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WALKING WITH THE ANZACS
By Mat McLachlan
Headline, 336pp, \$40

Several years ago, while researching another historical topic, I found myself on the World War I Western front in northern France. It is a solemn, impressive area, and McLachlan's book is a detailed guide to the battlefields, focusing specifically on the activities of Australian troops. His enthusiasm for the topic comes through on every page.

It is a guide book in the conventional sense with maps, directions and recommendations for accommodation but it also gives a historical context to each battle and personalises the text by highlighting the actions of specific soldiers, usually VC winners.

It is hard to judge the utility of this book without using it practically on the ground. It is certainly full of detail, much of it depressing. A feeling of futility comes over you as you read the text. Why were the lives of 45,000 young Australians wasted there?

However, I suspect that walking the text in the field might bring a different perspective, for good history always requires a practical knowledge of geographic context.



L'OREAL TOOK MY HOME
By Monica Waitzfelder
Arcadia Books, 256pp, \$24.95

The title of this book says it all: that the French beauty products giant, L'Oreal, acting through a front company, bought the home of Waitzfelder's grandparents in Karlsruhe for a song in 1952, turned it into its headquarters, then sold it for a profit.

The Jewish family's house had been confiscated by the Nazis. Waitzfelder's mother was the sole survivor of the family. This, the story of her fight for compensation, is more than an account of justice for a Holocaust victim.

It opens the door on the large number of powerful people in France who collaborated with the Nazis. Among them was Eugene Schueller, L'Oreal's founder. He sponsored and later protected some of the most virulent anti-Semites in France.

His daughter, Liliane Bettencourt, the 16th richest person in the world, still has a controlling interest in the firm, which has fought the case. Despite persuasive evidence, the French courts have refused to hear it. The matter is now before the European Court of Human Rights.



ALL OUT: The Ashes 2006-07
By Gideon Haigh
Black Inc, 298pp, \$26.95

Gideon Haigh is a fine writer and I loved the first part of *All Out* where he outlines a kind of "sociology of cricket" and explains the role Test cricket plays in the Australian psyche.

After a chapter dealing with the ticketing fiasco leading up to the 2006-07 series, he discusses why Test cricket against England really matters in Australia. It comes down to the ambivalence of our relationship with the Poms. In a love-hate kind of way we measure ourselves against them, yet we would rather be more like them than like Americans. Above all, we want to beat the English at their own game.

Test cricket seems to be the antithesis of our media-driven, instant-gratification world. "Test cricket," Haigh says, "takes a long time but it endures in the memory, like a good wine lingering on the palate." But it is more: it also builds community and while it might seem to be a "pre-modern spectacle" it engenders loyalty and is "astonishingly resilient".

The book also analyses all five Tests in detail, but it was the first part I liked most.