

wars resulted in greater casualties than either the Indian wars fought across the Western Plains of North America or the New Zealand Wars. Indeed, the number of casualties situates Australia's frontier wars in the realm of its contribution to World Wars One and Two. Ultimately, Reynolds concludes that while Australia's formal processes of reconciliation have brought some people closer together, the divide between 'white history' and 'black history' cannot be bridged until the nation officially acknowledges its extensive, drawn-out frontier wars (p.256).

Forgotten War is written in an accessible and engaging style. It will be of interest to anyone working in the areas of frontier warfare, Australian and New Zealand history, military history, comparative colonial history, the history of the British Empire, public history or war and memory. It would also make a pertinent and useful addition to undergraduate or postgraduate reading lists. In the wider public sphere, it will be interesting to gauge *Forgotten War's* impact in the ongoing campaign for Australia to acknowledge and commemorate its frontier wars.

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Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend. 2nd ed. By Alistair Thomson. Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2013. 406pp. NZ price: \$46.99. ISBN 9781921867583.

In this new edition of *Anzac Memories*, Al Thomson revisits his earlier landmark work on Anzac veterans' experiences and their composed memories of World War One. The new book goes further than merely updating recent trends in Anzac scholarship and public commemoration. Thomson fills in some of the silences in his previous book by introducing a new section based on his personal family history and recently released Australian repatriation files. Revising the book almost 20 years after its initial publication also lets Thomson reflect on his own past approaches to oral history. The mature oral historian is able to sift and measure the motivations and approaches of his younger self.

The first three parts of *Anzac Memories* remain unchanged. Each part comprises of three chapters which follow a repeating pattern. In all three sections the first chapter is based on Thomson's 21 oral history interviews with working-class veterans; the second chapter draws on archival sources and secondary research to examine the broader context of the topic in question; and the third chapter examines the experiences of three diggers: Percy Bird, Bill Langham and Fred Farrell. For me, the final chapters in each part are the stars of the show. Thomson teases out the nuances of the three men's memories. Their personalities, motivations, ways of remembering and storytelling techniques are brilliantly evoked. By the end of the book I felt like I knew these three veterans: theatrical Percy, who loves performing funny anecdotes but avoids unsettling memories; thoughtful Bill, whose reflections around conflicting Anzac identities are never quite resolved; and socialist Fred, with his re-made politicized memories of an unhappy war.

Part I, 'Making a Legend', focuses on the Australian diggers' wartime experiences, the construction of their identity by official war correspondent and historian Charles Bean, and the ways that Percy, Bill and Fred remembered and reconstructed their own wartime experiences. In Part II, 'Politics of Anzac', Thomson examines veterans' return to Australia and subsequent repatriation issues. He then outlines the battle over the meaning of the Anzac legend between loyalist and radical groups, and the subsequent victory of the RSL in defining official Anzac culture and commemoration. Chapter 6 looks at the repatriation experiences of Percy, Bill and Fred, and how these shaped their war reminiscence. In Part III, 'Anzac comes of Age', Thomson places his interviewees' memories within the context of their retirement years and

the public's resurgent interest in veterans' stories. He then charts the changing popularity and reception of Anzac mythology and commemoration by the public, academics and popular culture up until 1990. The final chapter in Part III outlines how Percy, Bill and Fred responded to, and appropriated, more recent depictions and celebrations of Anzac.

In the newly added Part IV, 'Anzac Memories Revisited', Thomson is now able to tell the story of his grandfather Hector Thompson, which was excluded from the original version at his father's request. In Chapter 10 he uses Hector's newly released repatriation case file, which documents repeated applications to the Repatriation Board for war-related disability pensions, to paint a harrowing picture of post-war mental disturbance, illness and family struggle. Hector's wife Nell emerges as a determined heroine, whose efforts for her family's survival were thwarted by her premature death. Chapter 11 takes a broader look at the shortcomings and context of the 'Repat' system in Australia, and examines Percy, Bill and Fred's respective Repat files in the context of their interviews. Particularly in the case of Fred, Thomson is able to trace how his continual pension applications helped shape his wartime memories. Part IV is an important addition to the existing text. It highlights the long-term effects of war on veterans and their families, an important facet of war history which has only been examined by historians in more recent years. Thomson's honest engagement with a painful family secret also provides him with a great springboard from which to reflect on the intersection between oral history and family history. He argues that while 'broaching secrets and breaching confidences can hurt people we love ... secrets and lies can be more damaging than confession' (pp.281–2). Thomson reminds us of the importance of balancing truth and care in oral history.

In his new postscript, 'Anzac Postmortem', Thomson documents the evolving ideas of Anzac in popular culture and academic research, and speculates on what Anzac might mean to future generations. In recent years historians such as Marilyn Lake have expressed concern that the popularity of Anzac has caused 'a militarisation of Australian history'.¹ Thomson agrees, but argues that the 'booming Anzac marketplace creates opportunities' to 'counterbalance and disrupt the national mythologizing' of Anzac (pp.321, 323).

As a practising oral historian, I found that *Anzac Memories*' greatest value lies in its innovative application of oral history theory and candid descriptions of oral history practice. Thomson clearly explains and applies popular memory theory and his own theory of 'composure' throughout the book. And Part IV builds on Thomson's previous work that combines contemporary written and visual records with oral history: an approach brilliantly illustrated in his book *Moving Stories: An Intimate History of Four Women Across Two Countries* (2011).

At one point Thomson claims that Charles Bean's Anzac volumes were 'like all histories, shaped by the circumstances and attitudes of its creator' (p.167). Like many oral historians, Thomson is self-conscious of this fact, and consistently (but non-intrusively) reflects on his own personal context and relationships with interviewees. Appendix I gives a full description of process of contacting, meeting and interviewing veterans. In the new added sections, hindsight provides Thomson with the opportunity to assess his younger self, and highlight possible mistakes and naivety. *Anzac Memories* is not only an exceptional study of Anzac veterans and their memories; it is also a valuable example of the passion, personal motives and emotional investment that drive oral historians.

NOTES

1 Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, eds, *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, Sydney, 2010.

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