



Waging war in words



BETWEEN THE lines

CHRISTOPHER BANTICK

EACH year the battalions of Anzac-themed books marching on to the market grow.

This year, there is a wide range of material from histories to memoirs.

The Anzacs: Gallipoli to the Western Front, by Peter Pedersen, Viking, \$59.95

IT is hard to imagine a better place to start than Peter Pedersen's substantial tome.

The book gives a cogent survey of the Australian Imperial Force from the optimistic days of 1914 through the defeat of Gallipoli, the mud and blood of France and the successes of 1918. Illustrated throughout with some excellent black and white photographs, this is a fine history.

Anzacs at War: The Best 12 Anzac War Stories Ever, HarperCollins, \$29.95

THIS collection, selected by *Commando* editor George Low, is high on excitement.

The comic-book format will appeal to aficionados of the *Commando* series and offers a different form of portraying representations of the Anzac spirit.

Bean's Gallipoli, edited by Kevin Fewster, Allen & Unwin, \$39.95

IF there is a voice that assisted in shaping the Australian digger tradition, then it is that of C.E.W. Bean. Australia's frontline war historian in World War I. In *Bean's Gallipoli*, we see an intimate portrait of Bean. The subtitle of the book, *The Diaries of Australia's Official War Correspondent*, accurately captures the content of this telling account.

Walking with the Anzacs: A Guide to Australian Battlefields on the Western Front, by Mat McLachlan, Hachette, \$35

AS battlefield tourism to France grows each year, the appearance of *Walking with the Anzacs* is timely.

The book is a useful user-friendly resource. The descriptions of the battlefields, maps and photographs are excellent. The potted histories of the battlefields are also informative and descriptive.

A Month at the Front: The Diary of an Unknown Soldier, Miegunyah, \$19.95

SOME historical studies of Anzac are concerned with telling the story of battles

in a particular context. The discovery in 2005 of a diary at the Bodleian Library in Oxford in a box from a donor revealed something unique.

A Month at the Front is a remarkable document. The unknown British soldier from the D Company of the 12th Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment tells of his experiences from July to August 1917. It is a poignant read.

Well Done Those Men: Memoirs of a Vietnam Veteran,

by Barry Heard, Scribe, \$24.95

TURNING to a more recent war, in Barry Heard's *Well Done Those Men* the reality of what Vietnam meant for a generation is clear. It is worth pointing out that the book is in its third reprint and will possibly become a classic of modern war literature.

Backs to the Wall: A Larrikin on the Western Front,

by G. D. Mitchell, Allen & Unwin, \$29.95

WITH an introduction by Robert Macklin, *Backs to the Wall* would serve well as a companion document to the unknown British soldier's diary. Originally published in 1937, the book is George Mitchell's first-hand account of what an Australian soldier faced on the Western Front in World War I.

The Battle of Anzac Ridge 25 April 1915, by Peter Williams, Australian Military History Publications, \$45

GIVEN that the Gallipoli campaign was fraught with dangers and at times poor decision-making, expatriate Tasmanian

Peter Williams has presented a different take on the campaign.

While familiar historical ground is traversed in *The Battle of Anzac Ridge*, Williams is not averse to asking questions of whether the eulogising of the feats of the diggers is entirely accurate.

To Hell and Back: The Banned Account of Gallipoli, by Sydney Loch, HarperCollins, \$32.95

SIMILARLY, questions are raised in *To Hell and Back* over the historically familiar images of the Anzacs at Gallipoli.

To escape censorship, the book was originally published as a novel, *The Straits Impregnable*, receiving widespread literary acclaim. But when the publishers revealed it was not, in fact, fiction.



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Australian military censors ordered its withdrawal from sale. An important book.

The Gunners' Doctor, Vietnam Letters,
by David Bradford, Random House, \$34.95

ANOTHER book which develops the theme of personal experience is *The Gunners' Doctor*. The book grew out of a chance

discovery in 2005 when David Bradford's mother found a collection of his letters in a shoe box.

The letters tell the story of an idealistic young Army doctor serving in Vietnam. These are not just letters home with personal news but catalogue the fears, hopes and stresses of the Vietnam conflict.

