, his pension was increased by no asking of his, that is about 2 or 3 years ago. And I am in a position to state he has not altered one bit.' Frustrated, she concluded: 'When I see people drawing large pensions who do so much drinking and gambling it makes my blood boil. My husband is a Total Abstainer, neither does he gamble, it generally takes all we can get to pay Dr's bills.'[1]

In her letter to the repatriation organisation, Emily Elliott was conspicuously silent on the factors that had caused Victor's present state of reduced health: his more than three and a half years of service in the AIF, which included 20 months in German captivity.[2] This was a common strategy in former prisoners' correspondence with the repatriation organisation. Rather than dwell on the facts of service, former prisoners, and their representatives, often focused on the traits of character, work ethic and

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[1] Letter, Emily Elliott to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, Victor Elliott, NAA, C138, M76586.
[2] Statement of service, NAA, B2455, ELLIOTT V. Victor Elliott was captured by the Germans at Bullecourt on 11 April 1917.

respectability manifest in the postwar period. While the emphasis on the contemporary was not necessarily out of the ordinary – accepted claims inevitably focussed more on the present-day ramifications of war service – the relative silence around the issue of captivity and emphasis on demonstrable qualities of domestic masculinity in both repatriation applications and appeals warrants further investigation.

The relative prominence of domestic masculinity in repatriation case files was indicative of the centrality of its principles to both the repatriation organisation and to postwar society. It was also suggestive of the capacity of domestic masculinity as opposed to war service – and specifically wartime captivity – to be a vehicle for constructing masculinity itself in repatriation case files. An emphasis on domestic masculinity in repatriation case files therefore served a dual purpose. It rendered a claimant deserving of assistance, while also working to alleviate the personal discomfort of applying to the repatriation organisation for assistance in the first place. Such discomfort referenced longstanding cultural associations between charitable or state-based welfare and a feminised state of personal and financial dependence.

This chapter explores the framing and interpretation of masculinity in the repatriation case files of former prisoners of war and considers the function and significance of these articulations for both former prisoners and repatriation officials. It suggests that repatriation was a context in which masculinity became fraught, and that articulations of good military or personal character served to mitigate the challenge to masculinity posed by the giving and receiving of financial assistance. It argues that former prisoners of war faced a double burden, attempting to navigate the potentially comprised masculinity of dependence on the state with the challenge of captivity itself sometimes being construed as a feminised state.

Compromised masculinity

In the postwar period, the public self-presentation of prisoners of war had attempted to negotiate the inherent potential for emasculation in captivity itself by emphasising acts of redemptive manhood. Particularly in the genre of memoir, avoiding work and feigning illness were structured as tactics deployed during imprisonment that allowed prisoners of war to redeem themselves and thwart the ambitions of the enemy. Rather

than being 'resourceful and courageous in battle', or being hard-working and honest, prisoners of war were resourceful in attempting to escape, feigning illness, avoiding work and mocking or humiliating captors. Modes of masculinity in captivity were somewhat different to those of the battlefield and the domestic sphere, and sat awkwardly in relation to the repatriation organisation's emphasis on hard work, honesty and good character. Lewis Stewart's assertion, for instance, that a German farmer he was required to work for during his captivity 'was very dissatisfied with me because I would not work hard enough (I was not alone in that respect)' and his later reference to being sent out from a nearby prison camp to work, 'if I was not smart enough to dodge it' conflicted somewhat with his reported devotion to work in the postwar period.[3]

As such, when captivity appeared in applications for assistance as the cause of postwar disability, it often proved to be a problematic vehicle for the expression of masculinity. Another prisoner of war applying for a pension in 1930 for a knee injury found that his reference to escaping from captivity was poorly received by repatriation officials. 'Applicant claims that his ... knee was injured when he was taken prisoner in 1917 at Bullecourt,' a repatriation doctor noted. 'If so, the injury must have been very slight as, on own statement, he was able to escape to Moscow and made no mention of the disability prior to discharge.'[4] In this case, the nature of the condition under consideration was incongruous with the perceived physical challenges of escape from captivity. Even escape, the most positive and potentially redemptive narrative former prisoners could tell, did not always go over well. While for some it helped contribute to their wider military character, for others it was evidence that the suffering they had endured in captivity might not have caused quite the damage they had tried to claim that it did.

The narrative strategy that had restored masculine agency to prisoners in postwar memoirs bumped up against the paradigm of repatriation in two important respects. First, as we have seen, the key tenets of redemptive masculinity in captivity sat in awkward opposition to the principles of domestic masculinity at the centre of the

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[3] Letter, Lewis Stewart to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 5 February 1920, Lewis Stewart, NAA, B73, M60602.
[4] Medical evaluation by Dr Crowe, 23 September 1930, Thomas Taylor, NAA, B73, M81355 PART 1.

repatriation organisation. Second, repatriation required direct emphasis on the cause of postwar illness and injury, which left little space for other facets of service not directly related to the genesis of a particular postwar condition, including aspects of redemptive manhood. Whereas an injury sustained in frontline service could serve as the cause of postwar disability while also highlighting the character and masculine identity of the veteran – their courage and devotion to duty – captivity by comparison could not as easily serve as *both* the cause of postwar disability and a vehicle for demonstrating appropriate masculinity. An injury sustained in combat might complicate men's pursuit of ideal masculinity postwar, but the context in which the injury was sustained was anything but emasculating. As a consequence, former prisoners of war were generally forced to focus on the most enfeebling aspects of their war service if they wished to invoke captivity in their claims on the repatriation system. Making a claim for pension entitlements from the repatriation system was thus a process that was especially fraught for prisoners of war, men for whom an already fragile relationship to martial masculinity was further compromised by the need to seek support from the state.

Repatriation and the restoration of masculinity

Despite proclamations of the superior martial masculinity of the Australian soldier, there was also real concern in postwar Australia that the experience of war had physically and psychologically damaged many of these men to such an extent that they would be unable – or unwilling – to fulfil their civic duties and reintegrate into society.[5] Repatriation was a measure that was partly devised to manage this potential 'crisis of masculinity' amongst Australian veterans, and to encourage men to once again take up their masculine roles in civilian life.[6] Yet the tension at the heart of the repatriation scheme was the concurrent fear that with the provision of financial repatriation benefits, many returned men 'would collapse into a passive, unmanly dependency on the pension system, rather than reclaim their status as men, husbands and fathers'.[7] Emphasis on appropriate masculinity – especially the sanctity of work and financial self-

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[5] Garton, 'Return Home', 195.
[6] Garton, 192; Stephen Garton, '"Fit Only for the Scrap Heap": Rebuilding Returned Soldier Manhood in Australia after 1945', *Gender & History* 20, no. 1 (2008), 57.
[7] These concerns persisted into the post-Second World War period. Garton, '"Fit Only for the Scrap Heap"', 57.

sufficiency – was consequently woven throughout the rhetoric, structure and operation of the repatriation organisation.

Employment and financial self-sufficiency were at the crux of the repatriation scheme. One information booklet provided to soldiers returning to Australia went so far as to state that, 'Every feature of the Australian repatriation scheme aims at repairing, so far as is practicable, the economic loss which military service has entailed.'[8] Repatriation literature provided to men awaiting demobilisation divided veterans into three categories when it came to financial support. The first was those who were permanently disabled, men entitled to assistance and assured of 'a place in a hostel where care would be provided for them,' and where 'they may spend their days in pleasant surrounding and be assured of skilled attention'. The second category were those men who had permanent, but not completely debilitating conditions; in a pamphlet distributed to soldiers awaiting demobilisation, Major A. B. Ryan, a representative of the Repatriation Department, outlined a number of provisions in place to allow men with permanent disabilities to train and pursue alternative careers, making it abundantly clear that any financial support meted out to men with permanent, though not completely debilitating, war injuries was intended to be temporary.[9] The final category was those men who were able to work, and who were thus framed as ineligible for financial assistance. Repatriation largely envisioned that a very small selection of men would remain dependent on repatriation benefits, while the rest would once again find gainful employment, after a short period of support and training by the repatriation authorities.

Repatriation authorities placed their primary emphasis on restoring men in civil society by virtue of restoring them to their earning capacity prior to the war. All assistance provided to veterans was to be provided 'with the definite end in view of re-establishing them as self-supporting members of the community,' the Minister for Repatriation, Edward Millen, noted. 'Any form of assistance should be to that end,' Millen counselled, 'and not an end in itself.'[10] A specific employment section of the

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[8] *Demobilisation Procedure in Australia*, (Melbourne: Australian Imperial Force, 1919), 16.
[9] 'What Australia is doing for her Returned Soldiers', 1919, NAA, MP367/1, 535/4/783.
[10] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 9.

repatriation organisation was devoted to finding suitable employment for returned men. Sustenance payments were provided to men seeking employment, and veterans were required to take whatever work they were offered by the repatriation organisation.[11] Work was touted as key to physical and psychological recovery, and initiatives like convalescent farms were established to help men to regain 'the habit of work'.[12] Injured and ill veterans who could no longer perform their pre-war jobs, meanwhile, were offered vocational training for a new role suited to their disability. Repatriation reports proudly pointed to instances in which injured and ill veterans had 'risen superior to their disabilities and returned to civil life able to take on some part at least in the responsibilities and activities of their pre-war days.'[13] Repatriation discourses, Stephen Garton has argued, specifically appealed to veterans' previous war service, utilising terms like, 'Duty, action, deeds, self-reliance' to encourage veterans to take up their domestic responsibilities with the same devotion that they had their war service.[14]

Repatriation sought to restore the earning capacity of war-damaged men, and thus a capacity for wages was inevitably built into the system. This was particularly apparent in the assessment of pensionable disability, which assessed the rate of pension as a measure of the extent to which a veteran's earning capacity was reduced by his accepted disability. A veteran with a 10 percent rate of disability would thus be entitled to 10 percent of a full repatriation pension. In the interwar years, this resulted in pension reductions when a veteran's working capacity was deemed to improve. In 1943, the official medical historian of the war, Arthur Butler, criticised the repatriation system on these grounds, arguing that an emphasis on 'indigence' had been built into the system, resulting in an adversarial relationship between claimants and repatriation officials, which also discouraged veterans from taking up employment again for fear of a

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[11] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 14. The employment section of the Repatriation Department had to create jobs, assign those jobs, work out the rate of sustenance in the meantime, organise transport to jobs for veterans and sign men up for vocational training if they couldn't find them jobs. The veteran had to take the job he was offered.

[12] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1922* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1922), 30.

[13] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1922*, 30.

[14] Garton, 'Return Home', 196.

reduction in pension.[15] Emphasis on the working capacity of veterans aligned these men with other contemporary welfare recipients. The early administration of repatriation pensions by the Pensions Department exacerbated these issues, and Butler suggested it left an enduring mark on the administration and perception of Australia's war pensioning scheme.[16]

While the majority of veterans were understood to be hard-working, and willing to re-establish themselves as self-sufficient members of the community, fear of fostering dependence amongst returned men was a pressing concern for repatriation officials. The existence of this type of veteran, and the steps taken by repatriation officials not to indulge them, was a regular theme of early repatriation reports. Veterans who were not considered to be serious about finding suitable employment had their sustenance payments cancelled, though 'not without protests.'[17] In applications for assistance, 'the ingenuity of the "digger" was matched against the vigilance of officials' one repatriation report noted, 'and while it fairly may be said that the majority of men were anxious to get back into their normal industrial stride with as little delay as possible, there were not a few who took full advantage of every indulgence the Department was prepared to extend.'[18] Alongside glowing reports of hard-working veterans, willing to overcome their disabilities, were scathing evaluations of the character of those who fell short of this ideal of returned solider masculinity. Despite the purported success of the repatriation organisation's convalescent farms, for example, one repatriation report noted disapprovingly that 'there is, however, a type of man who seems content to spend the rest of his days in an institution such as this rather than endeavour to rise superior to his disability and fend for himself.'[19]

Local repatriation committees, especially between 1918 and 1920, played a crucial role in finding appropriate employment for veterans, and monitoring their work ethic. These committees investigated claims and reported their findings to the state boards,

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[15] Arthur Graham Butler, 'The War-Damaged Soldier', in *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918*, 1st ed., vol. Special Problems and Services (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1943), 793–94.

[16] Butler, 793.

[17] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 14.

[18] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 14.

[19] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1923* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1923), 13.

which were responsible for deciding on their merits. Given their proximity to veterans in their community, local committees had valuable insight into the local employment situation and the aptitude of the veteran. In the early stages of repatriation, this local knowledge was considered a distinct advantage in determining the merits of individual claims, and in organising appropriate employment and assistance for veterans in need.[20]

Members of local repatriation committees also had insight into the reputation and conduct of the veterans in their local area, and these committees were in a position to conduct first-hand evaluations of the character of repatriation claimants. Personal contact with veterans might convince local repatriation officials of the merits of the case where the veteran had a good reputation in the local community; by contrast, a veteran with a bad reputation might be construed as underserving.[21] One former prisoner of war had his employment and sustenance payments revoked in late 1919 due to the censure of the local repatriation committee. Along with a fellow veteran, the former prisoner was given employment and sustenance payments in a small community in Western Australia, despite the misgivings of the local repatriation committee. Though they were 'not at all impressed with these men', the committee resolved that the men 'shall have a fair go and will be given patient encouragement.'[22] Both men proved lacking when it came to the work, and it was suggested that they were prone to misusing their sustenance payments. 'You will doubtless have discovered,' one local repatriation official noted wryly, 'that it would be better to provide them with rations, rather than with the money to procure same.'[23] In addition to their poor work and bad behaviour, both men were accused of 'exploiting' the local townspeople by 'telling harrowing stories of hardship and want' in pursuit of money.[24] After only four months, the local repatriation committee suspended the men from the employment scheme and ceased their sustenance payments, and the men were informed that 'having abused the privileges and assistance which they were receiving ... they will not be eligible for any

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[20] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 93, 97.
[21] Lloyd and Rees, 96.
[22] Letter, G Colquhoun, Secretary of the Meekatharra Local Repatriation Committee to Deputy Comptroller, Department of Repatriation, Perth, 20 August 1919, Thomas Bray, NAA, PP2/8, M12839.
[23] Letter, G Colquhoun, Secretary of the Meekatharra Local Repatriation Committee to Secretary Mount Magnet Local Repatriation Committee, 29 August 1919, Thomas Bray, NAA, PP2/8, M12839.
[24] Letter, G Colquhoun, Secretary of the Meekatharra Local Repatriation Committee to Deputy Comptroller, Department of Repatriation, Perth, 4 December 1919, Thomas Bray, NAA, PP2/8, M12839.

other form of assistance whatsoever from this Department, other than Medical attention for war-caused disability.'[25] The Deputy Comptroller noted: 'It is extremely regrettable that these men have turned out as they have as it is not only disheartening … but also casts a slur on returned soldier generally in the eyes of the public.'[26]

While the repatriation system strove to divorce itself from the 'discretionary judgement' of charitable and benevolent societies, assessments of character – whether a veteran was deserving or undeserving – were reflective of the influence of nineteenth-century models of private charitable assistance.[27] Local committees, with their implicit emphasis on subjective evaluations of character and deservingness, occupied an increasingly marginal position in the repatriation organisation after 1920. By this point, Lloyd and Rees suggest that it had become clear that it was 'impossible to make the local committees both independent and accountable'.[28] However, subjective assessments of the character of the veteran remained an intrinsic feature of the repatriation system.[29] When Joseph Darlington applied to the repatriation organisation, evaluations of his claim were largely preoccupied with his obesity rather than his alleged conditions. Indeed, one doctor claimed that Darlington's obesity was in fact his sole disability.[30] Darlington's weight was used to suggest that he was undeserving: his obesity associated him with inactivity, laziness and a dependent, and therefore undeserving, character. Despite claims from outside sources that Darlington 'was a good, clean living man, honest, and of sober habits,' repatriation authorities crafted a competing narrative around his character, which partly facilitated the rejection of his claim.[31]

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[25] Letter, Deputy Comptroller, Department of Repatriation, Perth to G Colquhoun, Secretary of Meekatharra Local Repatriation Committee, 9 December 1919, Thomas Bray, NAA, PP2/8, M12839.

[26] Letter, Deputy Comptroller, Department of Repatriation, Perth to G Colquhoun, Secretary of Meekatharra Local Repatriation Committee, 9 December 1919, Thomas Bray, NAA, PP2/8, M12839.

[27] John Murphy, *A Decent Provision: Australia Welfare Policy, 1870 to 1949*, Modern Economic and Social History (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 127.

[28] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 97.

[29] Lloyd and Rees, 97. Oppenheimer and Scates have noted that these concepts also exerted considerable influence on evaluations of soldier settlers. See Scates and Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle*, 34–37.

[30] Medical examination by Doctor E. M. Baseden, 14 April 1930, Joseph Darlington, NAA, BP709/1, M19585. Joseph Darlington's claim was rejected by the Queensland State Repatriation Board on 25 July 1930.

[31] Form 'S', Mr O Stanley, 19 April 1927, Joseph Darlington, NAA, BP709/1, M19585.

Deserving and undeserving were essentially 'imported' concepts in the context of repatriation; as Shurlee Swain has argued, these concepts were created and re-negotiated in specific contexts.[32] The specific meaning of deservingness varied; Peel has argued, for instance, that the notions of deserving and underserving that preoccupied workers of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s were linked to class and class identity, as social workers actively constructed and enforced the boundaries of class, while clients pushed back against and re-negotiated those boundaries.[33] Similarly, Swain argues that the files of the Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society (MLBS) show both poor clients and middle-class Victorian charity workers engaged in a dynamic, though unequal, relationship to redefine the concepts of deserving and undeserving.[34] While the contours of deservingness in the context of repatriation bore some similarities to those at play in contemporary welfare and charitable organisations, they were ultimately unique, drawing on both martial and domestic modes of masculinity.

Employment – and specifically willingness to work – was clearly central to what it meant to be deserving of repatriation assistance, but so too were other facets of character. In addition to having a valid claim, veterans were expected to be honest, hard-working, sober, active and reputable. Repatriation officials in the interwar years often requested corroborating evidence from friends, employers and community members associated with former prisoners, specifically requesting information on 'his mode of living, such as recreation, sobriety, etc.'[35] Though these were construed as having medical relevance to the onset and severity of particular conditions, this information was also used to compose an image of the character of the claimant. The primary basis on which claims for assistance were judged was on the strength of the medical case: whether or not a particular postwar condition could reasonably have its genesis in war service. However, in absence of strong medical case, or in the presence

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[32] Shurlee Swain, 'Negotiating Poverty: Women and Charity in Nineteenth-century Melbourne', *Women's History Review* 16, no. 1 (February 2007), 101.

[33] Mark Peel, 'Charity, Casework and the Dramas of Class in Melbourne, 1920-1940: "Feeling Your Position"', *History Australia* 2, no. 3 (December 2005), 83.5.

[34] Swain, 'Negotiating Poverty', 101.

[35] Letter, C Taylor, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation to P. Fogarty, C. Laughton and J. Hamilton, 19 October 1937, Charles Barnard, NAA, PP866/1, M12350.

of any doubt, subjective evaluation of the character or deservingness of the veteran exerted an influence on the decisions of the repatriation organisation.

In the context of repatriation, military service was also unavoidably central to the determinations of deserving or undeserving. The centrality of military service within the repatriation organisation was reflected in the composition of both the Repatriation Department and the Repatriation Commission during the interwar years. The first paid Repatriation Commission consisted entirely of returned men, so too was the position of Minister of Repatriation largely filled by veteran soldiers throughout the interwar years. Lloyd and Rees have argued that 'the predominance of returned soldiers in the Repatriation Department created an ethos which did not dissipate until the World War II veterans began to retire from the public service more than fifty years later.'[36] The presence of veterans in the repatriation organisation did not necessarily correlate to sympathetic or generous application of repatriation provisions; as Thomson has noted, 'any sympathy they might have had for fellow returned men was tempered by their bureaucratic role and by their social background and values.'[37] Nonetheless, veterans with a history of reliable or distinguished service, and who were perceived as having 'moral character' tended to be understood as inherently more deserving of assistance.[38]

When Arthur Wearne applied for a pension, repatriation officials were impressed by his military conduct. Wearne had served as an officer in the fledgling Australian Flying Corps during the First World War, and he was captured when his plane was shot down in enemy territory. In the years after the war, Arthur Wearne's mental health deteriorated, and his wife claimed that he had returned from war a changed man. She believed that the plane crash, combined with his time as a prisoner of war, was the cause of Arthur's postwar health problems. Despite a troubling postwar record of alcoholism, violence and mental health problems, as well as a stint as a prisoner of war, Arthur Wearne was viewed favourably by repatriation officials in light of his 'fine war service'.[39] Though captivity was a feature of Wearne's service, one doctor was careful to note approvingly that as a prisoner, Wearne, 'endeavoured to escape on more than one

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[36] Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 91.
[37] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 286.
[38] Thomson, 286.
[39] Pension evaluation by Dr J.Y. Griffiths, 12 February 1942, Arthur Wearne, NAA, B73, M5539.

occasion'.[40] Yet the connection between Arthur Wearne's postwar condition and his war service was medically tenuous. 'Regretfully, in view of his fine service,' one doctor noted, 'I can find no definite evidence from the whole account in the files, to support the claim that his mental disability was due to, or aggravated by, war service.' Another doctor appropriately summed up the tenor of these deliberations: 'It seems unfortunate that men with poor records receive many benefits and a man who distinguished himself in the late war, who now has deteriorated morally and physically, can have no departmental assistance.'[41] Though his claim was ultimately unsuccessful, Arthur Wearne's postwar moral and physical deterioration was secondary to his upstanding conduct in war.

Former prisoners more commonly drew on modes of domestic masculinity to frame themselves as deserving of repatriation assistance. The experience of captivity itself, while it might cause postwar harm, was a problematic vehicle for masculinity, and few prisoners of war could draw on distinguished service in the way that Arthur Wearne could. One supporting witness declared that a former prisoner was 'V.C. material' prior to his capture. His time in captivity, however, was evidently seen to have tarnished his otherwise promising military career and character.[42] Articulation of good character in a domestic context consequently took on particular weight and significance in the repatriation case files of former prisoners of war.

Claiming from repatriation

When approaching the repatriation organisation, veteran prisoners of war made it absolutely clear that they were in need of assistance. When one former prisoner appealed the rejection of his claim for repatriation benefits in 1941, he wrote: 'Financial circumstances compel me now to take this course. Previously I have always paid myself.'[43] The man expressed a common sentiment: financial need had driven him, finally, to apply for repatriation benefits. Matthew Sloan, a former prisoner of the Turks, wrote to the repatriation organisation with a sense of regret that '[a]fter an honest

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[40] Pension evaluation by Dr J.Y. Griffiths, 12 February 1942, Arthur Wearne, NAA, B73, M5539.
[41] Pension evaluation by Dr J.Y. Griffiths, 12 February 1942, Arthur Wearne, NAA, B73, M5539.
[42] Letter, Dr Gunter, Vice-Chancellor of University of Papua New Guinea, 21 May 1968, William Groves, NAA, B73, M58371.
[43] Form T.A., 3 November 1941, Charles Barnard, NAA, PP866/1, M12350.

attempt for the past 15 years to carry on I am very sorry to say I am compelled on account of ill health to appeal to your Department for assistance.' While he had done his best to carry on in spite of his illness – including allowing a pension granted in 1920 to lapse while he 'tried to earn my own living' – in 1935, Sloan wrote that, '[o]f late years I have been unable to work owing to sickness.'[44] After John Cowden's death in 1953, evidence produced by his widow, Jean, suggested that John had struggled throughout his life with physical and psychological problems related to his captivity. When a doctor recommended John apply for a pension, he declined, as 'he was able to work and had a permanent job'.[45]

Work was also commonly associated with a desire for independence, in contrast to the potentially fraught and emasculating condition of financial dependence on the state. A supporting witness testified that one former prisoner was 'of an independent nature and preferred to continue to remain in employment rather than be a burden on the Commonwealth'.[46] Another former prisoner similarly accounted for the lapse in time between his discharge and his application for assistance in 1937 with his intention 'to carry on without recourse to the government'.[47] Another character witness noted that a former prisoner had continued to work despite his ongoing illness, as he was 'loth to make a nuisance,' by going to the repatriation organisation.[48] 'Applicant is a very independent person, and has battled along for years trying to scrape out a living doing odd plumbing jobs round the town,' wrote the President of the Holbrook RSSAILA on behalf of former prisoner George Shirley, 'he is physical [*sic*] wreck with chronic heart trouble, and will only accept cash assistance from the Organisation in the nature of a loan, which he insists on repaying.'[49] As one supporting witness wrote of a former prisoner of war: 'His is certainly a very deserving case.'[50]

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[44] Letter, Matthew Sloan to repatriation organisation, 24 October 1935, Matthew Black Sloan, NAA, BP709/1, M20001 PART 2.

[45] Statement in support of pension application, 22 June 1953, John Cowden, NAA, PP18/1, R12421.

[46] Letter, R.M. Hankinson, Esq., M.L.A to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, 31 January 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

[47] Application for assistance, 2 April 1937, George Gribbon, NAA, C138, M54212.

[48] Letter, Albert Elliott to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Western Australia, 22 November 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.

[49] Letter, B. Lewers, President of Holbrook RSSAILA, 31 August 1945, George Shirley, NAA, C138, C46636.

[50] Letter, Mr Jowett, 11 July 1919, Lewis Stewart, NAA, B73, M60602.

Reflecting the repatriation organisation's emphasis on work and employment capacity, work – and working through the discomfort and inconvenience of illness and disability – were commonly construed as necessary to meet other domestic obligations. 'Since I have come home I have been troubled a good deal with my head and back', wrote Lewis Stewart in 1930, '& although I have not lost much time from work I would have been at home much more if I had not been married, especially during the past 6 years, but to keep the home going & keep out of debt it was necessary for me to go to work.'[51] Robert Lowson similarly pointed out that throughout the interwar years, 'I frequently spent days at a time in bed with back trouble and very often carried on partly doubled up and in pain because I had to provide for my wife and family.'[52] A character witness described one former prisoner as 'an honourable and respected citizen; a gentleman who always studied his home and family'.[53] The role of the breadwinner was central to both working- and middle-class masculinity in the interwar period, and some former prisoners clearly conceptualised their roles as husbands and fathers in these terms.[54] As such, financial insecurity and employment problems compromised the masculine identities of former prisoners of war and, for many of these men, repatriation benefits offered a way to continue to meet the masculine obligation of providing for their wives and children.

Financial need and earning capacity had precious little relevance in determining whether or not particular disabilities were due to or aggravated by war service. While these factors were certainly taken into account when assessing the pensionable rate of disability for accepted claims, financial need and reduced earning capacity were unlikely

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[51] Letter, Lewis Stewart to the repatriation organisation, 5 February 1930, Lewis Stewart, NAA, B73, M60602.

[52] Letter, Robert Lowson, 23 January 1957, Robert Lowson, NAA, PP946/1, M11628A.

[53] Letter from G.T. Shepherd, 29 November 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.

[54] Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, 'A History of Australia' (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 191. The breadwinner ideal had particular prominence in the latter half of the twentieth century, and John Murphy has pointed to its popularity across class divides in the 1950s. However, as Chelsea Barnett has argued, breadwinner masculinity was by no means universal or uncontested in this period. John Murphy, 'Breadwinning: Accounts Of Work And Family Life In The 1950s', *Labour & Industry: A Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work* 12, no. 3 (January 2002), 59–75; Chelsea Barnett, '"Working Hard and Saving Up": Australian Masculinity and Meanings of Work and Class in Smiley (1956)', no. 21 (2015), 14; Chelsea Barnett, 'Man's Man: Representations of Australian Post-War Masculinity in Man Magazine', *Journal of Australian Studies* 39, no. 2 (3 April 2015), 151–69; Chelsea Barnett, 'Masculinity and Cultural Contestation in the Australian 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies* 49, no. 2 (3 April 2018), 184–202.

to improve a veterans' chances of actually having their claim accepted as due to war service. The prominence of financial need in claims made by former prisoners of war suggests that it was important for these men to demonstrate that their request for financial assistance was not borne out of greed or laziness. 'Returned men are not mendicants', MP and former prisoner Thomas White noted succinctly in a speech to the House of Representatives in 1939. 'Occasionally we might find one who is not deserving of sympathy, but in the main they spurn charity.'[55] White himself made a point of noting that he gave up his own repatriation pension 'realising that many who were entitled to it needed it more than I did.'[56] Emphasis on financial need and employment difficulties spoke to the centrality of these concepts to repatriation, but more importantly served as a way for former prisoners to both ease the discomfort of applying for assistance, and to frame themselves as deserving men of good character.

While financial need and a thwarted desire to be self-supporting were at the crux of the majority of repatriation claims, references to the lifestyle and recreation of the claimant also appeared. One former prisoner noted that, 'I cannot take up any exercise such as tennis or rowing much as I would like to. I find all the exercise I can stand at the wood heap and in the garden.' The same man went on to add that he had 'been a tee totaler all my life but a modest smoker.'[57] Letters sent to employers and other character witnesses commonly requested information on claimants' habits and mode of living, and as such, references to the lifestyle, temperament and character of former prisoners were significantly more likely to appear in letters written by supporters and character witnesses than they were in letters from the former prisoners themselves. Often these assessments were simple and direct. 'He was a man of good habits – strictly sober' noted one employer's report on a former prisoner.[58] 'He leads a quiet useful life and while not a total abstainer,' wrote one witness, 'he is of the most abstemious habits, never

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[55] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 15 June 1939, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1939-06-15/0106/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpd
[56] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 15 June 1939, available at https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1939-06-15/0106/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpd
[57] Letter, Lewis Stewart to the repatriation organisation, 5 February 1930, Lewis Stewart, NAA, B73, M60602.
[58] Report from employer, 29 July 1930, Thomas Taylor, NAA, B73, M81355 PART 1.

indulging in any excesses.'[59] Others emphasised how the experience of war had prevented former prisoners from engaging in sport and recreation as they had prior to the war. One such letter noted that a former prisoner 'bears an excellent character in this district' and he 'was a keen footballer' prior to enlistment. 'Since his return he has been unable to play which I have always understood was because of an injury received while on Active Service,' the character witness noted.[60] Another supporting declaration similarly noted that the former prisoner in question had returned from war, 'broken in health', whereas before enlisting 'he was an athletic type of man; he played "A" grade Rugby League Football for Waratah and was obviously in a perfect physical state of fitness.'[61]

In reality, good character and appropriate masculine conduct alone had little bearing on cases where medical evidence did not support a link between war service and postwar illness or injury. When Charles Barnard applied for a pension in 1937, he was depicted as an ideal reflection of interwar domestic masculinity: he was a hard-working, uncomplaining man with sober habits and a desire to provide for his family. 'He is a sober good living man', a character witness wrote in support of Barnard, while another averred that '[h]is mode of living has always been one of the best'.[62] Another supporter noted that Barnard 'is of a quiet disposition, attends to his work.' Though unmarried and without children, he was also a man committed to his family. When Barnard's father died, a friend wrote, he had moved back to Perth to care for his sister and mother, 'where he is at present living and keeping the home going.' Alluding to Barnard's stoic and uncomplaining nature, the same friend noted: 'I was talking to him on the Sunday before your letter came and he never mentioned anything to me about it, so I got a surprise when I got your letter.'[63] Despite his good character, Charles Barnard's application for a pension was denied; his sobriety, work ethic, devotion to his family and uncomplaining stoicism alone were not enough to entitle him to a

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[59] Letter from J Prentice, 15 December 1928, Robert Lowson, NAA, PP946/1, M11628A.
[60] Letter from J Woolstencroft, 8 August 1930, Thomas Taylor, NAA, B73, M81355 PART 1.
[61] Letter from George Morris, 31 October 1961, Charles Morris, NAA, C138, M69777.
[62] Letter, P. Fogarty, 21 October 1937, and Letter, J.H. Hamilton, 22 October 1937, Charles Barnard, NAA, PP866/1, M12350.
[63] Letter, J.H. Hamilton to repatriation organisation, 22 October 1937, Charles Barnard, NAA, PP866/1, M12350.

repatriation pension.[64] Repatriation was, ostensibly, designed to compensate veterans for economic loss caused by disabilities due to or aggravated by their war service. While veterans like Charles Barnard were undoubtedly men of deserving character who were in need of a pension, in absence of a war caused disability or a complete inability to work, they were not eligible for repatriation assistance.

In contrast to former prisoners, character witnesses and those writing on their behalf tended to focus on the suffering and hardship brought about by war service. One supporting witness wrote that he could, 'testify to the dreadful emaciated condition' that one former prisoner was in after he was released from German captivity. 'He came to my house in Edinburgh direct from Germany before returning home to Australia', the man wrote, 'and he was a total wreck – just a walking skeleton. Poor fellow.'[65] Another man similarly testified that this particular prisoner had, 'joined our forces the A.I.F. in perfect health' and after the war was, 'a war wreck after a fearful time as prisoner of war in Germany'. Despite his ill health, he had continued to work, 'till at last he was forced to give up and suffered greatly till at last he died'.[66] An additional character witness wrote that after the war, he 'was never in good health and his coughing at night and morning was distressing to hear. At times he could scarce speak, his breathing was so bad. Many times he went to work when he should have laid up. There is no doubt in my mind that he was suffering from the effects of the late war. One could see him failing in health some time before he had to give up.'[67] A character witness similarly wrote of another veteran prisoner that 'at times his pinched features and languid bearing cause his friends no little anxiety'.[68] Where former prisoners preferred to emphasise their efforts to carry on in spite of poor physical and mental health, supporting witnesses also chose to emphasise the adversity caused by war service in the postwar period.

The suffering and hardship described by those writing in support of former prisoners was overtly contrasted with the claimant's personal stoicism and forbearance. 'He was a man who never complained,' a character witness lamented of one veteran

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[64] Evaluation of Doctor A.R.F. Clarke, 24 December 1937, Charles Barnard, NAA, PP866/1, M12350.
[65] Letter from S.J. Auld, 30 August 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.
[66] Albert Elliott to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Western Australia, 22 November 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.
[67] Letter from G.T. Shepherd, 29 November 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.
[68] Letter from J Prentice, 15 December 1928, Robert Lowson, NAA, PP946/1, M11628A.

prisoner. 'It is a pity he did not complain more instead of trying to battle along as he did. If he had, perhaps greater consideration would have been given to his case.'[69] Constance Wallbank meanwhile, wrote that her husband Joseph, 'did not talk much about his starvation and other hardships and tried to forget them.'[70] The wife of one former prisoner wrote to the repatriation organisation to beg for them to reconsider their rejection of her husband's claim. 'It is many months since he has done any work through the injury and the few pounds that we had managed to save are almost gone. He is practically a cripple now,' she wrote in desperation. In concluding her letter, however, she was careful to note that, '[m]y husband is ignorant of the fact that I am writing to you, but it is the predicament that we are in that made me do so.'[71] When Emily Elliott complained to the repatriation organisation about the reduction in her husband Victor's pension, she was also careful to note that her husband was not privy to her decision to write to the repatriation organisation. Victor, unlike Emily, was stoic and uncomplaining. Stoicism, and careful regulation of affect, were integral to masculine identity in the early twentieth century.[72] In pointing to the stoicism of former prisoners of war, wives, widows and those writing on their behalf, reinforced the appropriately masculine conduct of these stoic and uncomplaining former prisoners of war. While repatriation case files were undoubtedly 'a masculine narrative of the male suffering', to borrow Jessica Meyer's phrase, family members and supporting witnesses

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[69] Letter, G.T. Shepherd, 29 November 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.

[70] Letter, R.M. Hankinson, Esq., M.L.A to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, 31 January 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

[71] Letter, Mrs Taylor, 26 October 1930, Thomas Taylor, NAA, B73, M81355 PART 1.

[72] Both Stephen Garton and Raewyn Connell discuss stoicism and Australian masculinity. See Stephen Garton, 'The Scales of Suffering: Love, Death and Victorian Masculinity', *Social History* 27, no. 1 (2002), 40–58; Raewyn Connell, 'Australian Masculinities', in *Male Trouble: Looking at Australian Masculinities*, eds Mike Donaldson and Stephen A. Tomsen (North Melbourne: Pluto Press Australia, 2003). Melissa Bellanta complicates this somewhat and points to the importance of masculine sentimentality in addition to stoicism. Melissa Bellanta, 'His Two Mates Around Him Were Crying: Masculine Sentimentality in Late-Victorian Culture', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 20, no. 4 (2 October 2015), 471–90; Melissa Bellanta, 'Australian Masculinities and Popular Song: The Songs of Sentimental Blokes 1900–1930s', *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 3 (1 September 2012), 412–28; Melissa Bellanta, '"Poor Gordon": What the Australian Cult of Adam Lindsay Gordon Tells Us About Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Masculine Sentimentality', *Gender & History* 28, no. 2 (1 August 2016), 401–21.

played an integral role in constructing these narratives of male suffering without compromising the masculinity of the veteran.[73]

Conclusion

Captivity complicated the expression of masculinity in repatriation claims. Hardship, suffering, persecution and mistreatment in captivity were essential elements of the narratives of redemptive manhood produced by former prisoners in more public contexts, such as memoirs. Elements of hardship and suffering were implicit to the articulation of a particular mode of masculinity, whereby captured soldiers resisted their enemies and the implied passivity and subjugation of captivity to continue the fight behind barbed wire. In contrast, the narratives produced as a consequence of creating a claim for repatriation left little space for these elements of redemptive manhood, and in their absence, veteran prisoners basing their claims on captivity were simply passive victims of hardship and mistreatment at the hands of their enemy.

Repatriation benefits may have been publicly construed as 'an earned right or recompense for sacrifice', but in practice former prisoners of war negotiated a complex mix of entitlement and fears of dependence and emasculation in claiming from the repatriation organisation.[74] The awkwardness of captivity in relation to masculinity ultimately placed substantial pressure on other iterations of masculine identity, and particularly on the character and respectability of former prisoners in the postwar period. Though it is likely that similar articulations of character – and thus, masculinity – also appeared in the case files of veterans who were not prisoners of war, these references were particularly significant for former prisoners. Good character alone could not ensure a favourable outcome for former prisoners of war. Rather, these men had to demonstrate that they had a compelling medical case in order to be eligible for repatriation assistance. The following chapter, accordingly, explores the medical legitimacy of captivity as the cause of pensionable postwar conditions in interwar Australia.

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[73] Jessica Meyer, '"Not Septimus Now": Wives of Disabled Veterans and Cultural Memory of the First World War in Britain', *Women's History Review* 13, no. 1 (1 March 2004), 118. Meyer points out that these files can also give insight into the experiences of the wives of these men.
[74] Garton, 'Return Home', 193.

Chapter 5

'Maimed, wasted and useless prisoners of war': medicine, health and the postwar understanding of captivity

On November 17, 1923, Bruce Moody committed suicide at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick. 'And behind this tragic death,' a rural newspaper asserted, 'is the spectre of three terrible years as a prisoner of war in Germany'. Moody's last moments were presented in vivid detail. After a desperate pursuit across the grounds of the hospital, he collapsed, suffering from horrific, self-inflicted wounds to his stomach and throat, and entreated his pursuers to let him die. Witnesses at the coronial hearing into Moody's death provided further details about his peacetime battles. 'Ever since his return from the internment camps of Germany,' the report continued, 'he has found life a ghastly struggle, and was really too worn and too tired to undertake it'. With dramatic flourish, the article concluded that 'Moody really died in the years of bloody carnage when men were taken prisoners and made animals. He wondered if the next world could hold more terrors than that haunting experience.'[1]

Many former prisoners of war, like Bruce Moody, returned bearing the physical, emotional and psychological scars of their war service. In the years after the war, these men approached the repatriation organisation for financial or medical assistance. In order to be eligible for this help, former prisoners of war had to demonstrate that their postwar conditions were 'due to or aggravated by' their service in war. [2] Conditions with a clear genesis in battle or captivity were rarely contested: Joseph Wallbank's leg was amputated while he was a prisoner of war in German hands, for instance, and the causal link between his time as a prisoner of war and subsequent disability was apparent, and uncontested.[3] For others the link between captivity and postwar illness and disability

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[1] 'Soldier's Pathetic End: Death of Bruce Moody', *Western Age*, December 14, 1923, 2.
[2] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 285–86.
[3] Medical Report on an Invalid, 20 January 1920, Joseph Wallbank, NAA, PP889/1, M14898.

could prove difficult to articulate. This was especially true of psychological disorders, seemingly degenerative and age-related illnesses, and conditions that manifested many years after the end of the war.

Understandings of war trauma in interwar Australia were indefinite and evolving; in the pages of repatriation case files, veterans, doctors and repatriation officials negotiated the meaning and extent of war-caused harm.[4] Debate around the limits of war trauma also took place in the public sphere, as newspapers, returned services publications and both houses of parliament publicly scrutinised and criticised the scope and function of Australia's repatriation system.[5] The medical implications of captivity did not tend to feature in this public chorus of criticism. Depictions of captivity as the cause of postwar harm during the interwar years were rarely as forthright as that of Bruce Moody's suicide, and only a handful of newspaper articles attributed public suicides or sensational criminal proceedings to the experience of wartime captivity.

During the war itself, captivity had provoked some interest amongst medical personnel from different belligerent nations, but in the interwar years Australian medical professionals placed little emphasis on its potential medical legacies. This stood in stark contrast to the post-Second World War period, when the repatriation organisation formed a specific advisory body – staffed by medical men who were also former prisoners of war – to investigate and advise on medical issues arising out of captivity.[6] Meanwhile, the medical legacies of First World War captivity, for just over 3,600 former prisoners of war, failed to garner any measure of the interest or attention devoted to later prisoners.

In the absence of any medical consensus, former prisoners of war and repatriation personnel negotiated the reasonable and pensionable physical and psychological legacies of this specific experience on a case by case basis. This chapter explores how former prisoners of war understood and represented their health problems, and how their cases were interpreted and evaluated by repatriation personnel. It argues that wider narratives about the harm of captivity – or lack thereof

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[4] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 286.
[5] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 88.
[6] Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 38.

– shaped the construction of captivity in relation to postwar physical and psychological conditions. The absence of any specific syndromes or conditions associated with captivity could open up new possibilities for former prisoners, allowing them to articulate personal and often novel connections between their postwar lives and captivity. More commonly, however, articulating the impact of captivity could prove a problematic endeavour, adding a layer of complexity to what could already be a difficult, complicated and personally challenging experience. Wider understandings of war trauma, medicine and repatriation gave shape, meaning and legitimacy to repatriation claims, and gave former prisoners the scope to both understand and represent their experiences. In absence of clear narratives around the medical impacts of captivity, this experience could constitute an additional burden in the process of dealing with the repatriation organisation.

Prisoners of war and the impact of captivity

Fears over the physical health and mental wellbeing of prisoners of war were a feature of newspaper coverage in Australia throughout the First World War.[7] Such concern was also reflected, in part, through the wealth of material assistance these men received from family members and charitable organisations.[8] During the war, the Australian Red Cross Prisoner of War Department distributed nearly 400,000 parcels to Australian soldiers, containing food, clothing, blankets and other necessary items.[9] These measures, while doubtless improving the conditions of captivity for many prisoners of war, could not completely insulate Australian prisoners from the varied hardships of captivity. Observing repatriated prisoners in England in 1918, Mary Chomley, secretary of the Australian Red Cross Prisoner of War Department, noted that 'all are sick and wounded and suffering from the mental depression or nervous excitability which seem

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[7] See, for instance: '948 Anzacs Prisoners of War: Better off in Turkey than Germany', *Geelong Advertiser*, January 24, 1917, 4; 'More Hun Brutality: German Treatment of Australian Prisoners', *Area's Express*, March 21, 1919, 5; 'Treatment of Prisoners: Will Huns Respect Promise?', *Argus*, July 27, 1917, 7; 'Prisoners in Turkey: Invalids to Be Exchanged: A Barbed Wire "Disease"', *Age*, April 26, 1918, 7. Portrayals of the enemy as cruelly mistreating innocent prisoners served as propaganda, particularly against Germany, and were even overtly used to bolster recruitment drives. Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 149–50; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 29–30.

[8] Prior to 1916, Kate Ariotti has shown how families took on the role of providing comforts and clothing to prisoners of war in the Ottoman Empire. Ariotti, 'Families of Australian Prisoners in Turkey', 57–74.

[9] Oppenheimer, 'Our Number One Priority', 79.

to be the inevitable result of the terrible experience they have undergone.'[10] In 1919, a newspaper article quoted a former prisoner who claimed that during captivity he 'noticed a number of officers getting melancholy, and I should say that many were "queer and quiet" although not actually insane.'[11] As former prisoners emerged from the camps, many bolstered this image of the starved and victimised prisoner by recounting tales of cruelty and mistreatment at the hands of the enemy.[12]

The concern expressed for prisoners' wellbeing, however, conflicted with concurrent and later public assertions of the inherent resilience of these men to the privations of captivity. One article noted that '[t]here was a notable absence of mental affections among the Australian prisoners'.[13] Another report on Australian prisoners released from Ottoman captivity stated: 'The awful experiences of Gallipoli, the still greater trials of three and a half years in Turkey, could not break their spirit, nor repress the light-hearted, cheery humor of the Anzac.'[14] Even Mary Chomley compared Australian prisoners of war favourably to the English prisoners she had seen who suffered 'the dreadful mental effects' of having been prisoners of war.[15] She confidently asserted of Australian prisoners of war that 'their spirit is absolutely unbroken'.[16] The superior mental and physical qualities of Australian soldiers had been regularly expounded by war correspondent and later official historian of the First World War, Charles Bean. As a result of their rural, independent and democratic upbringing, Australian soldiers, Bean contended, were of superior moral and mental fibre, particularly in relation to their English counterparts.[17] These qualities were evidently also seen to translate into wartime captivity. The pervasive perception that Australian soldiers were inherently resilient complicated understandings of postwar trauma,

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[10] Report, Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, September 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 192, 2015.0033.00465.

[11] 'More Hun Brutality: German Treatment of Australian Prisoners', *Area's Express*, March 21, 1919, 5.

[12] This image found its expression particularly in a Defence Department report published in 1919: Defence Department, *How the Germans Treated Australian Prisoners of War* (Melbourne, Government Printer: 1919).

[13] 'Prisoners Stories', *Geelong Advertiser*, January 11, 1918, 3.

[14] '"We Are Back Numbers!": Liberated Anzacs Speak of Horrors Endured at Hands of Turkish Captors', *Herald*, January 18, 1919, 15.

[15] Letter, Mary Chomley to Philadelphia Robertson, 17 January 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196, 2015.0033.00488.

[16] Letter, Mary Chomley to Philadelphia Robertson, 17 January 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 196, 2015.0033.00488.

[17] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 56, 197–70.

especially in regard to cases of psychological breakdown amongst veterans in the interwar period.[18]

In the postwar years former prisoners experienced myriad physical and psychological problems as a result of their war service. In the main, the conditions experienced by former prisoners of war were similar to the wider veteran population.[19] These conditions ranged from common service-related conditions like gun-shot wounds and amputations, to heart problems, respiratory diseases, digestive conditions, joint and mobility problems, and a range of psychiatric disorders of varying degrees of severity. Unlike their combatant counterparts, when applying for assistance from the repatriation organisation, former prisoners of war also had to contend with the uncertain and contested nature of captivity in causing or exacerbating these various postwar syndromes.

The potential physical and psychological effects of captivity did not arouse particular interest amongst medical professionals in Australia, nor did it prompt any specific policy response from the repatriation organisation in the interwar years. Nonetheless, many former prisoners of war argued that captivity was the fundamental cause of their postwar conditions. 'I consider that the privations suffered while prisoner of war in Germany … combined with the very poor food conditions, was the basis of my stomach trouble ending in a duodenal ulcer,' one former prisoner of war wrote.[20] 'My condition is indirectly caused thro [*sic*] severe privations and punishments suffered as a Prisoner of War,' wrote another returned prisoner, 'Have never been a normal man since my Return from last war.'[21] Suffering from what he believed was malaria, another former prisoner wrote, 'I was captured by the Turks … Their treatment of prisoners was brutal. With next to no clothing we slept on the bare ground not even a handful of straw to lie on, no shelter of any kind over us. Rain or fine I never had even an old bag to put

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[18] See, for instance: Michael Tyquin, *Madness and the Military: Australia's Experience of the Great War* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2006).

[19] A.G. Butler cited five main disease groups – diseases of the 'cardio-vascular system', 'chest (lung) condition', 'chronic rheumatism', 'gastric and duodenal ulcer' and 'nervous conditions' – affecting veterans. Butler, 'The War-Damaged Soldier', 810–13.

[20] Appeal to the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal (WPEAT), September 1934, Frank Renard Weetman, NAA, PP681/1, M12997.

[21] Letter, John Bolton to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Victoria, 22 April 1942, John Bolton, NAA, C138, C30360 PART 1.

over me at night. Food, you could not call it food at all, a respectable pig would not eat what was given to us.'[22] It is clear that men such as these firmly believed that captivity had diminished their physical and mental health, and irrevocably altered their lives.

Not all former prisoners of war were so direct and unequivocal in their attribution to captivity in their dealings with the repatriation organisation. The majority invoked their captivity in addition to other contributing factors, including their frontline service history. This could be a pragmatic strategy to secure financial and medical assistance. In other cases, explaining postwar medical conditions in terms of both combat and captivity reflected uncertainty around the legitimacy of captivity as the cause of postwar war harm. Even where captivity was strongly featured in repatriation claims, its precise role in causing or contributing to postwar conditions was often unclear. While former prisoners of war claimed that captivity negatively affected their health in different ways and to varying extents, apprehension about its traction as a recognised cause of harm was a common thread.

Medicine and captivity

During and immediately after the First World War, there was some limited medical interest in the potential effects of captivity. Vischer's 1918 study, *Barbed Wire Disease*, had argued that the prolonged, uncomfortable, uncertain and markedly adversarial nature of wartime captivity brought about a particular kind of syndrome or neurosis in prisoners of war.[23] The term 'barbed wire disease' had appeared briefly in Australian newspapers during the war to refer to a kind of 'nervous breakdown' linked to wartime captivity.[24] Vischer's work formalised a largely vernacular term around a group of loosely defined symptoms, including 'increasing egotism, irritability, suspicion, a vaguely persecuted attitude, defects of concentration and memory, aimless restlessness and depression.'[25] One review of Vischer's book, published in a number of Australian newspapers in 1919, noted that it 'draws a picture of a mentality characteristic of

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[22] Statement by ex-member, 9 December 1935, Matthew Black Sloan, NAA, BP709/1, M20001 PART 2.
[23] Vischer, *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War*.
[24] 'Prisoners in Turkey: Invalids to Be Exchanged: A Barbed Wire "Disease"', *Age*, April 26, 1918, 7.
[25] 'Barbed Wire Disease', 107.

prisoners of war, to which the majority fall victim within two to three months, and from which few escape completely'.[26]

Vischer's argument problematised some earlier studies of the psychology of captive soldiers during the war. Both German and British medical professionals studying enemy prisoners of war in captivity had observed that hysteria and traditional neurosis were largely absent among populations of captive soldiers.[27] These psychiatrists concluded that captivity offered protection from the psychological rigours of the battlefield.[28] Of course, these theories tended not to consider the adversarial nature of wartime captivity, and the consequent efforts by enemy prisoners of war to maintain a façade of stoicism and composure.[29] While Vischer accepted these conclusions, he posited that barbed wire disease was a distinctive psychological condition affecting prisoners of war. In spite of Vischer's work, however, the theory that captivity sheltered soldiers from psychological trauma remained persuasive until well after the Second World War.[30]

Later studies of prisoners of war across a variety of conflicts and places tend to note the harsh nature of wartime captivity, and suggest that this experience had a psychological impact; some refer specifically to former prisoners as having or exhibiting barbed wire disease. Yücel Yanikdağ, for example, argues that the capacity of Ottoman prisoners of war in Russia to associate with nearby Russian civilians 'helped them escape the worst effects of a psychological disorder known as barbed wire disease,' but that 'Ottoman prisoners were not immune to the disease and some of them had to be transferred to mental hospitals, in some cases never to return.'[31] While his assertion that Ottoman prisoners experienced and exhibited mental and psychological strain is no

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[26] 'The Mentality of the War Prisoner', *Daily News*, July 16, 1919, 6.
[27] See, for instance, F.W. Mott, 'Two Addresses on war psycho-neurosis.: (i) Neurasthenia: the disorders and disabilities of fear', *The Lancet*, vol 191 no 4926 (1918), 127; Paul Frederick Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 68; Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception', *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 2 (1 June 2010), 165–66.
[28] Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception', *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 2 (1 June 2010), 164.
[29] Jones and Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War', 166.
[30] Jones and Wessely, 166.
[31] Yücel Yanikdağ, 'Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914-22', *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 1 (1999): 78.

doubt well-founded, Yanikdağ's use of the term 'barbed-wire disease' suggests a level of medical and diagnostic clarity that did not exist at the time. The concept of barbed wire disease in academic literature often serves as a blanket term for a whole swathe of nervous and psychological problems, united more by the shared experience of wartime captivity among the sufferers than by particular symptoms. This usage can serve to obscure the complexity of nervous and psychological problems amongst prisoners of war, and also tends to assume that there is something inherently pathogenic about captivity, without considering what it was about captivity that could cause psychological trauma amongst prisoners of war.

Despite Vischer's work, during and after the First World War captivity was not routinely associated with any particular physical or psychological syndromes or conditions. Though accounts written by former prisoners of war referred to bouts of starvation or disease, as well as cramped, unsanitary and inadequate living conditions, insufficient clothing, excessive working hours and strenuous manual labour, the exact medical implications that could reasonably result from any of these aspects of captivity remained obscure. The diverse nature of wartime captivity, in part, militated against defining a particular syndrome or condition arising out of this experience. Just as the conditions of captivity were diverse, so too were the physical and psychological effects of this experience. Indeed, Garton has suggested that it is 'impossible to define a distinct prisoner-of-war syndrome.'[32] Compounding this lack of consensus about the impact of captivity was a lack of curiosity among medical professionals in the interwar years in Australia. While particular conditions and syndromes attracted attention from the medical profession, returned soldiers' associations and repatriation authorities, none of these syndromes were causally or explicitly considered in relation to captivity.

Medicine, repatriation and war trauma

Just as doctors and medical professionals had been central to Australians waging war, so too were they essential to evaluating the extent and impact of war in the postwar years.[33] Kate Blackmore has suggested that medical professionals occupied an 'ambiguous yet powerful' position in repatriation, borne partly out of the growing

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[32] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 225.
[33] Blackmore, *The Dark Pocket of Time*, 77.

professionalisation of medicine in twentieth century Australia. [34] Alistair Thomson, meanwhile, has noted that doctors' evaluations of the links between illness, injury, war service and incapacity in repatriation case files were 'usually decisive'.[35]

Australian repatriation and medical authorities grappled with plausibility of links between various physical and psychological conditions and war service, and with the appropriate forms of treatment and financial assistance warranted by these conditions throughout the interwar years.[36] The appearance and worsening of particular physical and psychological conditions years after the war had ended provoked particular consternation amongst both medical and repatriation personnel.[37] Rather than diminishing, medical problems amongst First World War veterans seemed to grow considerably throughout the interwar years, and by 1938 257,000 veterans were receiving war pensions, at the cost of almost one-fifth of the Commonwealth's total expenditure.[38]

Perhaps more than any other subset of conditions, psychological problems presented significant issues for the repatriation organisation in terms of causation, treatment and pensioning. Like most war-related disabilities, repatriation authorities predicted a steady decline in the incidence of pension applications for psychological conditions as the war years receded into the progressively distant past. An optimistic repatriation report in 1920 declared, 'shell-shock cases becoming markedly fewer,' and by 1921, repatriation authorities were triumphally claiming that war neurosis had 'ceased to be a prominent feature in hospitals and in the streets'.[39] However, the steadily increasing number of veterans succumbing to these disorders over the interwar years rapidly become problematic. By 1941, Doctor A.G. Butler, official medical historian of the First World War, indicated that the frequency of 'moral and mental disorders', as he termed them, 'achieved almost a three to one predominance over that of any other

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[34] Blackmore, 77–100.
[35] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 286.
[36] Thomson, 286.
[37] Butler, 'The War-Damaged Soldier', 804.
[38] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 83–84.
[39] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 20; Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1921* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1921), 15.

type'.[40] Repatriation personnel were often unwilling to grant pensions for psychiatric conditions, and tended to rescind or reduce them at any sign of improvement.[41] Pensions were overtly cast as a threat to the treatment of psychological problems. 'In neurosis cases particularly,' a repatriation report noted, 'the question of pension vitiates treatment and prognosis more than any other disability.'[42] In 1941, Butler noted that, 'positive aids to self-help' were most effective in treating 'nervous disorders' amongst veterans in the interwar years. 'This help,' Butler continued, 'must take the form of *enabling him to work, and making it worth his while, morally and economically to do so*.'[43]

Former prisoners did exhibit a range of symptoms of psychiatric disturbance in the interwar years. Diagnoses of psychiatric conditions varied from 'anxiety state', 'toxic psychosis', and 'traumatic neurosis' to the more common labels of 'neurosis', 'neurasthenia' or 'nerves'. The diagnostic labels were distinct from one another in certain ways, however, the differences between these particular conditions were, in many cases, minute, and appear to have been one of categorisation rather than substance. If, as Garton has argued, the proliferation of diagnostic labels to describe psychological strain in veterans reflected 'bafflement' rather than clarity, then the range and inconsistency of diagnostic labels used suggests that repatriation authorities struggled to understand, describe and catalogue the complexity and diversity of mental disorder amongst former prisoners of war.[44] Common symptoms of psychiatric disturbance amongst former prisoners of war included difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, shaking on excitement and difficulty concentrating. While hospitalised in 1919, one former prisoner experienced hallucinations where 'he imagined the staff to be dressed in German Uniforms and carrying fixed bayonets'.[45] A doctor noted of another former prisoner of war: 'Sleeps poorly, dreams war and imprisonment.'[46]

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[40] Butler, 'The War-Damaged Soldier', 831.

[41] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 285.

[42] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1925* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1925), 16.

[43] Original emphasis. Butler, 'The War-Damaged Soldier', 833.

[44] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 146.

[45] Statement in support of pension application, 22 June 1953, John Cowden, NAA, PP18/1, R12421.

[46] Report, Prince of Wales Hospital, 19 February 1924, Robert Spencer, NAA, C138, R87623.

Men who emerged from captivity with unavoidably apparent signs of mental disturbance were accepted as having psychological problems due to their captivity. [47] Making this claim effectively in the postwar years could prove far more challenging. Scholars have noted that veterans suffering from obvious physical disabilities – such as amputees – were 'more likely to gain a sympathetic ear' from repatriation authorities than psychological complaints.[48] The passage of time further complicated claims for assistance, and conditions that manifested years after the war were problematic for former prisoners of war and repatriation personnel alike. Former prisoners struggled to demonstrate continuity of symptoms and a conclusive link between these elusive conditions and service in war. Repatriation officials, in turn, grappled with the implausibility of these claims by contemporary medical standards, and with the fear that unscrupulous and underserving veterans might attempt to gain pensions by deceit or exaggeration. Sudden symptoms of psychological breakdown were often treated with suspicion by repatriation authorities.[49] When one former prisoner applied for a pension in 1931, repatriation officials pointed to the lapse in time between his claim to his war service. His medical assessment found that he was significantly affected by neurasthenia, however, the doctor assessing the claim argued that there was no plausible link to his war service. The doctor noted that these symptoms had arisen 'after a lapse of twelve years, during which he has been able to carry on quite efficiently as a shearer, and with no record of any ill-health until recently.'[50] Reflecting the difficulties of invoking captivity to explain psychological problems, in the case files studied for this

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[47] See, for instance: John Bolton, NAA, C138 C30360 PART 1 and Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, M13380 and H13380.

[48] Jen Roberts, 'The Front Comes Home: Returned Soldiers and Psychological Trauma in Australia during and after the First World War', *Health and History* 17, no. 2 (2015) 32; Blackmore, *The Dark Pocket of Time*, 172–93; Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 96.

[49] These issues were not solely limited to psychological problems but also presented issues in repatriation more broadly. The role of time and the natural aging process presented a key point of difficulty for many claimants. In her claim for a war widow's pension, one woman wrote: 'When a man reaches the age 72 you are not able to say if he died through his war service,' one widow noted. 'But [two years and seven months] in Germany as prisoner of war wouldn't help him. He was captured at Fromelles in 1916 & never enjoyed good health since he returned in 1919.' Her application was rejected. Letter, Vera Gigg to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, 1962, George Gigg, NAA, C138, M47293. Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 232.

[50] Recommendation of Senior Medical Officer, 8 October 1931, William Peter Sankey, NAA, BP709/1, M19673.

thesis, former prisoners of war only linked 15 percent of these types of claims to captivity.

Articulating the links between mental disturbance and wartime captivity was particularly challenging for the wives and widows of former prisoners of war, whose understanding of captivity was invariably second-hand. When John Bell died in Callan Park Mental Hospital in 1935, his wife Isabel wrote to the repatriation organisation. In the years immediately following John's return from war, the couple had settled in Narrandera in New South Wales and had four children. By the early 1930s, John's health was deteriorating, and he experienced 'fits of depression' and struggled to work consistently.[51] In early January of 1935 he was admitted to Callan Park, and died later that month. In her letter, Isabel made sense of her husband's sudden deterioration and death by linking them to wartime captivity: her otherwise 'happy natured' and 'good living' husband, who was 'very fond of his home, wife and children', had been irrevocably changed by wartime captivity. 'I think my husband's death was caused through being a prisoner of war in Germany,' she wrote. 'When he came home he never seemed the same as before. He was very quiet at times, liked being by himself and could not have the children make a noise or fuss of him, other times he was not himself or would not allow war be discussed.'[52]

Isabel's belief that captivity had caused her husband's psychological breakdown was not completely at odds with wider representations of captivity in Australian newspaper articles throughout the interwar years. Despite the stoicism of Australian prisoners of war featuring in the immediate months and years after the war's conclusion, gradually another narrative about the impact of captivity began to emerge, most especially when contemplating the reasons for suicidal behaviour. It is unclear precisely how many former prisoners of war took their own lives in the interwar years, as the repatriation organisation did not record the number of veteran suicides, let alone the rate of suicide amongst former prisoners.[53] After a former prisoner of war committed

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[51] Letter, John Bell to L.C. Wilson, 18 September 1939, and report by Dr Lethbridge, 27 December 1934, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.
[52] Statement by widow, January 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.
[53] Larsson and others have suggested that the incidence of suicide was somewhat higher amongst veteran populations that civilian populations. Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 241.

suicide in 1926, he was described as 'a returned soldier, who never recovered from the effects of his war service, which included 21 months as a prisoner of war.' One of the witnesses at the coronial hearing noted that 'he was always brooding on the treatment he had received when a prisoner of war … He had said he would never get over it, and that when he was left alone it all came back to him.'[54] More commonly, however, captivity tended to be invoked in passing in reports of suicides. An article in 1919 noted that the deceased 'was a returned soldier, and had been a prisoner of war in Germany for two years,' while another in 1922 similarly noted that the man 'was a prisoner of war nearly two years'.[55] One of the more shocking and widely publicised suicides was that of Stewart Stormoth in 1935. An upstanding member of the community, Stormoth was the Clerk of Petty Sessions and the Acting Police Magistrate in Nambour, and his public suicide at the local courthouse was widely reported. While the accounts stopped short of specifically suggesting a reason for Stormoth's suicide, it noted that he had been captured by the Turks and 'For three years he was a prisoner of war.'[56]

Captivity was also invoked to mitigate criminal charges. In 1923, former prisoner David William Austin was accused of 'an indecent assault on a young girl'. That Austin had committed the offence seemed not to be in question, but his culpability certainly was. A report on the proceedings noted the opinion of a neurologist, 'that Austin was on the borderline of insanity'. Indeed, the neurologist, A.W. Campbell, believed that 'most soldiers who had been held prisoners by the Germans for any substantial length of time were abnormal on release'.[57] Austin had also served in the Boer War, and spent several years in German captivity during the First World War, and his legal counsel argued that, 'his strong constitution broke down under the agony of it all.' Thorold Arthur Passant's time in German captivity was also raised as an extenuating factor when he was charged with having stolen money from his employer. As with Austin, Passant's guilt was not in question; however, his solicitor 'intimated that a cause for his irrational behaviour might be found in his war record, and painted a terrible picture of Passant's

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[54] 'War Victim's Death: Strychnine Poisoning', *West Australian*, February 18, 1926, 11.
[55] 'Suicide at Dawn: Refused to Grasp Lifebelt: Over Pyrmont Bridge', *Sun*, February 22, 1922, 9; 'Suicide at Fremantle: Finding of Inquest', *Daily News*, May 31, 1919, 8.
[56] 'Brisbane Suicide: Nambour C.P.S Dies in Chief Secretary's Office', *Bowen Independent*, September 13, 1935, 1.
[57] 'Hun-Haunted: Dreams of Tormented Ex-Prisoners of War', *Tweed Daily*, June 27, 1923, 3.

suffering whilst a prisoner of war'.[58] In 1929, an article in *Reveille* noted that many men taken captive during the war, 'found it hard to bear up against the great physical and mental strain.'[59]

Links between war service and psychological problems were particularly important to the families of mentally ill veterans for both material and personal reasons. In the case of a veteran's death, a conclusive link between their death and war service could mean a pension for surviving family members. However, attributing postwar mental disturbance to war service also helped to legitimise the otherwise stigmatised experience of insanity in the early twentieth century, and ensured that men could receive treatment in an official repatriation facility. To this end, Marina Larsson has noted that anxious families advocated for veteran soldiers, and desperately sought official confirmation from repatriation officials that their relative's psychiatric issues were war caused.[60] Isabel Bell's response to the rejection of her claim is illustrative of the importance of having veterans' psychological problems conclusively linked to war service. Despite the growing public suggestions that captivity could have negative effects on the mental health of former prisoners, the repatriation organisation refuted the link between John Bell's captivity and his psychological deterioration and death. A repatriation medical officer, Doctor C.K. Parkinson, asserted that there was no 'reasonable connection of mental disorder and death with War Service'.[61] Isabel promptly gathered evidence from several of her husband's fellow prisoners of war, all of whom attested to the hardship and trauma John Bell had endured in captivity, painting a compelling link between his altered state of mind in the postwar period and his treatment in captivity. Isabel's claim was eventually accepted on appeal, likely easing the stigma and financial hardship arising from John's 'sad ending in the Mental Hospital'.[62]

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[58] 'Life Wrecked by Ordeal in Dreadful War Dungeon: Perth Prisoner's Story: Mental State Blamed for Lapse in Taking Employer's Cash', *Truth*, October 12, 1930, 11.
[59] 'Prisoners of War: Better Times', *Reveille* 3, no. 1 (September 1929), 25.
[60] Marina Larsson, 'Families and Institutions for Shell-Shocked Soldiers in Australia after the First World War', *Social History of Medicine* 22, no. 1 (4 October 2008), 98–99.
[61] Recommendation of Dr C.K. Parkinson, 8 February 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.
[62] Letter, R.M. Hankinson, Esq., M.L.A to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, 31 January 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

While understandings of the psychological impacts of war service evolved throughout the interwar years, it was the shell-shocked soldier, rather than the returned prisoner, who dominated representations of mental disturbance. Shell shock was a term developed early in the First World War in an effort to describe hysterical and functional symptoms exhibited by soldiers, which appeared to be engendered by the experience of artillery bombardment. Medical personnel disagreed as to whether these conditions were somatic or psychogenic in origin, especially when soldiers broke down in absence of a bomb blast, or before seeing combat.[63] Shell shock, and later war neurosis, were broadly used to describe a range of symptoms of psychic trauma, 'from a mild stammer or nervousness … to complete catatonic collapse'.[64] Historians of shell shock and other post-combat syndromes have increasingly emphasised the role of culture in historical approaches to the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders amongst servicemen.[65] Garton has argued that shell-shock, or war neurosis, as it was later termed, was effectively created and shaped by the medical and military discourses surrounding it, while Tracey Loughran has argued that any analysis of shell-shock must take into account the 'concerns, knowledge and practices of both patients and doctors'.[66] Edgar

[63] Elizabeth Roberts-Pedersen, 'Impelled to Reminiscence: Millais Culpin, Military Psychiatry, and the Politics of Therapy', *Health and History* 17, no. 2 (2015), 2; Tyquin, *Madness and the Military*, 72–73. Many different belligerent nations grappled with these questions. See, for instance, Lerner, *Hysterical Men*; Mark Humphries, 'War's Long Shadow: Masculinity, Medicine, and the Gendered Politics of Trauma, 1914–1939', *The Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (2010), 503–31; Fiona Reid, '"His Nerves Gave Way": Shell Shock, History and the Memory of the First World War in Britain', *Endeavour* 38, no. 2 (June 2014), 91–100; Fiona Reid and Christine Van Everbroeck, 'Shell Shock and the Kloppe: War Neuroses amongst British and Belgian Troops during and after the First World War', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 30, no. 4 (2 October 2014), 252–75; Paul Lerner and Mark Micale, eds., *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[64] Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, 'Battle for the Mind: World War 1 and the Birth of Military Psychiatry', *The Lancet* 384, no. 9955 (2014), 1708; Roberts, 'The Front Comes Home', 21.

[65] Stephanie Linden, Edgar Jones and Volker Hess have suggested that cultural factors played a role in the expression of symptoms, though they note that culture alone cannot account for the symptomology of war syndromes across the twentieth century. Stefanie C. Linden, Volker Hess, and Edgar Jones, 'The Neurological Manifestations of Trauma: Lessons from World War I', *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 262, no. 3 (April 2012), 253–64. See also, Tracey Loughran, 'Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War: The Making of a Diagnosis and Its Histories', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 67, no. 1 (2012), 94–119; Garton, *The Cost of War*, 148; Ted Bogacz, 'War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-22: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell-Shock', *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 2 (1989), 227; Tracey Loughran, 'Shell-Shock and Psychological Medicine in First World War Britain', *Social History of Medicine* 22, no. 1 (2009), 79–95.

[66] Loughran, 'Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War: The Making of a Diagnosis and Its Histories', 94–119.

Jones and Simon Wessely have suggested that culture is particularly powerful in shaping the understandings and expression of medical conditions when the causation and diagnosis of these disorders are medically and scientifically nebulous.[67]

While considerable causal and diagnostic debate and uncertainty characterised the phenomenon of psychiatric breakdown amongst soldiers during the First World War, it was clear that combat was often considered more persuasive than captivity as the cause of psychological strain. An AIF medical evaluation of one former prisoner of war diagnosed the man with shell shock, noting that he 'Was blown up by shell in 1916 and was knocked unconscious for approximately 8 hours.'[68] While military doctors emphasised the concussive blast of a shell, the former prisoner's own report of his mental state linked decisively to his captivity. He stated that he had been put to work by the Germans after his capture, and reported that he 'Has felt ill nervous & shaky ever since he was taken prisoner & still feels the same.' While acknowledging the man's assertion that captivity was to blame for his condition, the doctor still framed frontline combat as the primary causative factor, summing up his condition as 'Shellshock due to shell concussion & bad conditions while prisoner of war'.[69] By the time this particular former prisoner disembarked in Australia, his psychological complaints were firmly and solely linked to captivity. His final medical review read: 'States started to get debilitated as soon as he was taken prisoner. Had a bad time in Germany. Complains of weakness, severe headaches.'[70] While shell shock was a contested and somewhat stigmatised diagnosis in military, medical and repatriation circles, it carried a certain kind of legitimacy, particularly when diagnosed during the war. Captivity, by contrast, carried no such legitimacy. Reflecting this lack of equivalence, this man's condition went from the recognisable diagnosis of shell shock, to the rather vague and decidedly less serious diagnosis of 'Debility and Neuralgia' once his problems were linked to the experience of captivity.[71]

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[67] Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, 'War Syndromes: The Impact of Culture on Medically Unexplained Symptoms', *Medical History* 49, no. 01 (2005), 56.
[68] Medical reports, 12 and 26 February 1919, William Wells, NAA, B73, H60251 PART 1.
[69] Medical report, 26 February 1919, William Wells, NAA, B73, H60251 PART 1.
[70] Medical Report on an Invalid, May 1919, William Wells, NAA, B73, H60251 PART 1.
[71] Medical Report on an Invalid, May 1919, William Wells, NAA, B73, H60251 PART 1.

The emphasis on combat as a cause of postwar conditions, including shell-shock, was reflected in the uncertainty with which some former prisoners of war approached the repatriation organisation. When asked how his condition linked to his war service, William Sankey wrote: 'Was fifteen months a prisoner of war and know of no other cause for my breakdown in health so as I am unable to do hard work'. Sankey's euphemistic 'breakdown in health' had been diagnosed as neurasthenia by repatriation doctors a few years earlier, though this condition was not considered to be due to his war service. William Sankey's uncertainty in his invocation of captivity was almost palpable. The exact manner in which captivity had impacted his psychological state appeared to evade him; years after the war, Sankey's captivity was represented as an elusive and peculiar experience. Only on his final right of appeal, years after his original claim, did Sankey choose to invoke his captivity, and even then, not without reference to some curiously unrelated physical injuries from the war, as though they were the features of his war service that marked him out as deserving of assistance.[72]

William Sankey's understated reference to his postwar psychological problems was suggestive of the stigma attached to these conditions. While a recognised link between war service and postwar psychological breakdown eased this stigma somewhat, psychological breakdown amongst soldiers still carried unfavourable historical associations with cowardice, malingering and emasculation. As Effie Karageorgos has argued, these negative associations were partly borne out of the notion that 'ideal Australian masculinity precluded mental illness', which exposed men suffering these conditions to suspicions of malingering or deficient masculinity.[73] While the prevalence of psychological breakdown during the First World War – amongst men of different backgrounds, classes and ranks – forced some reconsideration of the negative associations with these conditions, theories of causation, diagnosis and treatment of

[72] Appeal to the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal, 19 February 1937, William Peter Sankey, NAA, BP709/1, M19673.

[73] Effie Karageorgos, 'Mental Illness, Masculinity, and the Australian Soldier: Military Psychiatry from South Africa to the First World War', *Health and History* 20, no. 2 (2018), 11. Pre-existing understandings of mental illness as a feminised condition, combined with wartime understandings of neurosis as a way to avoid combat and soldierly duty, resulted in significant stigma being attached to soldiers with mental trauma after the war. Joseph Pugliese, 'The Gendered Figuring of the Dysfunctional Serviceman in the Discourses of Military Psychiatry', in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 162–63.

shell shock and war neurosis ultimately drew on previous models and understandings of mental illness.[74] The fundamental continuity between theories and treatments of war neuroses was the predisposition theory, which held that soldiers who broke down were predisposed to do so, by virtue of personal, hereditary or constitutional weakness on the part of the individual soldier.[75] The shift in terminology associated with psychological conditions in the interwar period – from shell shock to neurosis – reflected the prominent belief that constitutional weakness, rather than battle, was the cause of psychological breakdown.[76]

Older associations between psychological problems and malingering or cowardice continued into the postwar years. As Thomson has noted, repatriation case files were 'crowded with moral judgements about family traits and mental weakness that affected pension decisions.'[77] Former prisoners of war suffering from nervous complaints were often suspected of exaggerating or misrepresenting their condition in an effort to garner sympathy or financial assistance. Robert Spencer was variously described in disparaging terms by medical professionals; 'Woebegone expression and "invalid" manner', wrote one; 'Does not give a good impression but gives the impression of trying to impress', wrote another; while a further assessment noted that Spencer's 'Tenderness is not convincing. Neurotic temperament is.' One doctor summed up the tenor of these evaluations: 'He strikes me as making the most of it.'[78] John Bolton was characterised as inherently susceptible to psychological disorder in an effort to explain his traumatic neurasthenia arising from captivity. His military medical history sheet noted that Bolton's mother was 'hysterical' and that he had been 'rejected a number of times in both NSW & Victoria' before finally enlisting.[79] Both John Bolton and Robert Spencer were cast by the repatriation organisation as veterans who 'were never robust

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[74] Garton, *The Cost of War*, 145–51; Tracey Loughran, 'Shell Shock and British Psychological Medicine', *Social History of Medicine* 22 (2009), 79–95; Bogacz, 'War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-22', 227.

[75] Tyquin has argued that the persistence of the predisposition theory limited the development of psychiatry in Australia in the later interwar years. Tyquin, *Madness and the Military*, 147; Reid, '"His Nerves Gave Way"', 93.

[76] Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 32; Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 527.

[77] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 286.

[78] Medical report by Dr Willcocks, 1924, Medical report by Dr Poulton, 22 April 1932, Prince of Wales Hospital case sheets, February to September 1930, Robert Spencer, NAA, C138, R87623.

[79] Detailed Medical History of and Invalid, 10 July 1918, John Bolton, NAA, C138, C30360 PART 1.

prior to enlistment, but always of a weak mental or physical constitution'.[80] That captivity was the trigger of their psychological problems was represented as secondary to the perceived constitutional weakness and predisposition of both men to such a breakdown.

In an effort to avoid the scrutiny of repatriation authorities when it came to psychological problems, there is evidence that former prisoners of war simply self-medicated with the assistance of local chemists, or with alcohol. One former prisoner provided a statement from his local chemist in support of his application for a pension. The chemist testified that since 1927, he had supplied the former prisoner with 'mixtures for his nerves,' on many occasions. In his statement, the chemist noted that the former prisoner was the 'type of person who seemed not to like worrying a Medical man', though he had 'strongly impressed upon him the necessity of consulting the Repatriation Doctor, as whilst I was only too happy to give him something to give him relief my honest opinion was that it was best for him to see a Medical man.' The former prisoner of war had repeatedly refused, content to 'jog along' with his chemist's assistance. [81]

While alcohol may have worked to numb the pain of the postwar period for some former prisoners, alcoholism was also a compelling way for repatriation and medical personnel to rationalise the late onset or worsening of psychological conditions. In 1920, the bulk of emerging or persistent nervous conditions were characterised by the repatriation organisation as being 'consequent upon alcoholic or other personal abuses, mental instability or continued idleness.'[82] Abuse of alcohol was regularly implicated in the development and worsening of psychiatric conditions by repatriation officials.[83] One former prisoner's claim for a service pension while an inmate of Callan Park was rejected on the grounds of its 'unworthiness', after a medical officer noted that he considered the man 'permanently unemployable due to his own default. Incorrigible

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[80] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1921* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1921), 15.
[81] Statement of evidence, T. Connelly, 10 July 1937, William Peter Sankey, NAA, BP709/1, M19673. See also: Robert Spencer, NAA, C138, R87623. and Francis Lionel Wright, NAA, B73, M79007.
[82] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1920), 20.
[83] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1920), 19.

Alcoholic.'[84] Another former prisoner of war, whose psychological condition was deteriorating throughout the 1930s, had his pension reduced significantly when a doctor discovered evidence that he was abusing alcohol. [85] This was despite communications with the secretary of the local RSSILA, who wrote to the repatriation organisation with evidence that the man's pension money was managed by a family member who did not allow him to purchase alcohol. The secretary wrote that the former prisoner 'has often come to me perfectly sober, and asked me to tell him who the men are who keep following him about and talking about him he also wanted to know who were the men hiding behind my door and saying things about him.'[86] His pension was eventually restored.

As psychological conditions became manifest in the returned soldier population, including prisoners of war, an appropriate and effective treatment for them remained elusive. Repatriation case files make clear that there was no standard practice and huge variations from case to case.[87] Freudian theories had some limited uptake in Australian medical circles in the later interwar period, however, there is little evidence that these theories were adopted to treat veterans at large in the interwar period.[88] While repatriation authorities heralded the results of 'patient and prolonged individual treatment', the nature of this treatment was often unclear.[89] In many cases, treatment administered to former prisoners of war was ineffective. While repatriation personnel consistently projected an improvement in John Bolton's neurasthenia, each successive medical review consistently noted no improvement to his condition in the previous six months, and his pension rate remained stable for most of the interwar years.[90] Samuel Greenhill's case was also reflective of the limits of repatriation intervention and

[84] Letter, Cyril Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, to Deputy Master-in-Lunacy, 5 July 1939, Douglas Grant, NAA, C138, C70396; Report from Medical Officer Doctor T.B. Clouston, 20 March 1939, Douglas Grant, NAA, C138, C70396.

[85] Medical evaluation by Dr McKay, 28 July 1932, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.

[86] Vic O'Grady to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Western Australia, 2 February 1931, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.

[87] Garton has noted that a range of different techniques – from 'hypnosis, suggestion and persuasion techniques' and some efforts at psychoanalysis – were used during the First World War. Garton, *The Cost of War*, 149.

[88] Tyquin, *Madness and the Military*, 146–47; Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005).

[89] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1921* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1921), 16.

[90] Medical evaluations, 1920-1930s, John Bolton, NAA, C138, C30360 PART 1.

treatment. He refused to travel to Perth for treatment in 1932, and, while he continued to receive a pension, repatriation authorities ceased any effort to offer treatment for his psychiatric condition. He lived a solitary existence, reportedly 'quite unable to do anything because "they" are always saying things about him audibly and making his life miserable'.[91] A doctor noted that Greenhill was 'quite incapable of concentration or of returning rational answers to simple questions' and that he 'says he hears voices threatening persecution but cannot trace them to anyone in particular.' However, in response to the question of treatment recommended or prescribed, the doctor simply wrote, 'None'. In one of his final medical reviews in 1934, Greenhill was described as 'a small wasted man' who 'looks worried'.[92] After this point, he disappeared from the ambit of the repatriation organisation until his death in 1944. A report in 1925 openly acknowledged the limits of the repatriation scheme in this regard: 'There are losses, of course, for which there can be no adequate compensation – in such cases, alleviation, and not complete recompense, is all that can be accomplished.'[93]

The burdens of physical and psychological problems in the interwar years often fell on the wives and family members of returned men.[94] Women were central to the functioning of repatriation and to the reintegration of soldiers, and their unpaid and unacknowledged labour undoubtedly saved the Australian government significant sums of money and eased the burden of medical care on the state.[95] After her husband died in 1935, one widow wrote, 'I devoted my whole married life in looking after my husband, otherwise he may have been in hospital on many occasions.'[96] The wife of another prisoner frequently approached the repatriation organisation for advice and assistance to deal with her husband. From the late 1930s, she repeatedly expressed a desire to have

[91] Medical evaluation by Dr Webster, 2 March 1934, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.
[92] Medical evaluation by Dr Webster, 2 March 1934, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.
[93] Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1925* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1925), 5.
[94] Tyquin, *Madness and the Military*, 136–40; Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 121.
[95] The reliance of the repatriation organisation on women was exemplified in the annual report in 1924-25, in relation to small business loans. The report noted that loans were granted for disabled servicemen when they had a reliable female relative. One Deputy Commissioner was quoted as stating that: 'Most small businesses require constant attention over long hours, and this a badly disabled man, subject to intermittent periods of total incapacity, cannot give; hence the necessity for this woman help-mate to be able to come to the rescue at such times.' Department of Repatriation, *Report of the Repatriation Commission for the year ending 30 June 1925* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1925), 7.
[96] Statement by widow, January 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

her husband admitted for medical treatment to 'relive his trouble physically and mentally.'[97] He often refused to be admitted for treatment and resisted the interventions his hapless wife tried to administer at the behest of repatriation doctors. He was prone to violent outbursts where he beat both his wife and his daughter, and his wife insisted that he not know about her frequent communications with repatriation personnel. When she contacted the repatriation organisation after her husband had violently assaulted her again in 1946, a repatriation doctor noted: 'Wife stated ex-soldier's mind appears to be going. He pulled a knife on her last night. Advised that ex-soldier could not be forced into hospital against his will and to report condition to Branch Office on Monday.'[98] There were evidently limits to the reach of repatriation authorities when it came to assisting veterans, and in such cases the wives and family members of these men were expected to manage and tolerate their needs and behaviours.

Rates of divorce in Australia doubled from 1911 to 1921, as did the number of divorce petitions initiated by women. Michael Tyquin has suggested that the increased divorce rate was related to the burdens of psychological breakdown amongst veterans.[99] While psychological problems alone cannot account for instances of divorce amongst former prisoners of war, it certainly played a role in the breakdown of the marriages of some former prisoners. After the suicide of one former prisoner, his widow revealed that her husband's violent tendencies left her fearing for her life. After enduring years of his violence and alcoholism, she had left her husband a year prior to his death. Writing to the repatriation organisation, she argued that he had come back from war a changed man, that he 'appeared to have lost weight and looked pale and ill and was very nervy'. After their marriage in 1920 she 'commenced to realize just how ill he was'.[100] She attempted to explain the changed man she married in 1920 by drawing, in part, on his time in captivity; she wrote that she believed her husband had suffered head trauma when his plane was brought down in enemy territory just prior to his capture, but she also noted that her husband had also mentioned 'that he was very harshly treated and he received no medical treatment' while in German captivity.[101] The relationship

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[97] Memorandum, E.L. Pierce, 5 November 1937, Joseph Brown, NAA, B73, M56590.
[98] Report by Dr Stafford, 19 July 1946, Joseph Brown, NAA, B73, M56590.
[99] Tyquin, *Madness and the Military*, 140–41; Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities*, 152–53.
[100] Statement in support of application, 3 November 1941, Arthur Wearne, NAA, B73, M5539.
[101] Statement in support of application, 3 November 1941, Arthur Wearne, NAA, B73, M5539.

between captivity and postwar violence amongst former prisoners, however, remains nebulous. As Jen Roberts pointedly notes: 'Some returned men were of fairly poor character to begin with'.[102] However, Elizabeth Nelson has argued that the First World War had an escalatory effect on the prevalence and acceptability of men's violence toward women in the interwar years, and this may have facilitated and legitimised acts of domestic violence amongst former prisoners.[103] While the experience of captivity alone cannot account for incidences of domestic violence amongst former prisoners of war, it is clear that, for some, the trauma of captivity and war service offered a compelling explanation.

Some prisoners of war experienced other marital difficulties in the interwar period. A doctor assessing one former prisoner of war noted, 'Says he cannot get an "erection" and is no good to his wife. Nerves are bad, is very irritable.'[104] Sexual dysfunction was not a common feature in repatriation case files, whether this was the result of self-censorship of claimants or an absence of this kind of problem amongst former prisoners is less clear. It is telling in the previous example, however, that the claimant mentioned the problem in the perceived privacy of a medical evaluation, rather than in a letter to the repatriation organisation. A medical evaluation of another former prisoner similarly noted: 'He says that since 1933 he has been impotent … He made no claim on this account, partly through embarrassment, and partly because his wife did not wish for children in any case.'[105] The wives of claimants were sometimes more forthcoming. After her husband's pension was reduced, the wife on one claimant wrote to the repatriation organisation to contest the decision. 'My husband's condition is getting worse every day. I am kept away nights through his trembling and jumping in bed and he has had some very bad turns lately,' she wrote. 'I also wish to state that my husband has lost all desire for relations between husband and wife, he has been treated for same but there is no improvement.'[106]

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[102] Roberts, 'The Front Comes Home', 20.
[103] Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities*, 176.
[104] Medical evaluation by Dr Clouston, 1937, Robert Spencer, NAA, C138, R87623.
[105] Medical evaluation by Dr D.D. Lyness, 3 December 1969, Roy Galbraith, NAA, J26, M20078.
[106] Letter from ex-soldier's wife, 26 November 1937, Robert Spencer, NAA, C138, R87623.

The repatriation organisation and captivity as the cause of postwar harm

Captivity and its medical implications did not arouse sustained interest amongst medical professionals in Australia, nor did it prompt any specific policy response from the repatriation organisation. Throughout most of the interwar years, no specific prisoner of war groups existed to draw attention to particular medical issues that might reasonably arise from captivity. The first formal prisoner of war group – formed in Adelaide in 1935 – functioned primarily as a social group, with an additional aim of facilitating connections between former prisoners of war who might support each other's repatriation claims.[107] Veteran lobby groups, as discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, served a critical purpose in prompting change in repatriation practice and policy, and in drawing attention to particular service-related conditions. In absence of this kind of collective advocacy to change repatriation policy and practice, individual prisoners of war argued for the merits of captivity as the cause of their postwar conditions on an individual basis, and repatriation personnel evaluated each individual pension claim on a case-by-case basis.

Cognisant of the need for general recognition of the privations of captivity, one former prisoner, William Groves, wrote a statement of support for a fellow prisoner and requested that his statement 'be placed on the records of the Repatriation Department for further reference in future cases.'[108] In his letter to the repatriation organisation, Groves pointed more broadly to the problems experienced by many prisoners of war in the interwar years. While he had not personally applied for a repatriation pension, Groves foreshadowed that this would almost certainly come to pass in the years to come. Conscious of the likelihood of many similar claims made by his compatriots, Groves perceived a need for prisoners of war to be considered as a distinct group of claimants, with particular physical and psychological health problems arising out of their experience. Though the repatriation organisation accepted the role of captivity in the

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[107] 'Ex-Prisoners of War Club', *Smith's Weekly*, December 28, 1935, 16.
[108] William Groves to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Victoria, 20 January 1932, Francis Lionel Wright, NAA, B73, M79007.

particular case under consideration, there is no evidence to suggest that they took Groves' statement as a guide for future cases.

Medical and repatriation evaluations of the harm caused by captivity tended to be somewhat muted and implicit. Captivity was often mentioned in passing, as a factor somehow relevant to the case under consideration, though the significance or specific pathogenic qualities of captivity were rarely elaborated on. The final medical evaluations of former prisoners conducted by the AIF often noted periods of captivity in this manner. Arnold Mason's medical evaluation prior to his discharge from the AIF noted a gunshot wound and, 'Prisoner of war since 1916'.[109] While the medical implications of a gunshot wound might reasonably be assumed, that same could not be said for captivity. George Day's medical evaluation similarly noted in the casualty information, 'P.O.W. 10th July 1917'.[110] Similar references abound in later repatriation evaluations. A medical review in 1926 recorded Robert Beattie's relevant medical history as, 'G.S.W. Abdomen and P.O.W. – 21 months'.[111] These invocations suggested that there was something specifically pathogenic about captivity, without any clear sense of what it was.

Some evaluations of captivity were more forthcoming. One repatriation medical officer evaluating the mental state of a former prisoner described captivity as 'a trying experience', and suggested that, in absence of another more persuasive explanation, 'I do not think War Service can be excluded as a factor in the Neurosis.'[112] Another observed that a claimant, 'was interned … during a period when Prisoners of War suffered much privation and hardships' and recommended that the claim be accepted.[113] In other instances, repatriation personnel more readily acknowledged that specific facets of captivity could have negative effects on the health of former prisoners of war. For instance, doctors observed of a former prisoner that his 'appendicitis … probably due to malnutrition in Germany'.[114] Evaluating the role of captivity in causing a stomach

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[109] Medical Report on an Invalid, 24 April 1919, Arnold Mason, NAA, C138, C45893.
[110] Medical Report on an Invalid, 21 April 1919, George Hartley Day, NAA, PP866/,1 M12435.
[111] Proceedings of Medical Board, Dr Beveridge and Dr Carlisle, 6 July 1926, Robert Beattie, NAA, PP2/8, R11585.
[112] Medical evaluation by Dr Langford, 20 May 1937, George Baker, NAA, BP709/1, M22708 PART 1.
[113] Medical evaluation by Dr Beveridge, 3 February 1932, Francis Lionel Wright, NAA, B73, M79007.
[114] Proceedings of Medical Board, Dr Beveridge and Dr Carlisle, 6 July 1926, Robert Beattie, NAA, PP2/8, R11585.

ulcer in 1937, however, another doctor noted that the claim was based 'on the fact that he was a prisoner of war in Germany for one year and eight months'. The doctor pointed to the dubious lapse in time between the claim being made and the claimant's war service, and pointed out that 'stomach troubles are common in men of his occupation who have irregular hours for meals and bolt their food, as he has done.'[115] He recommended the claim be rejected. In other cases, repatriation medical personnel were overtly critical of invocations of captivity. In response to one former prisoner's claim that his eye condition was due to his captivity, the medical officer wrote: 'There are no medical grounds on which this view could be accepted.'[116] Another medical officer unequivocally stated that the death of one former prisoner had no relationship to his war service, and particularly, 'was in no way related to the conditions the veteran was living under while a prisoner of war'.[117]

Medical evaluations were invariably partly subjective, and doctors' judgements were shaped by their medical training, knowledge of or exposure to issues related to captivity, and their knowledge of the specific prisoner of war making the claim.[118] As a local doctor in the small regional town of Narrandera in New South Wales, and an ex-serviceman himself, Doctor Lethbridge was familiar with many of the returned soldiers who were his patients. 'I knew the abovenamed before the War,' Lethbridge wrote in support of one former prisoner, 'and had no knowledge of any mental abnormality.' Though he acknowledged that his training as a general practitioner limited his insight into psychiatric troubles, Lethbridge postulated that 'Bell's extreme depression during his imprisonment was the cause of his Melancholia, that he probably was never normal after his imprisonment, and that his death was due to this.'[119] Doctor Parkinson – who initially refuted this connection – was, by contrast, a repatriation medical officer with no personal knowledge of the claimant, and a man who was generally sceptical of the legitimacy of claims of psychological problems amongst veteran soldiers emerging in

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[115] Medical report by Dr Clarke, 24 December 1937, Charles Barnard, NAA, PP866/1, M12350.
[116] Medical report by Dr Evans, 25 February 1970, Thomas Taylor, NAA, B73, M81355 PART 1.
[117] Repatriation Board, Queensland, Reasons for Determination, 3 July 1980, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247.
[118] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 286.
[119] Letter, Dr Lethbridge to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, 17 September 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

the later interwar period.[120] Their conflicting medical evaluations of the same case powerfully reflected their difference in training, employment and personal proximity to the claimant.

Unlike the post-Second World War period, where there was an effort to have former prisoners of war evaluated by doctors who had been prisoners of war themselves, former prisoners of the First World War often encountered doctors who had little understanding of the experience of captivity.[121] While the repatriation organisation did not overtly or systematically discriminate against former prisoners of war, repatriation personnel did, at times, display a marked insensitivity toward the potential legacies of this experience. Samuel Greenhill, a former prisoner of war living in Kalgoorlie, struggled throughout the interwar years with psychological problems related to his captivity. Greenhill's condition had become apparent immediately after his release from captivity when he attempted suicide after repatriation to England. A medical report noted that he had 'been a prisoner of war in Germany & been melancholy ever since, short of food and overworked while a prisoner of war.'[122] While in England after his release from captivity, Greenhill was convinced that 'he has to die'.[123]

Samuel Greenhill continued to have difficulty with his mental health throughout the 1920s. He reported hearing voices and noises at night, and started urinating in his bed, too anxious and afraid of the noises and voices to leave his bed. In 1930, the repatriation organisation requested that Greenhill travel to Perth for a medical examination, where he confessed to having been unable to sleep for several weeks and claimed that other patients at Perth Hospital were trying to hurt or kill him. When he became aggressive and 'tried to throw a nurse over the balcony', repatriation officials had him committed to Lemnos Mental Hospital. After a period of six months confinement at Lemnos – where he often refused food because 'the voices told him not

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[120] Parkinson, C.K. 'The Management of Neurotic Affection in Military Practice', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol 1, (1940), 94.

[121] Christina Twomey has noted that this approach was inherently contradictory in light of the repatriation organisation's denial that there was anything medically specific about wartime captivity. Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 40.

[122] Medical report, 3 April 1919, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.

[123] Medical report, 28 March 1919, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.

to eat' – Samuel Greenhill was released and returned to Kalgoorlie, his condition unchanged.[124]

By 1932, Greenhill was in a particularly bad state, and repatriation doctors insisted that he travel to Perth again for a full medical evaluation. Despite the urging of his brother Thomas and the Secretary of the local RSSILA, Vic O'Grady, Greenhill consistently refused these requests, much to the consternation of repatriation officials. In March of 1932, Thomas Greenhill wrote of his efforts to convince his brother to go to Perth for treatment. 'Unfortunately,' Thomas wrote, 'he does not forget the treatment that was meted out to him on him last calling up'. Vic O'Grady similarly noted that Greenhill flatly refused to attend his examination in Perth 'as he is of the opinion that your Department may take drastic action and commit him to the Lemnos Hospital'.[125] The implications of suddenly incarcerating a mentally traumatised former prisoner of war against his will appear to have been lost on repatriation personnel, who could not understand Greenhill's determined aversion to their later therapeutic interventions and consistent request that he travel to Perth.

Changing understandings of the limits of war in causing postwar harm increasingly opened up new possibilities for aging former prisoners and their widows. *Smith's Weekly* ran articles regularly criticising the repatriation organisation, and their treatment of specific cases. Other newspapers and returned services publications reported on successful and unsuccessful claims, or campaigns by veterans' organisations to have particular conditions accepted as due to war service.[126] Prisoners of war and their representatives often displayed an awareness of the applicability of particular conditions to war service. When Ethel Gatley applied in 1979 to have her husband's death from a cardiac condition attributed to his time as a prisoner of war, she noted that she had, 'heard soldiers of War 2 have been granted pensions for heart condition'.[127] Frank Gatley had died almost thirty years earlier in 1951. Shortly before his death, Frank

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[124] Medical report, 4 August 1930, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.
[125] Vic O'Grady and Thomas Greenhill to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Western Australia,17 February 1932 and 26 March 1932, Samuel Greenhill, NAA, PP864/1, H13380.
[126] See, for instance: 'Evatt's Query on Onus Proof in War Pensions', *Sun*, September 26, 1952, 2; 'Onus of Proof in Claims for Repatriation', *Northern Star*, October 21, 1954, 11; 'R.S.L Seeks Cancer Cover for Diggers', *Argus*, June 1, 1956, 5.
[127] Ethel Gatley to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Queensland, August 1979, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247.

had applied for assistance from the repatriation organisation. Though he painted a compelling picture of the strain and stresses of wartime captivity that he believed had caused his heart condition, the repatriation organisation had rejected his application.[128]

Like some other conditions, heart trouble proved difficult to conclusively link to service in war. This was particularly true throughout the interwar period. When William Fripp died from a heart condition in 1931, his widow Laura made repeated claims to the repatriation organisation to have his death attributed to his time as a prisoner of war. She claimed William had told her 'soon after his return that the German Doctor told him when he was in Hospital in 1918 a prisoner of war, that he would only live for 13 years,' and requested that the repatriation organisation seek evidence of medical treatment from William's captors 'as I think it might be helpful to my case'.[129] Laura Fripp's claims and appeals were also supported by various people testifying to both William's breakdown in health and his terrible time in captivity. 'When Fripp had been prisoner five months, his weight was reduced to 6 stone 7 [ounces]; and when Fripp was not in hospital, the Germans forced him to work from 6.a.m. to 6.p.m. in a war gas factory in Frederickfield [*sic*],' wrote one man. 'The consequence was that Fripp was never again well while he lived.'[130] Despite the supporting evidence provided, Laura Fripp's claim was rejected. The repatriation organisation posited that William's heart condition was brought about by venereal disease, which he had contracted while on active service, rather than captivity. While the repatriation organisation acknowledged that venereal disease was a condition that might result, 'from the abnormal conditions of service life', it did not accept responsibility for the treatment of venereal disease, nor was venereal disease accepted as a war-caused disability until the 1940s.[131]

The rejection of the Fripp case speaks to the power of subjective judgements of character in repatriation case files, but it also speaks to the uncertain relationship between heart conditions and captivity in the interwar years. By 1980, recognition of the

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[128] Statement in support of appeal to WPEAT, 12 June 1950, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247.

[129] Letter, Laura Fripp to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Western Australia, 3 March 1938, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.

[130] A.W. Bray to the Chairman Federal Soldiers' Appeal Board Perth, 26 April 1932, William Fripp, NAA, PP2/8, M12884.

[131] Department of Repatriation, *The civil re-establishment of the A.I.F.*, 19; Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, 274–75.

relationship between war service and the later onset of heart conditions was enshrined in repatriation precedent by the Foulger decision, when the Administrative Appeals Tribunal determined that Second World War veteran Ronald Foulger's heart condition was due to his war service.[132] The Foulger decision established that extreme stress arising from war service could, in some instances, contribute to the development of a heart condition in the years after the war.

A shift towards the acknowledgement of captivity as a potentially stressful and damaging experience for former prisoners of the First World War largely took place after the Second World War, when the potentially deleterious effects of captivity became a subject of public discussion and debate. One medical evaluation of a former prisoner of war in 1980 noted that the man, 'unquestionably was subjected to stress of an unusual kind on service. Not only was he a P.O.W. but he also was wounded in action on two occasions.'[133] Another doctor, writing in support of a former prisoner's application in 1958, suggested that the application hinged on whether or not the claimant's heart condition would have developed had he not served in the war. 'He did not see much actual fighting', the doctor noted, 'but I should think his sufferings as a prisoner of war mental and physical would be equivalent to a few battles.'[134]

Increasing medical knowledge around particular war-related conditions, however, did not always result in favourable evaluations for former prisoners of war. While not objecting to the principle that 'abnormal physical strain or intense mental stress may, in some cases, be accompanied or immediately followed by the symptoms of a coronary catastrophe', the lapse of time between the suggested 'intense mental stress' and the eventual heart condition of one former prisoner proved problematic. A repatriation doctor noted that 'This coronary followed some 34 years later – not immediately or accompanying the stress of P.O.W. life.' While captivity could potentially provoke the kind of stress necessary to trigger a 'coronary catastrophe', the passage of time rendered this link null and void. Furthermore, the doctor suggested that poor diet whilst in captivity – in particular the lack of 'animal fats', which might

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[132] 'Man Wins Six-Year Battle for Pension', *Canberra Times*, June 12, 1980, 3.
[133] Repatriation Commission Reasons for Decision, 24 April 1981, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247.
[134] Opinion by Dr Southy, 28 March 1958, Campbell Joseph Edwards, NAA, C138, R76112.

contribute to blocked arteries – actually protected against the development of a heart condition.[135] Captivity as the cause of postwar harm remained both contested and contingent well into the latter half of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

The dearth of medical literature linking captivity to particular physical and psychological health conditions did not reflect the lived experience of many former prisoners of war. These men suffered from a range of medical conditions, many of which they, or their representatives, attributed directly to their time as prisoners of war. Some of these conditions had a clear genesis in captivity, while others were less clearly defined. For the former, attributions and acceptance of particular conditions was straightforward and uncomplicated, and captivity was mentioned only in passing. For the latter, however, the role of captivity in causing postwar trauma was the subject of vociferous and ongoing debate between former prisoners, their family members, returned soldiers' organisations, medical professionals and the repatriation organisation. The policy of the repatriation organisation to treat each case on its merits – rather than developing general guidelines to the provision of pensions based on disability or war experiences – meant that they did not develop particular policies around prisoners of war, or their common medical complaints. Despite the commonality of many of these medical conditions amongst veteran prisoners of war, each veteran had to argue their case in isolation.

The absence of medical consensus about captivity as the cause of postwar harm served to limit clarity around invocations of captivity. In concert with the potentially fraught nature of masculinity in the context of repatriation and the vagaries of documentary evidence discussed in previous chapters, it is clear that captivity could be a tenuous prospect on which to base a claim for repatriation benefits. By contrast, the following chapter explores the role of shared narratives and memories of captivity in facilitating or encouraging depictions of captivity in repatriation case files.

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[135] Recommendation of Dr Beveridge, 27 June 1958, Campbell Joseph Edwards, NAA, C138, R76112.

Chapter 6

Witnessing and remembering captivity

In 1987, Noel Shiels privately published a book called *The Kaiser's Guest*. Noel's father, Robert, wrote the book about his experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany during the First World War.[1] It wasn't until after the outbreak of the Second World War – when a newspaper article regarding the escape of several German internees put him in mind of his own experience as a prisoner of war – that Robert decided to put pen to paper and start writing his account. In the foreword, Noel remembered proudly talking about his father's wartime captivity as a child, and he recalled that his father 'had many tales to tell and with a bit of prompting he would entertain my school mates'. Just over thirty pages long, Robert's original work was intended as an early draft of a longer piece, which never eventuated. After the end of the Second World War, as more than 20,000 Australian soldiers emerged from prisoner of war camps across Europe and the Pacific, Robert Shiels lost interest in his memoir, concluding that 'the P.O.W.s of the Japanese had more to tell about captivity than he'.[2] Stories of suffering, starvation, overwork and malnutrition, appearing in newspaper articles and written on the faces and bodies of the men and women returning to Australia from Japanese captivity, had a powerful impact on Robert Shiels. Specifically, these new accounts of captivity affected how he perceived the value of his own experiences almost thirty years earlier.

Shiels' reaction to Second World War POWs is suggestive of the power public narratives of captivity could exert on if, and how, former prisoners of the First World War remembered and wrote about their experiences. The concept of public narratives exerting an influence on personal remembrance is not new or novel. Historians have argued that individuals compose their personal memories through a dynamic

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[1] Noel Shiels' decision to publish his father's memoir at this point in time accords with a wider trend from the 1970s to the 1990s amongst the descendants of veterans to capture and share their memories and experiences. Ziino, '"A Lasting Gift to His Descendants": Family Memory and the Great War in Australia', *History and Memory* 22, no. 2 (2010). 130–31.

[2] Shiels, *The Kaiser's Guest*.

engagement with available narratives.[3] As Michael Roper has noted, 'personal accounts of the past are never produced in isolation from public narratives, but must operate within their terms.' Public and personal narratives shape remembrance at any given point in time, and remembering 'always entails the working of past experience into available cultural scripts'.[4] There are, however, many different versions of the same narrative at any given moment, and scholars argue that individuals compose particular memories – here composure is understood to mean both the crafting of the story and the psychological sense of personal equilibrium – in order to create particular versions of their past which best facilitate their sense of psychological composure, within these publicly available meanings.[5] While wider collective meanings undoubtedly shape and constrain personal memories, we should be wary of attributing too much power to collective memories and representations of the past, and assuming them to be all-encompassing. Personal memories are not simply passively shaped or influenced by available public meanings, but rather engage in an active exchange of meanings.[6] While new narratives of captivity after the Second World War discouraged Robert Shiels from writing his own memoir, it is likely that existing narratives of captivity during the interwar years – limited though they were – also encouraged or legitimised certain personal remembrances of First World War captivity.

The stories former prisoners of war composed in their repatriation case files can be understood as narratives of wartime captivity. These narratives were not as detailed as published memoirs, bound as they were by the context of a claim for assistance, but like memoirs, they were invariably drawn from the memory of former prisoners' experiences. Like other sources of personal memory, narratives that appeared in repatriation files were liable to change over time, and were shaped by the context of their production; writing or speaking about captivity in local, communal and familial

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[3] Michael Roper, Graham Dawson, and T. G. Ashplant, 'The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics', in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, eds Michael Roper, Graham Dawson, and T. G. Ashplant (London: Routledge, 2000), 18.
[4] Michael Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal* 2000, no. 50 (1 January 2000), 183–84.
[5] Roper, 183–84; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 11–14.
[6] Roper, Dawson, and Ashplant, 'The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics', 18.

contexts – and even publishing narratives of captivity – was different to articulating the impact of captivity in repatriation claims. Nonetheless, working from the premise that collective memories and wider narratives can also shape expressions of personal memory that appear in case files, this chapter turns to consider how wider narratives of wartime captivity influenced those produced in the context of repatriation.

While relatively few published narratives of captivity appeared in the interwar years, some experiences of wartime captivity were more storied than others. The experiences of 1,170 Australian soldiers taken prisoner during the First Battle of Bullecourt, for instance, were featured in several interwar memoirs. After their capture, 800 of these men were singled out for German reprisals, a period of deliberate mistreatment involving starvation, overwork, violence and a period of incarceration in a fortress that became known as the 'Black Hole of Lille'.[7] Comprising more than a third of the total number of former prisoners studied for this thesis, many of the men captured at Bullecourt – and especially those subjected to reprisals – composed lengthy, detailed and relatively consistent narratives of hardship and suffering in captivity for repatriation claims.[8] The narratives these men composed stood in stark contrast to the brevity and uncertainty that tended to characterise other claims for assistance on the basis of captivity. The widows of former prisoners, in particular, often had difficulties describing the conditions of captivity. Drawing on repatriation claims made by former Bullecourt prisoners as a case study, and a sample of claims made by widows, this chapter will explore the relationship between wider narratives of captivity and representations of this experience in repatriation case files. Where previous chapters have explored factors that contributed to the absence, brevity or ambivalence of invocations of captivity, this chapter conversely suggests that existing narratives of captivity might encourage or facilitate these narratives.

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[7] 1,500 Australian prisoners of the Germans captured during 1917 were subjected to similar reprisals, though it seems that not all of them were interned at Lille. Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 80.
[8] More than a third of the men studied for this thesis were captured during the First Battle of Bullecourt. Almost 29 percent of all Australian prisoners were captured during the First Battle of Bullecourt, which suggests that Bullecourt prisoners may have been slightly more likely than their compatriots to apply for assistance from the repatriation organisation. A specific comparative study of Bullecourt prisoners in relation to those captured elsewhere would elucidate the reasons for this trend.

Remembering and articulating hardship in captivity

In 1932, former prisoner of war William Groves wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales. In his letter, Groves argued that fellow former prisoner Frank Wright's, 'present condition of ill-health is due, not partially but entirely, to the strain put upon his physical constitution and mental soundness by the experience and suffering he underwent with the rest of us during those days of our captivity.'[9] Both Groves and Wright had been captured by German forces on 11 April, 1917 during the Battle of Bullecourt, and Groves detailed the hardships they had endured in enemy hands:

> 'Frank Wright and I were members of the unfortunate group of Australians deliberately selected by the German Military Authorities for what they were pleased to call "Reprisal Punishment", a form of treatment of prisoners of war that was without precedent in its entire lack of any evidence of human decency of treatment. Not the least of our sufferings was the incarceration for a period of 13 days in the infamous "Black Hole of Lille", where physique and morale alike were strained to the utmost. If there is any man of the number who experienced the brutal treatment meted out to our party during the 7 months of our working behind the enemy's lines in the vicinity of the City of Lille, whose health has not been impaired by those experiences, I can only suggest that he is something of a superman. Myself, a youth of 19 at the time, I have these memories seared into the very tissue of my brain, and feel that, though as yet no claim for pension or repatriation assistance has been lodged by me, the time will surely come, and possibly soon, when I shall be forced, in consequence of the ill-treatment referred to, to prosecute a claim similar to that now made by Frank Wright.'[10]

Shortly before writing in support of Frank Wright, William Groves had started writing a memoir of his own experiences as a prisoner of war, the first instalment of which was about to be published by *Reveille*, the journal of the NSW RSSILA branch. The depth, detail and sophistication of Groves' description of captivity on behalf of Frank Wright was no doubt partly reflective of his having recently rendered the narrative in writing for an audience of his peers.[11] Frank Wright, by contrast, ventured

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[9] William Groves to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Victoria, 20 January 1932, Francis Lionel Wright, NAA, B73, M79007.

[10] William Groves to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in Victoria, 20 January 1932, Francis Lionel Wright, NAA, B73, M79007.

[11] For more on the links between narrative and memory, see Alistair Thomson, *Moving Stories: An Intimate History of Four Women across Two Countries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 295–327.

no such narrative on his own behalf, preferring to leave the heavy lifting of describing the hardships of Bullecourt to his well-educated and soon to be published comrade.

Groves' rationale for publishing his memoir in *Reveille* was largely that the story, in his opinion, had never really been told before. There was a 'natural reluctance' amongst Bullecourt prisoners, Groves claimed, 'to recount experiences which the world would probably regard as incredible'. It was also due, he surmised, to the bleak and 'melancholy' nature of wartime captivity, an experience which 'conjures up no memories of joy such as do other aspects of war life in retrospect but only memories of broken men, broken spirits'. Consequently, the story of these men had 'been almost forgotten – if indeed it were ever fully known'.[12] Yet compared to the general experience of captivity for the majority of Australian prisoners of the Germans, the experiences of Bullecourt men – and specifically those men who had been interned at Lille – had received considerable attention. The Bullecourt narrative had been told in several different formats since the end of the war. In the immediate postwar years, a considerable number of newspaper articles had appeared throughout Australia detailing the experiences of Bullecourt prisoners, while two Bullecourt men based in Victoria had published memoirs in the years after the war: Thomas Taylor's *Peregrinations of an Australian Prisoner of War: The Experiences of an Australian Soldier in Germany and Bolshevik Russia* and Alfred Gray's *In the Hands of the Hun: Experiences of Private Alfred Gray, of Kyneton*.[13] Groves' assertion that the narrative had been 'forgotten' was more likely a reference to the relatively minor place of *all* narratives of captivity in the dominant understandings of Australia's experience of war.

In contrast to the majority of claims from former prisoners, Bullecourt men often produced detailed accounts of their experience of captivity in their claims to the repatriation organisation. These narratives often bore striking similarities to those appearing in published accounts of the Bullecourt prisoners, and tended to focus largely if not wholly on captivity rather than war service broadly. John Henry Jones wrote in 1938:

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[12] William Groves, 'Things I Remember: A Prisoner of War Looks Back, *Reveille* 5, no. 5 (January 1932), 13.

[13] Gray, *In the Hands of the Hun: Experiences of Private Alfred Gray, of Kyneton;* Taylor, *Peregrinations of an Australian Prisoner of War*.

While serving with the 14th Battn. A.I.F. during April 1917, I was taken prisoner. Together with about 50 other Australians I was taken to a semi dungeon and kept there for about a week, sleeping on the stone floor without blankets. No person was permitted to leave this dungeon during the week. The food ration consisted of dirty hot water, about one pint per day. This was called coffee. No sanitary arrangements were provided. An open barrel in a corner of the dungeon was the enemy idea of sanitary convenience. Quite a number of prisoners collapsed and died during this week. After a week I was taken about 2 miles behind the lines and for 3 or 4 weeks did various kinds of labouring work ... about 16 hours a day, and food ration very scanty and of very poor quality.[14]

Another former Bullecourt Prisoner, John Hogan, similarly wrote of his experiences as a 'prisoner of retaliation with Germany' after his capture at Bullecourt:

I started my term of prisoner ship of retaliation confined in a concrete room known as "Fort McDonald" at Lille in which only thirty men should have been accommodated. Our number in the room was 60, and for eight days we lived and ate and slept without being allowed to go outside this room. The room had a concrete floor and when we were imprisoned in it it had three inches of dust on the floor which was not swept up nor were we supplied with anything with which to sweep it up. The allowance of food and water during those eight days per man were one litre of water and one loaf of bread between ten men. After that we were taken through several French villages to show the French people what an awful state the British soldiers were in after coming out of the lines. This went on for about a week.[15]

In his statement, which was several pages long, Hogan also referred to being 'put to hard work on the railway lines or other hard manual labour' and working 'under our own shell fire' behind the German lines. Hogan, like Jones, noted that 'Many of my companions died here from starvation or malnutrition.'[16] Other former Bullecourt prisoners composed accounts that were perhaps not as long and detailed, but nonetheless touched on many of the same key points. One noted that he and his fellow prisoners were 'kept short of food and clothing and were subjected to most brutal treatment by the German Guards' while having to perform physically intensive work 'under shell fire'.[17] Another wrote that he was 'in the Black Hole at Lille for seven days' and while in German hands was forced to perform laborious work in close proximity to

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[14] Statement of claimant, 6 December 1938, John Henry Jones, NAA, B73, M61265.
[15] Statement supporting appeal to the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal, hearing 16 May 1938, John Hogan, NAA, BP709/1, M38843.
[16] Statement supporting appeal to the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal, hearing 16 May 1938, John Hogan, NAA, BP709/1, M38843. Hogan claimed the number of prisoners who died here was as high as 61 percent, though this seems unlikely given the low rate of Australian deaths in German captivity.
[17] Claimant's evidence, 26 October 1926, Matthew Finlay, NAA, C138, M49235.

the front lines, during which 'many Australians were killed by our own guns.'[18] While not always as fluent and emotive as William Groves, or as lengthy and detailed as John Jones, the narratives former Bullecourt prisoners composed tended to refer to many of the same events.

Several decades after the end of the First World War, descriptions of captivity composed by former Bullecourt prisoners retained many of the same narrative elements. James Shaw, in a claim for a medical pension in 1963, wrote, 'We were kept in the Dungeons of Lille Fortress, in the extra cold winter of 1917, without covering of any kind and had to sleep on a concrete floor. From there we were taken to work behind the lines under shellfire all the time, living mainly on stinging nettles.'[19] Again in 1970, Shaw reiterated that, 'after capture we were kept in a Dungeon at Fort Lille, where those of us who were affected by gas had bad fits of coughing day and night then were shifted to work behind the lines for three months on very little food, and while working on a Munition Dump at Douai it was blown up by our long range artillery where 20 of the party were killed, also the gasshells in the Dump exploded, and what few of us in the party were left had another whiff of gas.'[20] Shaw's multiple applications and appeals also drew on wider hardships in captivity, but his experiences at Lille remained a central feature. Similarly, when fellow prisoner of war William Riley wrote to the repatriation organisation in support of Shaw, his narrative describing events that had occurred 46 years earlier was both remarkably clear and remarkably similar to those composed by fellow prisoners in the interwar period more than 20 years earlier:

> We were taken prisoner on the 11th April 1917 near Bullecourt France, we were given rough treatment by the Germans and were taken to McDonald Fort Lille and kept in cells. The cells were roughly 10 feet by 20 feet we had tramped through snow all the day and the concrete floor was wet from the snow off our boots, we were kept there for six days, and then taken to work just behind the German lines, we were billeted in old huts, and our work was of a strenuous nature, shell fire of our own killed... our mates.[21]

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[18] Record of evidence by Charles Hobbs, 17 February 1936, Charles Hobbs, NAA, B73, M57814.
[19] Letter, James Shaw to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 23 January 1963, James Shaw, NAA, J26, M22903 PART 2.
[20] Appeal, 23 November 1970, James Shaw, NAA, J26, M22903 PART 2.
[21] Letter, William Riley to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 21 January 1963, James Shaw, NAA, J26, M22903 PART 2.

One factor that might explain these consistent narrative patterns was that the men captured at Bullecourt had greater opportunity to share and make sense of their experiences with fellow prisoners of war than many of their contemporaries. Oral historians and memory researchers have suggested that 'the process of making sense through story' and sharing these stories can facilitate long-term memory.[22] While chapter two argued that there were relatively few opportunities for former prisoners to share stories of captivity during demobilisation, the sheer number of men captured during the Battle of Bullecourt meant that these recently released prisoners returned to combat units with a high proportion of fellow prisoners of war to await demobilisation and return to Australia. They were thus likely presented with opportunities to informally compose and share stories about their time in captivity during this early period. In the postwar period, furthermore, Bullecourt prisoners were more likely to come across fellow former prisoners at battalion reunions. The experience of combat – and capture – at Bullecourt loomed large for the battalions involved; the 14th battalion's unit history, for instance, devoted an entire chapter to the battle and the death or capture of so many of its men. The prominence of events at Bullecourt for these combat units likely enabled greater discussion of capture and captivity at veteran social events. Bullecourt prisoners were thus given numerous opportunities to share and story their own memories of capture and captivity with fellow prisoners in informal and personal settings, and this undoubtedly contributed to the clarity of their repatriation accounts.

The period of deliberate and specific German reprisals in Lille distinguished the Bullecourt experience, and also lent itself to a narrative form with obvious elements of mistreatment.[23] Repatriation statements collected by the AIF immediately after prisoners were recovered from captivity suggested that the experiences of men captured at Bullecourt had taken on particular significance and narrativity in the immediate postwar period. In his compulsory repatriation statement, one former prisoner wrote that he 'was in the notorious Fort McDonald for about 5 days. The treatment here was utterly inhuman.'[24] The characterisation of Fort McDonald in Lille as 'notorious'

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[22] Thomson, *Moving Stories: An Intimate History of Four Women across Two Countries*, 299.

[23] Thomson suggests that certain experiences – migration, in his case – are likely to become memorable, partly because they involve a clear sequence of events, 'that act as hooks for remembering and a framework for story-telling'. Thomson, 299.

[24] Statement made by repatriated prisoner of war, 21 January 1919, John Henry Jones, NAA, B73, M61265.

suggested that the experiences of the prisoners interned there had already taken on a certain centrality amongst these men. Numerous newspaper articles also appeared in Australia throughout 1917, 1918 and 1919 describing the 'Black hole of Lille' and the dreadful experiences prisoners endured there. One regional newspaper described the events of Lille as an experience that, 'it is safe to say, the Australian Army will not forget'.[25] Another claimed the experience of Lille had 'seared itself into heart and brain'.[26] Unlike books, or even returned services publications, newspaper articles were widely accessible, enabling former prisoners to read accounts of captivity that reflected their own experiences in the immediate postwar years.

Capture in other areas and at other times did not preclude former prisoners of war from composing narratives of hardship in captivity. However, former prisoners captured in other battles tended to position hardship as part of a wider narrative, often pointing to other features of service. Robert Lowson was captured several days after the Bullecourt prisoners at nearby Lagnicourt. In support of his claim to the repatriation organisation in 1928, Lowson wrote:

> 'Shrapnel wound right foot, Gallipoli, in hospital 1 month. 1915 Enteric Fever; in Hospital Malta 5 months; was boarded for six months to Australia but arranged to go to England instead. Early 1917 In Hospital Etaples 3 weeks – Pleurisy. Prisoner of War 20 months; In Germany Hospital ... off and on all the time I was prisoner suffering from exposure and debility. When I was interned I was put in a reprisal camp ... and while there was on starvation treatment which reduced weight to 7 stone.'[27]

While Lowson experienced similar treatment to many of the men captured at Bullecourt, his narrative lacked much of the detail and certainty that characterised many of the claims written by former prisoners of Bullecourt.[28] Lowson's experience was more personal, individual and idiosyncratic; it was not shared or storied in the same manner as Bullecourt. In making a claim to the repatriation organisation, it is likely that Lowson was composing his narrative of captivity for the first time, and, unlike the

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[25] 'Black Hole of Lille', *Uralla Times and District Advocate*, June 16, 1917, 6.

[26] BLACK HOLE OF LILLE, *Daily Advertiser (Wagga Wagga)*, March 15, 1919, 2. See also: 'The Black Hole of Lille', *The Sydney Stock and Station Journal*, June 6, 1919, 11; 'The Black Hole of Lille', *The Corowa Free Press*, December 20, 1918, 4; 'Black Hole of Lille: Horrifying Details', *Examiner*, December 11, 1918, 5.

[27] Evidence from claimant, 13 December 1928, Robert Lowson, NAA, PP946/1, M11628A.

[28] Pegram has noted that men captured at Lagnicourt were also subjected to extreme reprisals, though it appears Lowson was not interned at the 'Black Hole of Lille'. Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 80–81.

Bullecourt men, his experience was not framed by a well-established narrative to guide his own articulation of captivity.

Part of the accessibility of the Bullecourt narrative was its status as a shared experience. Suffering *en masse* was more readily cast as an egregious breach of human decency on the part of the captor army. An experience of personal or individual suffering, by contrast, carried uncomfortable implications of victimhood, subjugation and humiliation at the hands of the enemy. Though he evinced distinct discomfort in depicting his own suffering, Frank Gatley was able to articulate his hardships after capture as part of a collective experience. 'I was a prisoner of war, being captured on April 11th 1917. Directly after my capture I was put into Fort MacDonald at Lille, "The Black Hole."' Gatley wrote. 'We were put rooms 110 men to each room and locked up for seven days and nights with a ration of one slice of dry bread ... each day.' A German soldier informed them that they were to be kept, 'very short of food, bad lodgings, no beds, hard work, also besides the German guns under shell fire, no soap for washing or shaving, no towel or boots etc.' and they were told to write to their friends and family of their poor treatment to encourage the British government to improve its treatment of enemy prisoners. 'The prisoners were then entrained ... about 5 kilometers from the front line, put to work on the dumps under shell fire from their own guns,' Gatley wrote. 'About Sept., 1917 about 12,000 prisoners were sent to Germany in a very weakened condition. My weight went down from eleven stone captured to six stone, and I attribute my suffering and privations of twenty months to my present condition.'[29] Though he introduced himself as an actor and concluded by pointing to the deleterious physical effect captivity had on him, when actually describing suffering and hardship in captivity, Frank Gatley switched from a personal pronoun to a collective one. Towards the end of his statement, Gatley had almost entirely removed himself from the description, citing the impersonal and removed 'prisoners' rather than 'I' or 'we'.

Though Bullecourt was one of the more accessible narratives of hardship and suffering in captivity, not all former Bullecourt prisoners composed such narratives in their case files. Those who did, furthermore, were more likely to do so on appeal. Even

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[29] Appeal, 12 June 1950, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247.

those who supported men claiming hardship were unlikely to mention it themselves; neither William Groves nor William Riley, quoted earlier in this chapter, wrote narratives of hardship and suffering in captivity in their own claims for assistance. It appears that the existence of a shared narrative alone could not facilitate the sense of psychological composure necessary for these men to produce narratives of their own personal suffering and hardship in captivity.

Widows bear witness to the impact of captivity

Articulating the impact of captivity presented a different set of challenges to the widows of former prisoners of war. These women were required to articulate a link between war service and the death of their husband to be eligible for a war widows' pension; whereas the widow of a soldier who died on the battlefield was almost automatically entitled to a pension, a widow of a soldier who died during the postwar period had to prove that their husband's death was related to his war service.[30] Repatriation authorities investigated each case to determine the war-relatedness of a serviceman's death before granting a war widow's pension, and captivity could add an additional burden to the process of applying for a war widow's pension.

War widows were provided with pensions to compensate them financially for the loss of their husband, and by extension, their source of income. This endeavour reflected the gender roles that characterised Australian society in the early twentieth century, as the state sought to replace to loss of the male breadwinner. However, it also reflected the centrality and dominance of the soldier in postwar Australia; civilian widows were not compensated for the loss of their husbands in any Australian state until the 1920s and the 1930s, and it was not until 1942 that the Commonwealth introduced a pension for civilian widows. Furthermore, provisions for these women tended to be more stringent.[31] Jill Roe has suggested that until the 1960s, 'war widows headed the hierarchy

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[30] Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, 242.

[31] Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 31–33. New South Wales first introduced pensions for civilian widows in 1926, and it was not until 1937 that Victoria followed suit. Both of these provisions were targeted at widows with children and were an expression of the state's responsibility for its future citizens, rather than an articulation of its responsibility to widows themselves. In 1942, the Commonwealth government introduced a general widows' pension. Once again, this provision centred on the role of the widow as a mother, and pensions for widows under the age of 50 without children

of women welfare recipients'.[32] A war widow could expect a measure of financial security, and certainly a greater degree of financial security than their civilian counterparts, particularly in the early twentieth century.[33] The war widows' pension, then, was a financial recognition of sacrifice.[34]

The letters widows wrote to the repatriation organisation offer valuable insight into prisoners of war in the post war period. These women were intimately aware of their husband's physical and psychological struggles; many of them bore the combined weight of the caring for their disabled husbands in addition to the financial hardship associated with a partially incapacitated husband who was largely unable to work. Some also endured physical violence and both psychological and emotional abuse, though these factors cannot always be said to have been war-caused.[35] In addition to their intimate knowledge of the costs of war, widows were, in several important respects, outsiders: they had not served as soldiers in the AIF, they had not been taken captive, and they were women rather than men. In her study of women's Holocaust testimony, Zoë Waxman has pointed to the significance of gender 'in the *narration* of experience', arguing that '[t]estimonies are not spontaneous bursts of information, but come from careful representation of experience, or the perceived "appropriateness" of experiences for publication.'[36] Experiences deemed incompatible with wider gender norms were less likely to appear as public testimony. As women, and outsiders, the widows of prisoners of war were able to articulate the impact of captivity without the fear of emasculation or stigma that could often constrain their husbands. From this paradoxically close yet removed position, widows offered a new perspective on the lives of former prisoners of war, and often painted alternative accounts of the impact of captivity.

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were only granted in special circumstances and tended to be temporary. Furthermore, in all cases, the civilian widows' pension was means tested.

[32] Jill Roe, 'The End Is Where We Start from: Women and Welfare since 1901', in *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia*, eds. Cora Baldock and Bettina Cass (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 11.

[33] Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, 32–33.

[34] Damousi, 21–22.

[35] For an analysis of the relationship between the First World War and domestic violence, see Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities*.

[36] Zoë Waxman, 'Unheard Testimony, Untold Stories: The Representation of Women's Holocaust Experiences', *Women's History Review* 12, no. 4 (1 December 2003), 665–66.

From their position as outsiders, widows were hampered by their lack of knowledge about that actual conditions of captivity: they were compelling and reliable witnesses to the postwar health of their husbands, but not to the facets of war service that might have caused these postwar troubles. Their knowledge and memory of captivity was invariably second-hand, drawn either from their husbands' stories or from other narratives of captivity. Consequentially, widows' applications to the repatriation organisation reflected differing degrees of confidence and certainty in the role of captivity in their husbands' deaths.

Some widows invoked captivity in a passing mention, with a sense that it was relevant but without seeming to know exactly how and why. In some cases, it was clear that former prisoners of war had not discussed their captivity with their wives and families. In her correspondence with the repatriation organisation, Isabel Bell noted that during his life, her husband John often 'would not allow war to be discussed'.[37] As such, when Isabel's claim was refused by the repatriation organisation in 1935, she wrote in great detail about John's increasingly erratic behaviour in the years after his return up until his death, but only vaguely linked his behaviour to his time in captivity:

> I knew John Robert Bell many years before he went to the War, kept company and engaged to be married for four years when he enlisted. He was very industrious man always busy and working hard and fond of sports and enjoyed all games, etc. He was a changed man when he came home and then we married, our first child lived only three weeks. The Dr. said it was war worries why it died. He gradually became quiet, liked being by himself, once he took me to the Show and came home without me – forgot he took me. When these turns came on I got the doctor, he would have a tonic and he then would pick up. His turns would come on and he restless, moving furniture and pictures, getting ready for parties and so forth. He would be well again perhaps for six months and then I could notice it again, especially if he lifted something heavy. We would try and battle along without asking for help...He told me in Germany they were set out to plant cabbages and he planted all his upside down. In these turns he would not let me tell his people, he did not want them to know his failing, always trying to be bright and helping others.[38]

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[37] Letter, Isabel Bell, January 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.
[38] Appeal, 17 December 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

Another widow wrote a similarly extensive statement describing her husband's health postwar, but also only loosely and briefly linked his health problems to his war service. She wrote that:

> He told me that on his release from the Turkish Prison after the Armistice he with others were placed in hospital in Alexandria for about a week. I do not remember if he told me why he was placed in Hospital in Alexandria but I gained the impression that he was placed there for the purpose of being built up in health after his imprisonment.[39]

By contrast, it was apparent that other former prisoners had spoken regularly with their wives about how they believed their captivity had affected their health. One widow, for instance, wrote that her husband's death from congestive cardiac failure at the age of 88 was due to an injury to his hip which he sustained during his captivity.[40] Throughout their marriage, her husband had repeatedly and unsuccessfully appealed to the repatriation organisation to have his hip injury recognised as war-caused. Though a hip injury in captivity had precious little relevance to cardiac failure at an advanced age, the widow's decision to explain her husband's death in these terms suggests that, throughout their marriage, this was the dominant narrative of postwar harm associated with her husband's captivity.[41]

Other widows were aware of the deleterious effects of their husband's captivity, even if they were not able to recall and articulate these narratives with ease. Florence Forster, whose husband Herbert was captured at Bullecourt, wrote that her husband, 'was in the Gallipoli landing & later in France where all his unit was captured, he was prisoner of war about 20 months. They were starved & only the Red Cross parcels kept them alive so only the fittest returned. He never recovered from the privations he endured.' Florence attributed Herbert's death to his war service broadly, but her main emphasis was on the deleterious effects of wartime captivity, where Herbert had 'suffered great privations, his weight was reduced from 12 stone to 8.'[42] While Florence

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[39] Widow's statement, 8 March 1933, Frederick Earnshaw, NAA, B73, M53760.
[40] Letter, Myrtle Jean Bryan to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales, 1 March 1983, Richard Alfred Bryan, NAA, C138, M88669.
[41] Richard Bryan wrote repeatedly to the repatriation organisation about this injury. See Richard Alfred Bryan, NAA, C138, M88669.
[42] Letter, Florence Forster, December 1963, Herbert Foster, NAA, C138, M73498; Appeal, 6 February 1964, Herbert Foster, NAA, C138, M73498.

was aware of the physical costs of Herbert's captivity, she was unable to compose a detailed narrative of hardship in captivity. Ethel Gatley similarly wrote that her husband 'was captured at Bullecourt [and] taken prisoner for twenty months … I can-not tell you what they went through.' While her husband Frank had composed a detailed narrative of his hardship in captivity in his own correspondence with the repatriation organisation, her recollection and articulation of those hardships were less precise and detailed.

Published narratives and other documentary evidence could help widows to describe the conditions of captivity with greater clarity. When Doris Groves applied for a war widows' pension, she invoked her husband's captivity as a factor that had contributed to his death. 'He worked for 7 months behind the enemy lines and was worked extremely hard and subjected to gun fire from the allied Army as well as starvation and ill treatment from the enemy,' she wrote. 'During this time prisoners were marched long distances with little or no food. My husband was among those who were incarcerated in the infamous Fort MacDonald, known as the "Black Hole of Lille".' In addition to providing this description, Doris also carefully copied William's entire memoir – which had been serialised in *Reveille* – and sent it through to the repatriation organisation, noting that 'a very full and authenticated story of that 7 months is given in the accompanying cuttings from Reveille of 1931 or thereabouts.'[43] Ethel Gatley similarly attached a small archive of evidence relating to her husband's captivity, consisting of a letter that her husband had received from his German captors, a copy of a letter from King George V, given to Imperial prisoners of war after their release from captivity, and a series of newspaper articles, including 'an account of his treatment as a prisoner of war', that had been published in the *Chronicle*.[44]

Even though Ethel Gatley could not clearly articulate how captivity related to her husband's postwar heart condition, these documents – collected and kept carefully by her husband during his life – spoke to the strains and stresses of captivity. Just as published and shared narratives amongst former prisoners could help to sharpen and

[43] Letter, Doris Groves to the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 5 June 1968, William Groves, NAA, B73, M58371.
[44] Claim for Pension by Wife or Widow, 14 November 1979, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247; letter, Ethel Gatley to repatriation organisation, 27 August 1980, Francis Gatley, NAA, J26, M21247.

clarify memory – and they could offer both narrative structure and legitimacy to depictions of hardship and suffering in captivity – to some extent, these narratives could perform a similar role for the wives and widows of former prisoners. However, not all widows could draw directly on published accounts of captivity. As chapter one argued, captivity was not a prominent feature of Australia's memory of the First World War, and narratives of this experience were marginal compared to narratives of combat. Both Ethel Gatley and Doris Groves were uniquely placed in this sense: William Groves had written an extensive and detailed memoir, and Frank Gatley's experiences were the subject of newspaper articles in the immediate wake of the war.

Other widows wrote directly to their husband's fellow captives for greater clarity of the experience of captivity. In response to letters from Isabel Bell after her husband's death, L. B. Crisp apologised that he could not provide all of the information Isabel requested, as 'Jack was always very quiet and had little to say in regards to himself.' Nonetheless, he noted that, 'I have heard him say that he has received rough treatment in some of the camps that he had been in before we came together, and I do certainly think the treatment that was meted out in some camps would help to derange anyone's mind.'[45] J. N. Glyde was somewhat more forthcoming. He wrote:

> This statement is to certify that I knew the late Jack Bell of Narrandera as I was taken prisoner of war with him ... We were together with some other of our chaps in the occupied territory behind the German lines working on road work mostly. We were starved and knocked about – quite a few died from starvation. Jack Bell's health became bad after a while and he got very weak but still had to work with the rest of us. This went on till November 1917 when we were separated, he was sent to one hospital and I with some others was sent to another hospital, both in Germany. Bell was one of the worst cases – he appeared to be affected in his mind and was very weak when I last saw him – that was in November 1917, and I never saw him again until after we came home.[46]

Another former prisoner of war described John receiving particularly harsh treatment during their captivity and noted that he was 'very surprised to find that [John] lived to return to Australia'. Another noted that John, 'was very lucky indeed to reach Home, as his mind and health was a blank the whole time I was with him, in fact when

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[45] Letter from L.B. Crisp, 22 July 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.
[46] Letter from J.N. Glyde, 10 August 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.

we knew of the Armistice I told him, thinking that he would be overjoyed the same as the rest of us, but this had no effect on his mind.'[47]

Witness statements like those regarding John Bell played a crucial role in widow's repatriation applications. For former prisoners, witnesses could corroborate and legitimise the prisoner's account of captivity, but for widows, these statements offered a compelling firsthand account of captivity that these women were otherwise unable to produce. Reflecting both an awareness of the difficulties associated with articulating the impact of captivity without having actually experienced it and the importance of firsthand accounts of this experience, publications like *Smith's Weekly* sought to facilitate connections between widows and former prisoners of war who could describe the conditions of captivity firsthand.[48]

Narratives of captivity after 1945

The return of Australian prisoners of the Second World War prompted new public discourses and narratives about both the experience of captivity and the physical and psychological legacies of this experience. Second World War captivity, unlike that of the First World War, was met with a proliferation of new support groups and veterans' organisations which advocated strongly on behalf of these former prisoners.[49] Returning prisoners published memoirs about their experiences to varying degrees of acclaim.[50] Captivity remained a contested and ambivalent experience, but it also became a more prominent wartime narrative, rather than a marginal one as it had been during the interwar years.

Some former prisoners and their dependents overtly drew on these new narratives. In the 1960s, Matthew Sloan appealed the rejection of a claim he had originally made thirty years earlier. In his application, Sloan wrote that his most recent illness was primarily a result of:

> The inhuman conditions under which I existed as prisoner-of-war in Turkey from the 1st May 1918 until my release after peace was declared. We lived out

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[47] Letter, Mr Hurst, 28 October 1935, John Bell, NAA, C138, M66321.
[48] 'Digger Prisoners of War can Help Digger's Widow: Witnesses from German Prison Camps Wanted', *Smith's Weekly*, June 23, 1934, 2.
[49] Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Post-War Australia*, 30.
[50] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, 'Rethinking Captivity', 3–4.

of doors continually with no shelter whatsoever even at night or from rain. We practically starved and the very little food we did receive was not even fit for consumption by animals. We were forced to work on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway even though starving and hardly able to walk. We received practically no medical attention when ill.[51]

In his earlier application for assistance, Sloan had similarly emphasised starvation, lack of shelter and the 'brutal' treatment he and his fellow prisoners had received in Turkish captivity. As chapter one argued, emphasis on ill-treatment and neglect were prominent features of memoirs of Turkish captivity, and Sloan's earlier application was very much constructed within these terms.[52]

However, work on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway had not been a prominent feature of Matthew Sloan's interwar application. His later emphasis on being 'forced to work on the Berlin to Baghdad Railway even though starving and hardly able to walk' was reminiscent of the experiences of Australian prisoners of the Japanese forced to work on the Burma-Thai Railway. Sloan's linkages to this later experience of captivity became even more pronounced in his final appeal to the Repatriation Commission after his application was rejected. By this point, Matthew Sloan was suffering from the effects of a stroke, and his health was rapidly failing. His final appeal was repetitive, written largely in partial and sometimes barely coherent sentences and replete with spelling errors, so much so that the repatriation typist was careful to note, when reproducing Sloan's letter as part of a summary, that it was 'Typed as written'. In it, Sloan pointed again to 'The hardship that I suffered,' while a prisoner of war, including working on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, with 'poor food little of it etc. (dura etc.) Vitamen Defecency, Berry Berry' [*sic*].[53]

Matthew Sloan's wife drew similarly on these narratives. 'My husband told me on various occasions that he and the other prisoners-of-war lived out of doors continually with no shelter whatever even at night or from rain, and had their clothes and boots taken from them and then forced to march barefooted for miles over terribly rough country,' Eva Sloan wrote. Matthew and his fellow prisoners were 'forced to work

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[51] Appeal, 9 November 1962, Matthew Black Sloan, NAA, BP709/1, M20001 PART 2.
[52] Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity', 213–14. Ariotti has also observed a tendency for Australian prisoners of the Turks to construct narratives that emphasised hardship and echoed the narratives produced in newspapers at the end of the war.
[53] Appeal, 30 September 1963, Matthew Black Sloan, NAA, BP709/1, M20001 PART 2.

on the Berlin-Baghdad railway' and denied food if they were too ill to work. 'He had Berri Berri,' she wrote, 'and as a result of the very hard work in tunnels and cuttings in dreadful dust, lack of food, and poor food he got malaria and dysentry and for quite a long time received no medical attention.'[54] The reference to beriberi – a nutritional deficiency common amongst Australians in Japanese captivity – and the renewed emphasis on being forced to build a railway despite starvation and illness framed Matthew Sloan's experience of Turkish captivity firmly within the terms of the Japanese prisoner of war experience during the Second World War.

Though not as overt as Matthew Sloan's application in the 1960s, the renewed emphasis on the negative physical and psychological effects of wartime captivity also appeared to influence other widows' claims. In 1973, Constance Wallbank firmly attributed her husband's death from cancer to his hardship and suffering in captivity over 50 years earlier. She wrote that while in German captivity, Joseph had endured 'starvation and hardships' including having his leg amputated and, while in captivity, 'the cartilage of his nose rotted leaving a hole big enough to easily put a pencil through.' In her application, Constance reasoned that, 'if his hardships and starvation could cause the cartilage to rot, it could have altered cells that could grow later.'[55] Joseph Wallbank, by contrast, rarely mentioned his captivity in his dealings with the repatriation organisation. Elsie Gribbon also referred to her husband's captivity in her unsuccessful claim for a war widows' pension in the 1950s. Though her husband George had asserted in 1937 that his captivity had been benign – indeed he had asserted that he had been 'Well treated' and had no complaints about his captors – Elsie suggested that her husband had suffered chronic bronchitis 'ever since being a prisoner of war in Germany from 1916 to 1918'.[56]

While few former prisoners drew explicitly on Second World War narratives, new narratives of wartime captivity and growing public acknowledgement of the potentially deleterious effects of this experience may have served to encourage some

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[54] Letter, Sarai Eva Sloan, 26 February 1964, Matthew Black Sloan, NAA, BP709/1, M20001 PART 2.
[55] Constance Wallbank to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, Joseph Wallbank, NAA, PP889/1, M14898.
[56] Application for Acceptance of Disability, 21 April 1937; Record of Evidence, Elsie Gribbon, 21 December 1951, in George Gribbon, NAA, C138, M54212.

former prisoners of the First World War to apply for assistance from the repatriation organisation. Applications for repatriation benefits amongst these men certainly continued after the Second World War. Indeed, many of these men lodged their first claims for assistance in this period. However, as veteran prisoners of the First World War aged, their existing health problems became more pronounced. It is thus difficult to know the extent to which these men and their representatives were driven by declining health, or by a growing public acknowledgement of the potential harm of wartime captivity in the years after the Second World War.

Conclusion

The narratives composed by former Bullecourt prisoners suggest that wider narratives of captivity – both published and shared – offered former prisoners the language and narrative structure with which to articulate hardship in captivity. Articulating narratives of suffering and harm in captivity could still prove a challenging and uncomfortable prospect for many former prisoners of war, and not all former Bullecourt prisoners composed detailed narratives of hardship and suffering in captivity. Widows were not bound by the same discomfort with victimhood and suffering, but they were constrained by their lack of first-hand knowledge of captivity. During the interwar years, however, many prisoners of war proved willing to compose detailed narratives of suffering when writing on behalf of their fellow prisoners or their widows, suggesting that the role of witness, rather than protagonist, offered more space to articulate hardship and suffering. Though beyond the scope of this thesis, evidence suggests that the proliferation of new narratives of captivity after the Second World War may have encouraged more open discussion about captivity, or more ready associations between captivity and hardship.

Conclusion

In the 1920s, Frank Hallihan wrote and published a memoir of his experiences as a prisoner of the Germans in the First World War. Though Hallihan was not reticent in acknowledging his hardship in captivity – his memoir very much perpetuated the brutality discourses circulating at the end of the war and in the early postwar period – he made no mention of the toll this experience later took on his physical and mental health.[1] Hallihan had been hospitalised and treated for 'debility' after his repatriation to Australia in May, 1919.[2] 'Has been a prisoner of war 2 yrs,' the hospital report noted, 'Not ill definitely but lost a lot of weight and became very weak generally. Is nervy at times.'[3] After two months in hospital, the AIF discharged Hallihan noting a minor incapacity, with the AIF medical board predicting a complete recovery within six months. Hallihan made no mention of the postwar years at all in his memoir, a silence typical in most memoirs of captivity.[4]

Frank Hallihan never intended to record the legacies of his imprisonment; his public reflections centred very much on the experience of captivity itself. Yet when a peptic ulcer prevented him from working and demanded serious medical attention, Hallihan unconsciously created another record, as he embarked on a relationship with the state that would last for several decades and require the disclosure of the intimate and personal consequences of his wartime imprisonment. He suffered from a range of digestive complaints throughout the interwar period, believed to be related to the food deprivation that he suffered whilst in captivity, and had ongoing trouble with anxiety. By the time of his death in 1960, he was receiving a pension for four separate conditions and was considered to be completely incapacitated.[5] Frank Hallihan's experience is akin to the majority of men studied for this thesis. Their personal circumstances and

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[1] Hallihan, *In the Hands of the Enemy: A Record of the Experiences of Frank Hallihan, 21st Battalion, in German Prison Camps.*

[2] Statement of service, NAA, B2455, HALLIHAN F.

[3] Hospital card, No. 5 AGH, 7 May 1919, Francis Hallihan, NAA, C139, R94635, NAA, Sydney.

[4] Lejeune and Lodewick suggest that diaries recording a specific event or phase are 'partial diaries ... organized around a particular area of experience'. Memoirs of captivity arguably fall into a similar category, oriented around a particular facet of service rather than life after the war. Philippe Lejeune and Victoria Lodewick, 'How Do Diaries End?', *Biography* 24, no. 1 (2001), 101.

[5] Letter, Deputy Commissioner A. H. Panton to Mr A. J. Dowd, Secretary Broken Hill sub-branch of the RSSAILA, August 1960. Francis Hallihan, NAA, D363, M28099.

disabilities may have been different, but none of them intended to record the legacies of their captivity for posterity.[6] However, former prisoners' interactions with the state unwittingly resulted in an archival trail that cumulatively illuminates the very personal consequences of imprisonment in wartime.[7]

The intensely personal and sometimes confronting disclosures in repatriation case files are of substantial value to the historian. Some scholars have heralded them as a kind of historical corrective to the contemporary national mythology of Australia's First World War veterans. Where personal records and stories of war have tended to be interpreted through 'the rubric of national myth' by family members and descendants, repatriation case files depict a confronting and often uncomfortable postwar legacy, described by medical personnel and veteran soldiers alike.[8] These files, Bruce Scates argues, are consequently 'more distressing and disruptive' and resist easy integration into wider national myths.[9] It is certainly true that repatriation case files can be confronting. Samuel Greenhill's struggle with debilitating psychological problems borne out of his captivity – which eluded the repatriation organisation's capacity to offer treatment, or even adequate compensation – powerfully illustrates that point.[10] Numerous other examples abound of mental and physical trauma amongst Australian prisoners of war. But we should be wary of assuming that these frank depictions of physical and psychological trauma necessarily challenge contemporary mythology. The Anzac mythology has proven itself to possess a significant degree of flexibility; as Ziino has argued, even as Anzac exerts an influence on how the wartime experiences of veterans are interpreted, so too is it 'proving adaptable to the expanding variety of

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[6] Repatriation case files were never intended to become public documents. The covers of these files record intended destruction dates throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

[7] Alexia Moncrieff and Jessica Meyer have suggested that this poses considerable ethical dilemmas to archives and researchers alike in terms of how to regulate access to these documents, which often contain incredibly sensitive medical and personal information. Alexia Moncrieff and Jessica Meyer, 'Bureaucratisation and Personal Privacy: Tensions in the First World War Archive' (International Society for First World War Studies: Recording, Narrating and Archiving the First World War, Deakin University, Melbourne, 2018). For more on the process of deliberation involved in opening Australia's repatriation archive to researchers and members of the public, see Bruce Scates, 'How War Came Home: Reflections on the Digitisation of Australia's Repatriation Files', *History Australia* 16, no. 1 (2019), 190–209.

[8] Bart Ziino, 'At Home with the War: The Great War in Victorian Private Life', *Victorian Historical Journal* 86, no. 1 (June 2015), 132.

[9] Scates, 'How War Came Home: Reflections on the Digitisation of Australia's Repatriation Files', 196.

[10] See Samuel Greenhill, PP864/1, M13380 and H13380.

experiences that emerge in family histories.'[11] Trauma, furthermore, is not necessarily or inherently at odds with the Anzac mythology. Indeed, Twomey has argued the two are mutually constitutive.[12]

One of the key contributions of this thesis is that is demonstrates the diversity of the repatriation archive beyond the most traumatised veterans. While narratives of trauma are an essential feature of the archive – and are both valuable and essential to understanding Australia's experience of war – repatriation case files were not always disruptive or confronting; in the aggregate, the repatriation archive offers a more complex story. The figure of the traumatised veteran has exerted considerable influence on both scholarly and popular interpretations of Australian veterans and the impact of war. Prisoners of war, in particular, have tended to be understood as physically and psychological traumatised victims of hardship and brutality at the hands of their captors. This thesis offers an alternative perspective to the paradigm of the traumatised former prisoner: by drawing on a broad sample of repatriation case files, it complicates the image of the physically and psychologically traumatised veteran by highlighting both the multitude of ways in which trauma manifested in former prisoners of war, and the varying degrees of that trauma. For some former prisoners, war-caused disability resulted in substantial difficulties, while others, like Joseph Wallbank, were able to adapt their life and work to accommodate their changed circumstances.[13] Some experienced relatively mild disabilities, while others lived without the burdens of poor physical and mental health well into the post-Second World War period, when the natural aging process made manifest the toll wartime service could exert on the body and the mind. Individual files might confirm or challenge the image of the traumatised veteran, but it is only through close and careful reading of a multitude of these files that a broader sense can be made of the legacies of war.

The analytical approach used here to make sense of the diverse legacies of wartime captivity has broad applicability for other studies drawing on repatriation case files. One of the key challenges this project confronted was how to understand the ways

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[11] Ziino, "'A Lasting Gift to His Descendants'", 140.
[12] See Twomey, 'Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac'.
[13] See Joseph Wallbank, NAA, PP889/1, M14898.

in which captivity was invoked, but equally to understand why it was or was not invoked at particular points. Alistair Thomson's seminal work *Anzac Memories* demonstrated the value of using repatriation case files in concert with other sources of personal memory – specifically, oral history – as a way of making sense of the narrative elements of both mediums.[14] However, as Aaron Pegram has noted, the historical record concerning former prisoners outside of the repatriation organisation is rather thin: documents tend to exist only when veterans chose to publicise their experiences, or otherwise came into contact with the state through the medical or legal systems.[15] In the absence of material to corroborate individual veterans' representations of the impact of captivity, this thesis has focused on the broader social and cultural context in which former prisoners and repatriation personnel interacted. It has argued that constructions of captivity in repatriation case files were contingent on a wider field of meanings around captivity, war service, war trauma, repatriation, masculinity, entitlement and deservingness. For the most part, captivity added an additional layer of complexity to claiming repatriation benefits, and many former prisoners evinced distinct uncertainty as to how their captivity had impacted their postwar health. William Sankey's appeal, after which this thesis is titled, is typical here: 'Was fifteen months a prisoner', Sankey wrote, 'and know of no other cause for my breakdown in health that I cannot do hard work'.[16]

As a broad study of the legacies and understandings of wartime captivity across the interwar period, this thesis has offered a general and suggestive history of the impact of captivity, the factors that shaped how that impact was articulated, and how Australia's repatriation system understood and responded to the needs of former prisoners. It raises a series of pertinent questions for future research, some of which have already been identified in the preceding pages. While gender, and specifically masculinity, has received considerable attention in this thesis, the experiences of women, most notably the wives and widows of former prisoners, have received only brief treatment. Yet it is clear that the experiences of the legacies of captivity were

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[14] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*.

[15] Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War', 82; Pegram, 'Surviving the Great War', 205–6.

[16] Appeal to the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal, 19 February 1937, William Peter Sankey, NAA, BP709/1, M19673.

anything but peripheral or superficial to the wives and widows of former prisoners of war. While they are invariably focused primarily on the male veteran, repatriation case files offer unique insight into the lives of wives and widows, and this thesis is suggestive of the possibilities of drawing on these types of files to position women at the centre of the postwar narrative.[17]

The preceding pages complement studies of wartime captivity concerned primarily with the war years, and situate the prisoner of war in the postwar world. Key continuities existed between the wartime experience of captivity and its legacies; most notably, captivity impacted former prisoners in diverse ways, and wartime captivity remained an ambivalent, though not overtly stigmatised, experience in the postwar years. Heather Jones' argument that the stigma of captivity had a direct relationship with postwar representation on issues concerning this experience holds true for the men studied in this thesis.[18] While former prisoners' capacity to articulate the personal consequences of their imprisonment in wartime was complicated by the subtle stigma attached to surrender and captivity, it was not enough to encourage them to band together and collectively advocate for their interests. Importantly, the stigma associated with captivity was historically and culturally specific; the debates, uncertainties and contradictions surrounding former prisoners and the impact of wartime imprisonment were not so pronounced in the interwar years as they were to become in the latter half of the twentieth century. Though this thesis touched on the idea that changing discourses around wartime captivity after the Second World War influenced how some former prisoners understood and represented their own experiences, further study in this area is a fruitful direction of future research.

Official responses to former prisoners reflected postwar understandings of captivity. In some repatriation claims, captivity was interpreted as a physically and psychologically challenging experience and was rewarded with a sympathetic and

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[17] The possibilities of such an approach have also been demonstrated by several scholars in an Australian context and internationally. See Meyer, "'Not Septimus Now'"; Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*; Scates and Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle*; Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities*.

[18] This is particularly evident in the case of French former prisoners of war, who were treated with suspicion – and not categorised as combatants for the sake of compensation – by the French government and military elite after the war. Unlike British prisoners, French prisoners were comparatively vocal about their experiences in an effort to garner recognition and compensation. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 327.

understanding evaluation. In others, however, repatriation officials made it apparent that they did not consider captivity a compelling explanation for postwar conditions. In his study of Canadian prisoners of war in the twentieth century, Jonathan Vance argued that nations had three primary responsibilities to their captive soldiers: to prepare their soldiers for the possibility of capture and captivity, to see to their care and wellbeing in captivity, and finally, to safely recover them from captivity and to compensate them for any physical or psychological hardship arising from this experience.[19] Though there is little evidence to suggest that former prisoners of war were discriminated against by repatriation officials, this thesis has suggested that the relative obscurity and ambivalence of captivity hindered the repatriation organisation's capacity and willingness to offer compensation and recognition to former prisoners. Captivity remained an ambivalent and poorly understood experience well into the latter half of the twentieth century. Ultimately, Mary Chomley's hope in 1918 that former prisoners would be cared for 'by someone who has made some study of the conditions of captivity and so may come to understand a little of the psychology of men who have suffered under it,' was never realised.[20]

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[19] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 6–7.
[20] Report, Prisoners of War Department of the Australian Red Cross Society, September 1918, ARCS UoM, 2015.0033 Unit 192 2015.0033.00465.

Appendix

List of prisoners of war studied for this thesis

Allison,	Ivan	Clucas,	Clifton Garfield
Anderson,	Cecil Stanton	Cole,	John
Anderson,	Stanley	Collett,	Harold Reginald
Angus,	Charles Henry	Collins,	Sydney
Armstrong,	Lindsay	Coogan,	Andrew Joseph
Austin,	Ronald Albert	Cowden,	John Alexander
Baker,	George Henry	Crago,	Arthur
Bamforth,	Sidney	Cull,	William Ambrose
Barnard,	Charles Frederick	Dalitz,	Alwin Clarence
Barry,	Alfred Westcott	Darlington,	Joseph
Beattie,	Robert	Davies,	William
Begg,	Frederick James	Dawkins,	John Harold
Bell,	John Robert	Day,	George Hartley
Benson,	James Elias	Deering,	John Bernard
Blair,	Reginald	Dent,	Arthur Ernest
Blundell,	Bentley Roger	Dignam,	Daniel William
Bolton,	John	Donovan,	Daniel
Bracken,	Robert Cecil	Dutneall,	Alan Robert
Bray,	Thomas Henry	Earnshaw,	Frederick
Brennan,	William Arnold	Ecroyd,	Frank
Brown,	Frank Joseph	Edwards,	Campbell Joseph
Brown,	Joseph	Elliott,	Victor
Bryan,	Richard Alfred	Ellis,	Percy Augustine
Burgess,	James Boyd	Farry,	James Alexander
Burns,	Owen	Ferry,	Denis
Butchart,	James	Finlay,	Matthew Watson
Carrett,	Frank Harold	Flynn,	John Augustine
Cash,	John Richard	Forster,	Herbert Frank
Clarke,	Jack David	Fowles,	Albert James
Clement,	Alexander Stewart	Francis,	Percy Sydney

Fredrikson,	Franz Oscar		Horner,	Herbert
Fremantle,	Fred		Hughes,	John Ernest
Fripp,	William		Huntley,	Victor Daniel
Galbraith,	Roy Fead		Hyslop,	William Henry
Ganson,	Horatio		Irving,	Harry
Gardner,	Norman Leslie		James,	William John
Gatley,	Ernest Francis		Jeffries,	Edmund Henry
Gigg,	George		Jenkins,	Rees
Gillan,	Leopold Cheverell		Jewiss,	Harold
Glover,	James Reuben		Johnson,	Frank Britton
Goss,	William		Johnston,	Archibald
Graham,	Claude Cecil		Johnstone,	Charles Duncan
Grant,	Douglas		Jones,	Daniel
Greasley,	Arthur George		Jones,	John Henry
Greenhill,	Samuel		Jonsen,	Cris
Gribbon,	George		Kamman,	Henry Charles
Grieve,	Archibald Morgan		Kelly,	John James
Groves,	William		Kennedy,	Samuel
Haig,	Frederick William		Kerr,	James (David)
Hall,	James		Kidner,	Herbert James
Halliday,	Frederick		Lahood,	Vincent
Hallihan,	Francis		Lampe,	Norman Elliott
Hanckel,	Frank Christopher		Langdon,	John Leslie
Harris,	Richard		Leane,	Albert Charles
Hart,	Alfred Victor		Lecky,	Royce Sydney
Harvey,	Richard Dennett		Lee,	Robert Stanley
Hayes,	John		Lindley,	Cecil
Hehir,	Thomas		Livingston,	John Macarthur
Herbertson,	Norman Ernest		Lohmann,	Herbert George
Higgs,	Cyril Percy		Love,	Herbert Edward
Hill,	Norman John		Lowson,	Robert James
Hinds,	Lyle Gordon		Luscombe,	Leslie Henry
Hobbs,	Charles Reginald		Lyall,	James Edward
Hogan,	John Joseph		Lyon,	Peter William

Madden,	Joseph Alfred		Nicholes,	Frederick
Mair,	John		Nicholson,	Arthur Malcolm
Malthouse,	William Henry		Norris,	Donald Alexander
Marsh,	Thomas Cecil		O'Connor,	Patrick
Marshall,	William		O'Leary,	Arthur John
Martin,	Herbert Andrew		O'Sullivan,	Percy Cornelius
Mason,	Arnold Blanston		Oakey,	Henry
Masterton,	James		Ogle,	Francis Joseph
Matthews,	Melbourne		Owens,	Richard Ernest
May,	John		Parsons,	Hamilton
McAdam,	William Claude		Patterson,	John
McAulay,	Albert Frank		Peachey,	Frederick Isaac
McColl,	Robert Malcolm		Pearce,	William Henry
McCullum,	Peter		Perrin,	Harold George
McCusker,	Charles Cornelius		Phillips,	Herbert Harold
McDonald,	John Duncan		Picton,	Edward Benjamin
McIlvena,	Reuben Carter		Pleasants,	Jack
McInnes,	George Septimus		Pooley,	Charles L L
McKay,	James		Price,	Frank Joseph
McMahen,	Herbert Joseph		Prow,	Reginald Charles
McMillan,	John		Rae,	Benjamin
McPherson,	Colin		Rawlings,	Ernest James
Meehan,	William James		Reid,	Harold William
Meyer,	Cyril Bernard		Reilly,	William Henry
Milne,	James Douglas		Rewell,	George Edwin
Moor,	Cyril John		Richards,	Francis Percival
Morgan,	Thomas		Richardson,	Norman
Morris,	Charles Arthur		Riley,	William Henry
Morton,	James		Robertson,	James
Mott,	John Eldred		Robinson,	Henry Charles
Mullins,	James		Rodgers,	William Joseph
Murley,	John Alvin		Roots,	David Daniel
Neill,	Bernard Peter		Ross,	John Alexander
Newcomen,	Arthur		Rudd,	John Ellwood

Ryan,	Joseph		Taylor,	Thomas Edward
Sankey,	William Peter		Thomas,	Walter John
Sawyer,	John Ernest		Thorp,	Robert
Scott,	David		Townsend,	Phillip Walter
Seinor ,	William Ernest		Trotter,	James
Sexton,	Henry Patrick		Vidler,	Harold Ernest
Shaw,	Cecil Edward		Wall,	Daniel
Shaw,	James		Wallbank,	Joseph
Shiels,	Robert Barrett		Walshe,	John Joseph
Shirley,	George		Warrell,	Hamilton
Simmons,	William Alexander		Watson,	Albert Victor
Simpson,	James		Watson,	William
Sinclair,	James		Wearne,	Arthur
Skippen,	George Frederick		Weetman,	Frank Renard
Sloan,	Matthew Black		Wells,	William James
Smith,	Angus McKenzie		Wetherall,	Walter
Smith,	Leonard John		Whelan,	Herbert Allan
Smith,	Edward George		White,	Ernest George
Smith,	Harold		White,	Thomas Walter
Smith,	William		Whiteoak,	Duncan
Spencer,	Robert Joseph		Whitwood,	Frederick Ernest
Stainsby,	Edward Allan		Williamson,	Charles John
Stevenson,	Horace Victor		Wilson,	Joseph Arthur
Stewart,	Lewis James		Withnell,	John Edward
Struthers,	Roy James		Wright,	Francis Lionel
Sweetman,	Joseph		Wynne,	William Wyne
Taylor,	Albert Duncan		Young,	Frederick Daniel

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CP78/27	Despatches from the Secretary of State to the Governor General enclosing secret reports on the progress of the war
A2421	Repatriation Commission, Correspondence files , 'G' single number series
A11804	General Correspondence of Governor-General (excluding War files)
A11803	Governor Generals correspondence relating to the war of 1914-1918 [War Files]

National Archives of Australia, Brisbane, Australia

BP709/1	Repatriation Medical case files for First World War
BP892/1	Personal case files for deceased First World War veterans
J26	Medical case files, single number series with 'M' (First World War ex-servicemen) prefix
J30	Hospital case files, single number series with 'H' (First World War ex-servicemen) prefix
J34	Pension case files, single number series with 'C' (First World War ex-servicemen) prefix

National Archives of Australia, Sydney, Australia

C137	Personal case files, single number series with 'R' prefix (Australian, 1914-1918 War)
C138	Personal case files, single number series (Australian, 1914-1918 War)
C139	Personal case files, single number series with 'X' prefix (Australian, 1939-1945 War)

D363	Personal case files (1914-1918 war), single number series with "M" (medical), "C" (pension), and "H" (hospital) prefix
SP948/1	Correspondence - policy and general ('G' files - Old series)

National Archives of Australia, Melbourne, Australia

B73	Personal case files, World War I
MP367/1	General correspondence files
B5741	Minutes of meetings of Repatriation Board, Victoria

National Archives of Australia, Perth, Australia

K60	Personal case files, single number with 'M' and other letter prefixes series
PP13/1	Pensions files, 1914/1918 War and Boer War, single number series with 'C' prefix
PP18/1	Assistance and medical files, 1914/18 War, single number series with 'R' prefix
PP2/8	Assistance and medical files, 1914/18 War, single number series with 'R' prefix
PP645/1	Medical and hospital files of veterans who served with Australian forces in 1914-1918 War and 1950-1956 Korean Malayan War in numerical order with 'M', 'H', 'MKM' and 'HKM' prefixes
PP681/1	Personal case files, single number series with alphabetical prefix
PP864/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP863/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP866/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP869/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes

PP872/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP878/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP886/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP889/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
PP946/1	Personal case files, single number series with 'M' and other letter prefixes
K89	Correspondence files, multiple number with 'G' prefix series

National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australia

MS 9148	Papers of Sir Thomas White, 1900-1992
MS 6609	Records of the Returned Services League of Australia, 1916-1997

Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia

B2455	First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920
AWM30	AIF Prisoner of war statements, 1914-18 War
3DRL/2153	Delpratt, Maurice George (Sergeant, b:1888-d:1957)
1DRL/0428	Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS)
2DRL/0072	Auld, Patrick Howard (Captain, b.1894 - d.1972)
PR83/230	Ward, Leslie Norman (Lieutenant, 68 Squadron, RFC)

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2015.0033	Correspondence Files, National Headquarters
2016.0055	Publications
2015.0029	Annual Reports

New South Wales State Archives and Records, Kingswood, Australia

NRS 13495	Divorce case papers

NRS 345	Coroners' inquest papers (Files concerning inquests, magisterial inquiries and inquests dispensed with), 1851-1963

Public Records Office of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

VPRS 552	Divorce case files

State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

SRG 869	Ex-Prisoner of War Association of South Australia

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Medical Journal of Australia

British Medical Journal

The Lancet

Periodicals

Age (Melbourne)

Area's Express (Booyoolee)

Argus

Aussie: The Australian Soldiers' Magazine

Bowen Independent

Camperdown Chronicle

Camperdown Herald

Canberra Times

Daily Advertiser (Wagga Wagga)

Dungog Chronicle: Durham and Gloucester Advertiser

Examiner (Launceston, Tasmania)

Forbes Advocate

Forbes Times

Geelong Advertiser

Herald (Melbourne)

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Mufti

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Queensland Digger

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South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus

Sun

Sydney Morning Herald

Telegraph

The Bundaberg Mail

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    Repatriation from April, 1918, to the end of June, 1920, with some account of the
    activities which preceded the Department's formation,* (Melbourne: Government
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    Government Printer, 1921)

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