



books

In their footsteps

WALKING WITH THE ANZACS

By Mat McLachlan

Hachette \$35

MORE than 61,000 Australians were killed fighting in the First World War – 10,000 at Gallipoli over eight months but in just one day of battle on the Western Front in France 5500 lives were taken.

Australia lost 5500 men at Fromelles, 'the Germans just kept pouring machinegun bullet after bullet into the Anzacs'.

The painstaking detail that the author Mat McLachlan has gone into to ensure you can follow in the footsteps of the Anzacs who fought in France is superb and easy to follow.

Mat McLachlan has spent countless hours researching where the Australians fought during World War I, consulting official war historians Charles Bean and John Laffin's 12-volume *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*.

There is a Western Front timeline starting at 1914 when Germany invaded neutral Belgium and Britain declared war on Germany through to the 5th of October 1918 with the last Australian action at the Battle of Montbrehain, where 400 Australian soldiers lost their lives.

Some of the soldiers who lost their lives were the original Anzacs from Gallipoli who survived the entirety of the war only to be killed just one month before the war ended.

Walking with the Anzacs – A Guide to the Battlefields on the Western Front is like a Lonely Planet Guide to a dreadful part of our country's history in which so many men senselessly lost their lives in what they called 'the war to end all wars'.

The book follows the battles fought on the Western Front and covers an area from the Belgian coast through to the Somme and the Aisne. First and foremost is an essential site list detailing where the Australians fought.

The following nine pages cover the essential administration to following the battles across France such as: 'Planning Your Trip, When To Go, Getting There, Where To Stay, Getting Around, What to Wear, General Advice, Cemeteries' and 'Researching a Soldier'.

Walking with the Anzacs - A Guide to the Battlefields on the Western Front is one of those books that you can open any page and be amazed at the personal accounts of hardship, heroics and mateship which were experienced daily on the Western Front.

This extract about a Victoria Cross winner, Bill Jackson VC, in 'no man's land' sums up the Anzac spirit perfectly: "He went out again and was helping to bring in another wounded when a shell exploded close by, blowing off his arm above the elbow. He refused treatment and led a small group back into no man's land to rescue two more wounded comrades. Jackson's arm still barely attached, was amputated later in the trench."

The directions to a battle site or grave are very clear and concise: "Leave VC Corner Cemetery and turn right. Follow the road to a small bridge over a ditch. This is the 'River Laies', which crossed the battlefield diagonally and proved a major obstacle to the attacking troops . . . (more description of the battle that ensued). Carry on to the next intersection and follow the farm track into the field on your left."

If you are planning to travel to France to follow in the footsteps of past relatives or friends or if you just want to learn more about the Anzacs on the western front this book is a must to add to your personal library.

If you have children who are learning about the Anzacs and the battles they were involved with this is a very good reference – easy to read and straight to the point without all the acronyms that make up military prose.

Luckily the footsteps that you take to follow the Anzacs won't be your last, as it was for most of the soldiers that this book is dedicated to.

In a phrase: Lest We Forget

—TROY RODGERS



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