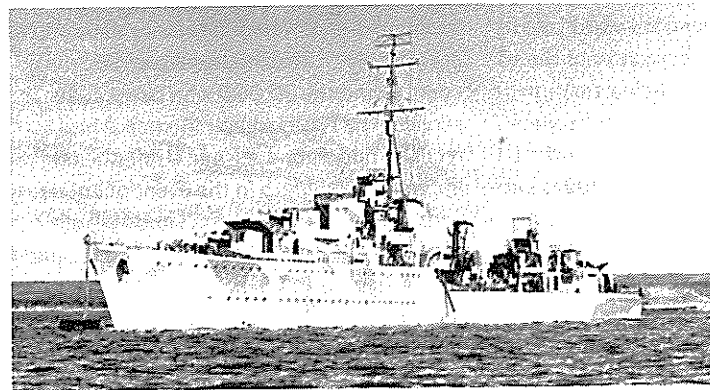


The 2nd Battalion RR was raised to resist the presence of German forces in German East Africa and some incursions into Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). The German commander, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, and his officers made considerable use of trained *askaris* (native troops), who were mobile and attuned to the environment. This could not be said of white troops, many of whom succumbed to tropical diseases and *ennui*. The 2nd Battalion withered due to these effects and coupled with uninspired and unimaginative leadership, this conflict dragged on until 1918.

At sea, the Imperial German light cruiser, SMS *Königsberg*, trapped by Royal Navy cruisers, was scuttled in 1915 on the Rovuma River (Rufiji Delta), then the German East Africa/Mozambique border.

Second World War

Learning from the lessons of the First World War, when bands of friends and comrades stayed together to sometimes devastating effect, as happened to the South African Forces at Delville Wood, the 1st and 2nd Battalions RR were distributed between British regiments in the Middle East to even out the probability of major casualties in one group. They became involved in reconnaissance and sabotage behind enemy lines, working with the early Special Air Service (SAS).



HMS *Matabele*, lost in the Barents Sea in 1942 with all but two of its crew. © Crown copyright

Colonel Ken Harvey DSO, a former chairman of the National Trust for Zimbabwe (NTZ), fought in the Western Desert and Italy with the Seaforth Highlanders and SAS. Colonel Don Grainger of the Southern Rhodesia Reconnaissance Regiment, later a commander in the Rhodesian Army, was a major philanthropist to charities in Zimbabwe. Continuing his work, a donation from the Don Grainger Memorial Trust has enabled the NTZ to refurbish the Rhodes Museum, Nyanga, one of its properties. Another link of interest to locals, the 1st Battalion Rhodesia African Rifles trained not far from the NTZ's headquarters in Borrowdale Road, Harare, before being sent to the Far East.

A number of future Rhodesian government ministers flew in the Royal Air Force during the war: Wing Commander William Harper, a government minister from 1965–73; Wing Commander Hardwicke

Holderness DSO, Southern Rhodesia MP 1954–8; and Flight Lieutenant Ian Smith, Prime Minister from 1965–79. Outside politics, another notable future Rhodesian was Group Captain Brian Paddon DSO, a contemporary of the British politician Airey Neave, both of whom successfully escaped from Colditz.

The Rhodesian ships of the Royal Navy, HMS *Mashona* and HMS *Matabele* both took part in the Norway Campaign (April to June 1940) which ended when that country fell to the German forces. The ships and their crew continued operations, eventually experiencing mixed fortunes: on its return from participating in the sinking of the *Bismarck*, HMS *Mashona* was holed by an air attack off Ireland in May 1941; of the ship's entire crew, only five men were lost. HMS *Matabele* was torpedoed in the Barents Sea in March 1942; of the entire crew, only two men were saved.

History

In September 1915, it was reported that a Red Cross bureau of 'like character' to those in London and Cairo was to be opened in Adelaide,¹ and by early 1916 it was announced that: 'Sir Josiah Symon, K.C. has completed the organisation of an information bureau in Adelaide for the purpose of supplying information to relatives and friends in the State concerning the wounded, sick and missing soldier.'²

The legal profession bore the running costs and co-ordinated activities, while a 'staff of ladies' giving their services 'free and freely, being glad to do their bit for the Empire' undertook the office work.³

The Bureau co-ordinated enquiries between the military, families and other bureaux nationally and internationally, analysing the results of searches in hospital wards and convalescent homes for eyewitnesses who could tell something about what happened. The frank eyewitness statements often show the realities of war, and were sometimes included in the letters that soldiers' families ultimately received. Information on prisoners of war was gathered through 'neutral intermediaries'.⁴

On receipt of an enquiry, a 'packet' was created for the soldier enquired after. It contained correspondence with enquirers, information about the soldier, eyewitness statements about their last-known whereabouts and, in most cases, details of their fate.

In 1919 the Bureau closed its doors and the records were donated to SLSA.⁵

RED CROSS INFORMATION BUREAU,

VERCO BUILDINGS, NORTH TERRACE.

All who are anxious to seek news of sick, wounded, or missing men enlisted from this State are invited to call at or write to the above Office, and the Red Cross will endeavour to help them.

CHAS. A. EDMUNDS, Hon. Secretary.

A series of notices placed within South Australia newspapers invited the families of soldiers to contact the Bureau. © *The Register*, 10 April 1916 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article59631123>

What we have

SLSA's holdings are unique in Australia. While the Australian War Memorial (AWM) holds copies of most of the Australian enquiry records from the London bureau and may include some South Australian information,⁶ SLSA's collection includes *all* the original documents from the South Australian Bureau, including the enquiry

Dear Sir or Madam,
I am writing to you again in my trouble and anxiety. My other son is missing, since Oct 22. Would you kindly make enquiries for me. His address is - P.O. 32. P.O. B. Hogg
48th Battalion
D Company.
Australian Imperial Forces
France.

COPY.

10th Batt. A.I.F.

(Killed)

Lt. E.W. Talbot-Smith

Landed 25th April with scouts at Anzac went forward with scouts. Returned, reported, took over machine guns and advanced with batt. He was heavily pressed. All his men killed or wounded he continued to work a gun alone. When relief arrived he was found lying across the gun. Thought to be dead, he was not removed for some hours. Later found to be living and embarked on hospital ship. Died on way to Alexandria and was buried at sea. Captain Herbert of same batt. was with him till he died.

The above information was collected by the informant Capt. Rumball, Adjutant of battalion, with a view to recommendation of Lt. Talbot-Smith for D.S.O.

Lieut Talbot-Smith was subsequently mentioned in despatches for conspicuous gallantry and valuable services (D.O. No. 60)

Ref:--Capt. Rumball

Adj. 10th Batt.

2nd Aust. Gener. Hosp.

Cairo.

H. Ward Boys,
Cairo
23/10/15.

letter and often a response from the family. Its new web resource will enable searches to be made across a range of indexed metadata and the retrieval of newly digitised scans of the original packets and, for the first time, enable searching by eyewitness names and other characteristics.

The resource will comprise three searchable elements, which represent phases of the project:

1. The entire content of packets in a digitised format, giving public access to view and download copies of the original documents and the ability to search across a range of indexed metadata.
2. A place for the public to contribute additional information. This may range from family photos of the soldiers to personal reminiscences or transcription of letters within the packets and tagging. This ability to engage with the public and offer opportunities to contribute more information is attractive to us at SLSA.
3. Content from third-party sources, such as the National Archives of Australia (NAA), Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and the National Library of Australia's Trove, which directly relate to the soldiers.

This third phase will link information from many different institutions across Australia and internationally, bringing everything together into one searchable web presence.

An enquiry from a mother for news of her son. Private Benjamin Mogg died near Passchendaele on 12 October 1917 age 23. © Reproduced courtesy of State Library of South Australia

An eyewitness account of the last hours of Lieutenant Eric Talbot-Smith who died on 30 April 1915, two days after his 23rd birthday. © Reproduced courtesy of State Library of South Australia

Most institutions, such as national and state libraries, AWM and NAA, present much of their material online or, at the very least, have an index, enabling soldiers to be identified through common points of reference, such as name, rank, service number, unit or conflict. Our web resource will integrate the personal dossiers for servicemen held in the NAA (attestation papers and service records) and, using the Trove API <http://trove.nla.gov.au/general/api>, bring together indexed obituaries from *The Chronicle* newspaper available in Trove.

Opening up the packets

Whilst some enquirers visited the offices, others sent letters and these are one of the jewels in our archive. There is emotion and resignation between the lines – a literal pain of not knowing – reminding us that we are dealing with people, families and the war's impact on society.

It is easy to overlook the length of time between enquiry and hearing pieces of information; what we can read in minutes may have taken years to compile. It is also important to remember that the Bureau opened in January 1916, 15 months after the first troops left Australia and eight months after the landing at Gallipoli. Some families would have heard nothing during this time.

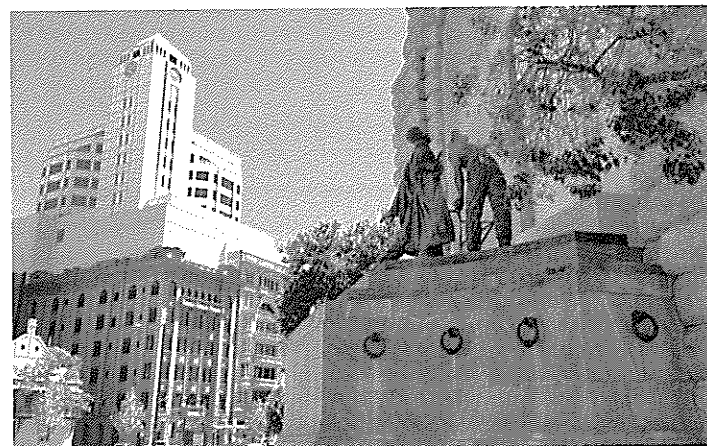
The eyewitness statements are another jewel which take the reader straight to a moment in the past, giving an insight into

Stories from silence: finding South Australia's servicemen

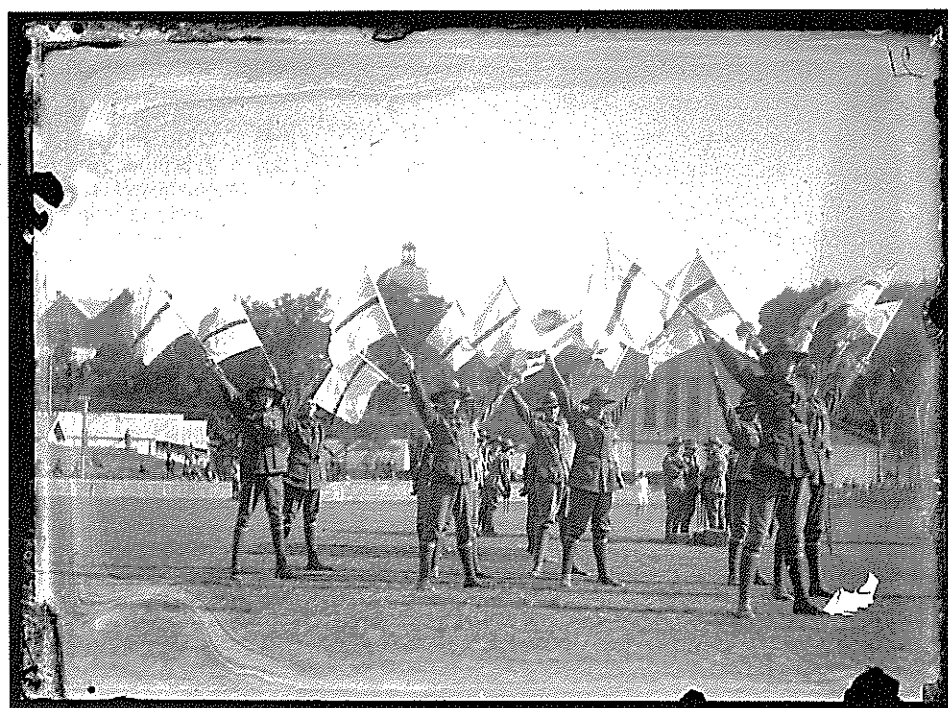
Andrew Piper, Manager, Online Projects, State Library of South Australia

Introduction

From 1916 until 1919, the South Australian Red Cross Information Bureau undertook research into 8,033 enquiries from family and friends of Australian Imperial Force (AIF) personnel who fought in the First World War. The State Library of South Australia (SLSA) is developing a web resource that will enable researchers, family historians and institutions worldwide to interrogate, contribute to and harvest the content of those enquiries. It is anticipated that this resource will be available early in 2015.



South Australia's First World War memorial with the building that housed the Red Cross Information Bureau in the middle ground. © Andrew Piper



Signallers sending a message from the past. © Reproduced courtesy of State Library of South Australia.

the soldier, such as personal information or a description. These words may be the only record of that person's experience of war.

Digitising commenced in December 2012 and was completed in September 2013 using a Kodak i1440 document scanner and Kodak Capture Pro Software, which simultaneously create searchable PDF and TIFF formats for preservation and for the website. Just as the Bureau used a volunteer workforce, SLSA continues the tradition by engaging volunteers to contribute to the rediscovery of these South Australian soldiers through indexing. A team of volunteers is extracting details from the records and entering data into a spreadsheet. The data will be added to the library's catalogue and then exported to a purpose-built web resource during 2014.

Considerable thought has been given as to what to index. While all the information is valuable and interesting, time constraints

dictated what to record. For example, by removing any requirement to interpret the content, it will be easier for our volunteers to concentrate on indexing. This will be alleviated by providing the opportunity for visitors to transcribe and tag records with keywords.

To give the resource validity and authority, the focus is on the people: the soldiers, eyewitnesses and enquirers. The following will allow connections with other resources: packet number; title on the packet; date range; soldier's name, service number, unit and NAA barcode; their date of death; eyewitness name and identifying details; locations associated with the soldier, including place of incident, hospitals, prisoner-of-war camps, burial, etc; and the enquirer's name and address. In time we will validate the place names and provide geo codes for mapping purposes.

Conclusion

The centenary is an opportunity to offer something unique to world-wide commemorations and provide content for the public to learn from and reuse. It is also an opportunity to deliver the public's expectation to be involved, to add their knowledge to our collections and create new content. This will, in turn, enrich the value of our heritage resources.

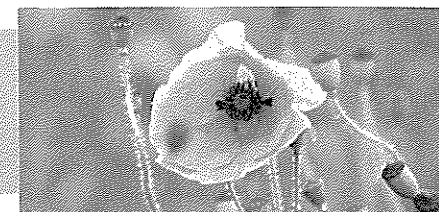
The recruitment of volunteers for data entry is a natural alignment for this project, neatly creating a full circle that commences with volunteers in 1915 and ends with volunteers in the twenty-first century.

For more information, visit our project page bit.ly/centenaryofanzac

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2. 'Soldiers abroad', *The Advertiser*, 5 January, 1916, p.8; <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8676852>
3. Saunders, A.T., 'Notes and queries: war time economy - a contrast', *The Register*, 11 August 1917, p.8; <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60464308>
4. Schneider, E.F., 'The British Red Cross wounded and missing enquiry bureau: a case of truth-telling in the Great War', *War In History*, vol.4, no. 3, pp.302-3 (SAGE Publications, July 1997).
5. 'Public library board', *The Register*, 20 December 1919, p.4; <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63123407>
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Force of nature: resurgence



How the Forestry Commission came into being and its connection to the National Trust

Ray Hawes, Head of Forestry

The landscape of parts of northern France and western Belgium was devastated by the fighting and associated activities of the First World War. Although there were no land battles in the UK at this time, our landscape also changed significantly because of the war. The reason was trees - or rather the lack of them.

Sustained by timber

After the retreat of the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago, trees began to recolonise the British Isles, eventually resulting in around 85-90 per cent forest cover. Tree cover then gradually reduced over thousands of years as the woods were cleared for farming and trees cut to provide the timber for buildings, ships, etc, and for fuel, including charcoal for smelting.

The result of all this exploitation eventually led to a time when demand outstripped supply, and by 1700 Britain was already dependent on timber imports from both the Baltic nations and from New England in the United States. In the nineteenth century the government called on landowners to plant trees, and particularly oaks, to help restore our forests, but we still needed to import a large proportion of our timber needs. The amount of British woodland reached an all-time low by the beginning of the twentieth century, covering just five per cent of the land area, and we were therefore still dependent on importing the bulk of our timber requirements at the start of the First World War. However, the hostilities made importing timber much more difficult, and the amount of woodland soon reduced to around 25 per cent of what it had been before 1914. Because wood was needed for the war effort in coal pits, steel works and railways as well as at the battlefield for trench building, our timber resources were stretched to breaking point,

despite Britain's private woods also being ransacked for extra timber.

Action on forests

Something had to be done and in July 1916 Prime Minister Herbert Asquith appointed a committee chaired by the Rt Hon. Francis Acland MP to look at the best ways of developing the country's woodland resources. The Acland Committee, as it became known, reported to Asquith's successor, David Lloyd George, in 1918 and recommended a state organisation as being the most effective way of co-ordinating a reforestation plan to meet timber needs for the foreseeable future. The Forestry Act came into force on 1 September 1919, which set up the Forestry Commission and gave it responsibility for woods in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The eight Forestry Commissioners were charged with promoting forestry, developing afforestation, the production of timber and making grants to private owners. The first Forestry Commission trees were planted on 8 December 1919 at Eggesford Forest, Devon, just over three months after its establishment which indicates the urgency with which the timber shortage was considered.

The predominant aim of forestry policy in the 1920s was to rebuild and maintain a strategic timber reserve, which had been severely depleted by the demands of war, and the new Commission was given a good deal of freedom to acquire and plant land. As well as restocking felled woods, the era of afforestation had begun. Unfortunately, before the trees planted had really started to grow and produce timber, the Second World War came along and again put huge demands on the need for wood, particularly for pit props for mines producing the coal on which so many of the armaments and other

industries depended. Again, mature woods such as the New Forest and Forest of Dean were heavily exploited, with large areas clear-felled.

Out of the woods

After the Second World War afforestation continued, mostly with introduced conifer species in the uplands, both by the Forestry Commission itself and by private owners encouraged by the Government with tax incentives and grant aid. At the end of the twentieth century, woodland cover in the UK had reached around 12 per cent, so more than double the figure only 80 years before. Many ancient woodlands had also been planted up with conifer species during this time, greatly changing their character and interest.

It could therefore be considered that although the UK's forest policy has gone through many changes during the last ninety-odd years and that maintaining a strategic reserve of timber is no longer the main purpose, the First World War has nevertheless had a significant effect on the current woodland cover, both in terms of its extent and character. Multi-purpose forestry is now what the Forestry Commission and other woodland owners, such as the Trust, now practise but the term 'sustainable' is invariably added because it makes people feel better, and the use of tangible products, such as construction timber and fuelwood, is once again becoming increasingly valued.

The Trust connection

Now, what about the connection of the National Trust to the Forestry Commission? As stated above, the committee which recommended the creation of the Forestry Commission was chaired by Sir Francis Dyke