

Preface

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Volume 39 of *Aboriginal History* is timely for the centenary of Gallipoli this year. The 56 Indigenous men who fought in this disastrous battle are duly noted in its special section on Aboriginal war service, edited by Allison Cadzow, Kristyn Harman and Noah Riseman. As Riseman points out in his preface, *Aboriginal History* can be credited as playing a leading role in the inception of growing interest in Indigenous combatants by devoting an earlier special issue to them in 1992, still nascent days for the field.

Growing public recognition of Aboriginal wartime service, however, hazards the affixed narratives and mythologies that often beset national remembrance of war. The Anzac myth has been riven with jingoism, particularly under the culture wars waged by recent conservative governments. Belated public interest in Indigenous service is thus susceptible to the suppression of racial discrimination and the diversity of Indigenous soldiers, and of forgetting that Indigenous servicemen fought for a 'white Australia'. Men circumvented regulations prohibiting the enlistment of persons 'not substantially of European origin or descent'; approximately 6,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served in both conflicts. The contributions to this edition's special section reappraise narratives and foster new avenues of inquiry, particularly on the impact of war service on families and communities, and in exploring how the entrance of Aboriginal men into Australian military service disrupted accustomed notions of defence of country.

John Maynard extends this service back to the South African Anglo-Boer War. Overwhelming public enthusiasm and patriotism was shared by Aboriginal communities who imagined their participation might secure national inclusion

and amend the historical emasculation of Aboriginal men. They faced less restriction on enlisting before state administrations tightened their regulatory control over Aboriginal movement and lives from 1910. By the First World War, military service offered an escape from board control. Despite fragmented archival evidence, Maynard shows that British commanders believed Boer guerilla resistance tactically required 'bushmen' skills, and particularly the skills of Indigenous trackers.

Andrea Gerrard and Kristyn Harman track the aftermath of the First World War for Tasmanian soldiers of Aboriginal descent. The 75 men who enlisted did not encounter the same obstruction in accessing repatriation benefits as did veterans in other states. Yet many made no claim on the 'Repat' scheme on their return while others were structurally obstructed by geographic isolation and illiteracy.

Recent recognition has emphasised the bonds forged in the level field of battle and of interracial friendship granting inclusion into the construct of Australian mateship. However, Philippa Scarlett challenges the 'mateship myth' of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) of the First World War. These egalitarian narratives are shown to harbour complex discrepancies in terms of equality which mateship did not guarantee, particularly on their return.

The denial of repatriation benefits fuelled Aboriginal people's post-war disenchantment and the political agitation of the 1920s and 1930s, as Jessica Horton shows. When military allotments and pensions were refused, assertions of national belonging deployed 'the language of citizenship so central to post-war political discourse'. Horton draws attention to local circumstance: men of the Victorian Western District did not disguise or suppress their Indigenous heritage to enlist in the AIF as they did in other regions. Men from Lake Condah drew on the language of 'Imperial loyalty, national service, personal sacrifice and masculine prowess' to express their motivations in claiming 'Britisher' identity. She finds it was in fact demand for land exacerbated by the Soldier Settlement Scheme that precipitated the closure of reserves, creating a new 'home front' for Gunditjmara veterans resisting ongoing dispossession. As noted there are many fronts in the defence of country.

Kristyn Harman looks at correspondence between white women and Aboriginal soldiers during the Second World War as overseen by the Aborigines Uplift Society's national comforts auxiliary. The paternalism of 'adopting' Aboriginal soldiers resonated uncomfortably with the policy of assimilation then being implemented by state protection and welfare boards. Enlisting men's own families were thought to be incapable of providing comforts to their men

overseas, yet Harman reveals the active participation of Aboriginal women from missions and reserves in the scheme, of women and girls knitting for the war effort at Cummeragunja Government Mission, New South Wales, in 1941.

Inclusion as facilitated through housing, rationing and welfare continues as a theme in the articles of Sharon Delmege and Anne O'Brien. Disruption to the ecological balance of bush food supplies continued unabated from first incursion. O'Brien's important history of hunger in the first half of the twentieth century in central and north Australia focuses on the provisioning at Ernabella mission in north-west South Australia in 1937. Earlier fears of dependency and pauperism as demoralising effects of relief found new impetus within post-war humanitarianism's anti-paternalism. O'Brien's research sheds light on the historical background for entrenched health disparities and the long reach of inappropriate and ineffective government policy, along with persistent public perceptions of deservedness.

The rationale for state intervention changed little in the move from assimilation to integration in the 1960s, as the goal of economic independence remained paramount. Sharon Delmege investigates policy implementation at Allawah Grove Native Settlement (1957–1969), Perth, to highlight what she sees as a missed opportunity in housing policy. Lack of access to public housing, barred private rental and local white opposition to Aboriginal residence was partly assuaged by establishing a temporary site at Allawah Grove as a palliative measure. Delmege shows that official policy created a class of fringe-dwellers and did little to realise the imposed ideal of Aboriginal assimilation. Residents afflicted with endemic health problems were treated as 'wayward minors in need of rehabilitation'. Rewards that never eventuated were held out to those deemed ready, who were encouraged to break reciprocal kinship ties, tearing at the fabric of the community. The yawning gap between policies for economic integration and their implementation are shown to founder around the critical resource of urban housing.

The grimmer antecedents to embedded disadvantage are studied in Steven Anderson's dispassionate article on Indigenous executions in South Australia, which reintroduced public hangings after they were abolished but only for Indigenous capital offenders. These public gibbetings served 'both a punitive and an elevated didactic function' in the frontier theatre of punishment. The ritual and spectacle of public executions was adapted to local crime scenes to graphically effect deterrence. Indigenous resistance to settler incursion was met with haphazard and arbitrary selection of offenders – often merely present at raids – who were hung as examples before their families and communities. Notably, murders between Aborigines were not punished with execution, attesting the critical role of capital punishment in frontier pacification.

The intercession of Europeans into Aboriginal homelands was less often met with violence than assistance. The little-known story of Harry Brown, guide to Ludwig Leichhardt on two expeditions into the interior, complicates dominant narratives of Aboriginal guides as subservient. As Greg Blyton elucidates, Brown flouted Leichhardt's authority on a number of occasions and undoubtedly saved his life – he was notably absent on Leichhardt's third and fateful expedition. Brown scouted the route ahead into country also foreign to him, found water when supplies were critically low, hunted game, fended off an attack and navigated the party's return. His exceptional abilities as an explorer in his own right are justly celebrated by Blyton.

Accurate representation of Indigenous Australians is thus a matter of public record and fitting commemoration. It is also manifestly important to descendants, as Robin Barrington shows in her corrective to the colonial visual archive. The photograph's status as 'privileged anthropological evidentiary document' is challenged in her riposte to public constructions of Yamaji individuals by Daisy Bates and Alexander Morton. Under her analysis these artefacts, circulated in scientific texts and in the popular register as postcards, are correctly reattributed, retrieved from the discursive violence of erasure and reinstated as precious family records.

In this volume, I assumed the role of editor and must thank my predecessor Shino Konishi for her work on the early stages of this edition and for passing on such an applied system for tracking the otherwise convoluted stages of submission, editing and production. Thanks also goes to reviews editor Luise Hercus, copyeditor Geoff Hunt and the journal's board members, particularly past editor Maria Nugent, for her ready guidance, and also to staff at ANU Press, especially Emily Tinker.

In its 30 years, the journal *Aboriginal History* has been widely regarded as a flagship journal in the field of Australian Aboriginal history. Its high standard of scholarship and openness to different methods, theories and approaches, its foregrounding of Indigenous scholars and inclusiveness of emerging scholars – along with new research that crosses into Aboriginal history from other disciplines – entrusts me with an established and deserved reputation. I hope this edition fulfils its mission of publishing the highest standard of scholarship in interdisciplinary Indigenous history, drawing on unconventional archives, providing new resources for researchers, as well as intervening in recently simplified discourses of national identity. As Bain Attwood observes in his history of the journal, *Aboriginal History* was formed 'in a moment of ferment that was both scholarly and political in nature'. I trust these aspirations for the journal, for scholarly intervention with an emphasis on 'inter-cultural' history foregrounding Aboriginal perspectives on European Indigenous encounters, are apparent in this edition.

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