

## David M. Hart, “How we Remember War”

**A Talk given at the Indy Aussies group on ANZAC Day in Indianapolis, Indiana in 2014.**

### *Introduction*

This year (2014) is the 99th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli on 25 Apr. 1915. We are hoping to have a joint Indy Aussies and Indy Turks commemoration next year for the 100th anniversary. Fran Colley has already begun making plans for this.

This year is also the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War (the “Great War”) which began 28 July 1914. How this even should be remembered has sparked considerable controversy in Britain already: conservatives wanting to remember Allied victory over German militarism; critics wanting to emphasise massive loss of life, the unintended consequences of 4 years of total war (Russian Revolution, rise of fascism, WW2), the failures [what the conservatives have called “the Blackadder view of WW1”]

### *Summary of My Talk*

1. Local Remembrance: The Holbrook War Memorial Obelisk, Holbrook, NSW [c. 1920s]
2. Personal Remembrance: “The Sphinx”, Nth. Turramurra, Sydney [1926]
3. Official Remembrance: the Cenotaph, Martin Place, Sydney [1927]
4. Public and Private Remembrance come Together: Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC [1982]
5. My Ideal War Memorial [naming all the dead]

## *Ode of Remembrance*

[from the poem by Laurence Binyon, "For the Fallen" *The Times*, 21 September 1914]

“They shall not grow old,  
As we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them,  
Nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun,  
And in the morning,  
We will remember them.”

[Response: “We will remember them”]  
[1 minute silence] [playing of the “Last Post”]

## *Stats for WW1*

Heavy loss of Australian and New Zealand lives in WW1 (at least as a percentage of population of what were then very small countries).

Total deaths for WW1 amounted to about 20 million people – a staggering number until WW2 eclipsed this figure (63 million).

Of this, about 62,000 Australians and 18,000 New Zealanders died. It seems a relatively small figure until one compares it to the total size of these countries' small populations.

In the case of Australia, 60,000 soldiers were killed out of a total population of 4.5 million (death rate of 1.38%).

For New Zealand, 18,000 were killed out of a population of 1.1 million (death rate of 1.64%).

To compare this to a more recent American experience, some 58,000 Americans were killed during the Vietnam War out of a population of around 200 million in 1970 (death rate of 0.029%) (in comparison, 2-3 million Indochinese died). If the USA in Vietnam had suffered the same death rate as Australia in WWI it would have had 1.2 million dead (this is twice the number of Americans who died in the Civil War).

## Notes:

1. Local Remembrance: The Holbrook War Memorial Obelisk, Holbrook, NSW [c. 1920s]

- spontaneous, grass roots remembrance of local friends and family soon after war's end
- Ten Mile Creek Gardens Jingellic Road, Holbrook New South Wales 2644
- small country town located between Wagga Wagga and Albury
- Inscription: In commemoration of our immortal dead who gave their lives in defence of the British Empire in the Great War 1914-1919. Erected by the residents of the Holbrook Shire. Also to commemorate our immortal dead in World War 1939-1945. Lest We Forget
- Note: 2 members of the Campbell family; 3 from Carrington family

2. Personal Remembrance: "The Sphinx", Nth. Turramurra, Sydney [1926]

- a convalescing veteran [shell shock, PTSS??] Private William Shirley - paid personal homage to his fallen comrades by carving his own replica of the Sphinx in Egypt out of local sandstone. Took two years to complete and then he died.

3. Official Remembrance: the Cenotaph, Martin Place, Sydney [1927]

- official remembrance was slow in following grass roots;
- Cenotaph, Martin Place, Sydney [1927]
- Australian War Memorial in Canberra - design competition in 1927, completed 1941
- ceremonies at Martin Place - many political dignitaries and generals, then march thorough the streets of Sydney; Cenotaph = empty tomb, soldier at one end, sailor at the other; "To Our Glorious Dead" (S. side); "Lest We Forget" (N. side)
- large scale, very patriotic, orchestrated event

4. Public and Private Remembrance come Together: Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC [1982]

- design competition won by Chinese-American Architect Maya Lin
- very controversial because she was Asian, design was considered to be un-monumental, looked like a wound in the side of a hill (or a body), absence of reference to soldiers (statue of three soldiers added later under pressure from veterans groups)
- 150 m long highly polished stone walls with names of 58,000 dead in chronological order, sunk into the ground
- ignores 800,000-1,200,000 Vietnamese deaths

- people unexpectedly began personalising the memorial by leaving memorabilia in front of their loved one's name (boots, dog tags, insignia)
- taking rubbings of the names - e.g. David Meldrum Hart (1946-1967) died one day after his 21st birthday

#### 5. My Ideal War Memorial [naming all the dead]

- “naming the dead” is a modern phenomenon [late 19thC]; Shakespeare's Henry V only the names of the noblemen who fell at Battle of Agincourt named; non-noble ignored; reading the names of those who died on Sept. 11 has become common practice; giving the names of our enemies who also fell in the same battle is not done [our soldiers have names which should be remembered but our enemy has no names]
- modelled on VNVM: 58,000 names of Americans who died between 1955-75 in Vietnam which are inscribed on 150 metres of highly polished basalt stone
- focus is on a single battle (or war) and so includes deaths on both sides
- Gallipoli Campaign War Memorial: 113,350 names [56,643 Turks; 56,707 Allies] who died in the 8 month Gallipoli Campaign between 25 April 1915 and 9 Jan. 1916
- every 2nd name would be Turkish [56,643 Turks]
- every 3rd name Brit [34,072]
- every 12th name French [9,798]
- every 13th name Oz [8,709]
- every 40th name NZ [2,721]
- every 80th name Indian [1,358]
- a similar wall for all the dead from the Vietnam War would be 2,586 m for just the VN names [150m for the American names]

# *Indy Aussies, 25 April, 2014: How We Remember War*

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