



Australian War Memorial

Sound Collection

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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TITLE:

INTERVIEWEE: TED DRAKE

INTERVIEWER: GEOFF LEWIS

RECORDING DATE:

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SUMMARY:

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Tape ID: This is tape is to be played on Anzac Day, April 25, from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m.. The tape will begin in approximately ten seconds from now.

(Orchestra playing *Waltzing Matilda*)

On a summer's day, June 25, 1914, an unpopular and seemingly inconsequential prince and his wife were assassinated by a frightened student in the Serbian town of Sarajevo. Almost six weeks later the world found itself plunged into the bloodiest and most devastating war it had ever known: the First World War, the 'war to end war'. Today, Anzac Day, 1984, 2AAA FM wishes to pay tribute to those Australians who've not only fought in the Great War, but those who have fought in all wars in which Australia has been involved.

Undoubtedly, the news that Britain had declared war on the Kaiser's Germany, on August 4, was greeted with great enthusiasm. A wave of patriotism and loyalty to home swept the country, thousands of young men eagerly joined the colours to fight for their nation and the Empire. By December 1914 over 52,500 men had enlisted. As the Melbourne *Punch* said at the time, the British Empire is our family and we cannot live without it. The men's main worry was that they would not get to Europe in time to bit the bosh, since it was honestly believed that war would be over by Christmas. A veteran of the Great War, Mr Ted Drake of Wagga Wagga, gives his reasons for enlisting, echoing the feelings of the men at the time.

Of course, I went into the Army, of course, but I enlisted as a private, but before long I was a lieutenant. But the point was, I went in under an assumed name, I couldn't tell them that. That was the difference, yes ... so that was that.

Can you remember what the reaction was - you were living then, when the war broke out - what the reaction was?

It was divided, Geoff. There were a large number of people who had the same idea as I had, that we had to help them if it was possible at all, and something had to be done to help, and there were the few that said, 'Oh, it will only last a few weeks, this is just a flare-up, there will be nothing to it.' Then there were the other ones that hoped to God we'd lose the business. See, we had one old German here in Wagga, for example, and he had a son here too, and when the war broke out, when it was declared, he drove down in his trap to his son - 'Oh, we jolly well will be right, we will be ...' Everybody round the area heard him. He didn't last too long, he was popped off ...

He must have got interned very quickly.

Yeah, he was popped off somewhere. But the funny thing, one of his grandsons, you know, enlisted in the AIF and was a hell of

a good soldier, was wounded four times altogether - kept on going, back for more. Still the same name but he was a different attitude altogether - he was born in Australia, of course, he was a real Australian, you see. And his sisters were the same, they were all ditto.

Because there is a fairly significant German population in Wagga.

Oh, yeah, well, look at Henty, for example.

Henty, and Jerilderie.

Henty was German Town, that was its original name, German Town, and they turned it to Henty when the war come on, they didn't like it to be known as German Town.

(Break in interview)

Oh, yes, I wouldn't have joined up had I not thought that it was essential that we should do all we could to help, and that the only way that you could help was to volunteer. You couldn't help them here while they are fighting over there. So it was a case ... I wasn't the only one; I mean, although they called a lot of them, said we were six-bob-a-day tourists, but very few had that attitude, I'll tell you. Mostly didn't go in thinking you were going to have a real good cook's tour, we went in knowing it was going to be (inaudible).

Australian poet, Howard Porter, in his poem, 'After September 21, 1914 AD', describes the scene as the men marched away:

*My Khaki uncles marched the streets,
Of that no-turning-back September,
And roaring, 'Goodbye, Melbourne Town',
Sailed off lice mat.*

*All I remember is pre-war, their trilby hats,
Those ox-blood boots, and primrose spats,
Their [masha] eyes, mascara curls,
And ragtime ruby rings that glistened,
While in those God-King-Country ears,
Had all times pricked, with ardour listened,
To pick up what they hankered for.*

*The Empire's bugles crying, War!
They quitted their ingenuous world,
Of horse trams, hansoms, stable [kitters],
Of penny postage, oyster bars,
Lamp lighters, [blue] backs,
Crossing sweepers, enamel placards,
Artlessly extolling cocoa, starch and tea.*

*A guileless time, on twilight blinds,
The [idle] candle shadows trembled,
And barber's fish-tailed gas jets showed,
A shelf of shaving mugs assembled,*

*Some with an uncle's name still on,
Though he and someone else had gone.*

*Sun-bonnet girls, in pinafores, still skip,
Those funny men still chatted on gramophones,
But innocence had lost its voice,
No longer mattered.
No innocence at all since then,
Never such innocence again.*

Song:

I have come to say goodbye, Dolly Gray,
It's no use to ask my why, Dolly Gray,
There's a murmur in the air,
You can hear it everywhere,
It's time to do and dare, Dolly Gray.

Don't you hear the tramp of feet, Dolly Gray?
Sounding through the village street, Dolly Gray.
There's the tramp of soldiers' feet,
In their uniforms so neat,
So goodbye until we meet, Dolly Gray.

Chorus:

Goodbye, Dolly, I must leave you,
Thought it breaks my heart to go.
Something tells me I am needed,
At the front to fight the foe.

See the soldier boys a marching,
and I can no longer stay.
Hark, I hear the bugle calling,
Goodbye, Dolly Gray.

Goodbye, Dolly, I must leave you,
Thought it breaks my heart to go.
Something tells me I am needed,
At the front to fight the foe.

See the soldier boys a marching,
and I can no longer stay.
Hark, I hear the bugle calling,
Goodbye, Dolly Gray.

Coda:

Hark I hear the bugle calling,
Goodbye Dolly Gray.

After receiving some training at home and in Egypt, the men of the 1st Australian Imperial Force were sent to Gallipoli in a combined allied force to fight Germany's ally, Turkey. The story of Anzac and Gallipoli is well known to all Australians and is an integral part of our ethos. Perhaps today, however, we should contemplate the 27,954 Australian casualties were suffered at Gallipoli. Of these, 8,500 were killed in the eight months that the Anzacs fought; this is just over a thousand a month, or

250 deaths a week.

Chris Wallis Crabb remembers these men in his poems, *The Shapes of Gallipoli*.

It was real beautiful this morning, mum. It's spring here, you know, and the flowers are all out in the sun, and there's birds singing, and Jacko isn't snipin' much. Maybe he's tired out, mum. Anyway, it's a real nice day so you could almost forget us first landing at Anzac - that's what we call it - and all that blood colouring the water of the bay. The boys are doing a good job all round here. Please sent tobacco and tomato sauce. Your loving son, Douglas. PS I hope you get this letter.

'The physical perfection of those young soldiers, the flower of the armies, who sacrificed themselves in this cruel adventure, impressed all observers', intoned one historian in his purple book, and for all his praising touched a chord, sprung a vein. That was there in us all, knowing rubbish, chaos, and our defeat begin to bear fruit of legend, a dove blazed with sunlight, and plain men shine like marble in the sacred Near East. Anzac. None of us dreamed, before this year was out, we would see snow, nor untouched rifles, all night sniping through a Turkish darkness.

At the truth of the myth this truth is coiled like a snake, but the men who enact it cannot see what pattern they are tracing. The men who spoke Australia did not know what they wrought for it was only to find by the completion of their lives. Icarus gave little thought to where it was he fell. We remember the spasmodic fire of ghostly riflemen and the funeral rites of Hector, tamer of horses, and the shallow sea lapping still. Then let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils, whose nostrils time alone will prove, interminable seasons passing over.

Song:

*Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war,
Who wouldn't be a soldier, eh?
Oh, it's a shame to take the pay.*

*As soon as Reveille has gone,
We feel just as heavy as lead.
But we never give in, till the sergeant brings,
Our breakfast up to bed.*

*Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war,
Why do we [walk] with eggs and ham,
When we've got plum and apple jam?
All force, right turn!
How shall we spend the money we earn?
Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war.*

Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war.

Song:

*Oh, how I hate to get up in the morning,
Oh, how I love to remain in bed.
For the hardest blow of all,
Is to hear the bugle call:
'You've gotta get up, you've gotta get up,
You've gotta get up this morning.'*

*Some day I'm going to murder the bugler,
Some day they are going to find him dead.
(inaudible) Reveille,
And set upon it heavily,
And spend the rest of my life in bed.*

Song:

*Take me back to dear old Blighty,
Put me on the train for London Town.
Take me over there,
Drop me anywhere,
Liverpool, Leeds or Birmingham,
Well, I don't care.*

*I should love to see my best girl,
Cuddling up again we seen shall be.
Oh, tiddly-iddly-ivy,
Hurry me home to Blighty,
Blighty is the place for me.*

Song: *Pack up Your Troubles*

*So pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile.
While you've Lucifer to light your fag,
Smile boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying,
It never was worthwhile.
So, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile.*

*What's the use of worrying,
It never was worthwhile.
So, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile.*

From the rugged battlefields of Gallipoli, the Australians were sent to northern France and Belgium, the Western Front. Ted Drake describes the conditions that faced the Australians when they got there.

So ultimately they landed in France and Belgium, and of course, we others, who were not original Anzacs, we fought with them there.

Now, as I said once before, I consider the Australian soldier was always one who could adapt to any condition and any surrounding, very, very rapidly; and after the type of country

in which they'd fought in Gallipoli, to be suddenly thrown into a land of flatness, which was always getting rain and which consisted of flat plains with mud and slush all over the place, shell holes full of water, various groups of trees, and forests, chopped to pieces by shell fire into just splinters and small stumps, dead mules lying in the different shell holes, dead horses everywhere, it was a complete scene of desolation, with the narrow trenches through no-man's-land just wriggling their way through on one side, and the Germans on the other side with the what was called no-man's-land between.

How wide was no-man's-land?

It varied, Geoff, from, in some cases, only a few hundred yards up to two or three miles, it just depended where it was. Now, in one or two cases you could hear them talking in the trenches at night, which meant they were fairly close; but in other cases ... Mostly, when we did a hop-over, it was a case of going for something, perhaps a thousand yards, or mile or two, whatever it might be, further advanced. But the whole point about it was that there was no let up from the constant strain, because you were stuck fast in the trenches. The shells, the machine guns, and the rifles, and the trench mortars kept coming, night after night, day after day, hour after hour, and it was very rarely indeed that you got a little bit of relaxation when you didn't get something thrown at you for a short while. Admittedly, we threw things at them, just the same, that's natural, but the point was we were getting it all the time, and I think that, mostly, it was a case of - I won't say survival of the fittest because in those days we were all pretty fit, I don't mind telling you - but it was really a survival, very often, of the one who used their brains the most.

Now, when we had the Americans join us, towards the finish, they, of course, couldn't think of lying on their tummy anywhere to dodge shellfire or anything else. I had to walk over and, of course, their casualties were pretty high, they were knocked over all roads. They couldn't understand why we'd run fifty yards and then duck on their bellies, it was something that they couldn't understand. But however, we learned, through bitter experience, the best way to go forward when we did go forward, as I say, with the whole area desolate, even the little towns and villages.

Now, we went through two or three villages - what was left of them. In one case we went to the [Dayores], for example - French, small town - and the Germans had hit it with shellfire in the middle of their dinner meal. When we got there, parts of the meal were still on the table, there were dead, quite a few, all over the place, and the rest had just bolted, the ones that were left had gone. And we found them lying in the streets dead, in the houses dead, and so on. You see, you never knew when it was coming and that's why the villages and towns were hit so hard - Armentieres, a whole lot of them got it.

The point about it was that you had to realise that that was going to happen, and you had to shut your mind to the terror of

it all, and think to yourself, well, that's too bad but we can't help it. You just had to do that. If you'd have started to think of those little kids, and the others that were killed in those things, you'd have gone off your head; you had to forget that.

Song: *A Long Way to Tipperary*

*It's a long way to Tipperary,
It's a long way to go.
It's a long way to Tipperary,
To the sweetest girl I know.*

*Goodbye Piccadilly,
Goodbye Lester Square.
It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there.*

Many memories of the Western Front have been burned into the spirit of those men who survived its horror. Names such as the Somme, Ypres, Villers-Bretonneux, Passchendaele, Pozieres, Messines and Vimy Ridge, became household words. Ted remembers the fields of red poppies of Picardy and Flanders that have become a symbol of the blood that was shed there almost seventy years ago.

Now, there was one time of the year when no-man's-land, Flanders Fields, became beautiful for a short while; that was when the poppies bloomed. Now, the poppies were blood red, really red, and they grew so thickly that you'd swear it was a red field. Well, we fought over that, naturally, and many of us were killed or dropped wounded in amongst the poppies. Now, the poppies became a symbol to us, it was a symbol, actually, of a soldier's agreement, or a soldier's wish, whatever (way) you would like to put it, to give, if necessary, his life for his country. That's why the poppies, even now, on poppy day, they come because the poppies represent that sacrifice of a life for their country, that's what it amounts to.

I did mention to you, one time, about Colonel, or Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae who wrote about the poppies. He was killed not long afterwards, by the way, and he's buried in a soldier's grave in Wimmere in Belgium. But it says:

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow between the crosses,
row and row - they mark our place - and in the sky the
larks still singing, [bravely] flying, scarce heard amidst
the guns below. We are the dead. Short days ago we lived,
felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved. And now
we lie in Flanders Fields. Take up our work, and as we go
to you from failing hands, we throw the torch, be yours to
lift it high. If ye break faith with us who die we shall
not sleep, though poppies blow in Flanders Fields.*

Song: *Roses of Picardy*
*She's watching [while she ponders],
Annette with the sea-blue eyes,
She's watching and longing and waiting,*

*Where the long white roadway lies;
And a song stirs in her sighs,
As the wind in the (inaudible).
She listens and [starts] and trembles,
'tis the first little song of [home].*

*Roses are shining in Picardy,
In the hush of the silver view,
Roses are flowering in Picardy,
But there's never a rose like you.
And the roses will die with the summer time,
And the roads may be far apart.
But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy,
'tis the rose that I keep in my heart.*

*Refrain:
And the roses will die with the summer time,
And the roads may be far apart.
But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy,
'tis the rose that I keep in my heart.
In my heart.*

Australians proved very worthy soldiers, they got a reputation that was second to none as they fought in the appalling conditions which faced them when they were down the line.

The main thing, I think, too, was the fact (that) when you are out of the line you tried all you could to rest all you could.

How long would you have been out of the line?

Oh, sometimes a week, sometimes five or six days, depends what the pressure was. If it was fairly slack, just the usual few machine guns, well, alright, you might be out for a week. But if there was a hell of a pressure on and they were losing a lot of casualties, right, you'd go up quick and lively.

How long would you have been up the line for?

Well, you mostly put in about a week up there, the same way, you see. As I said to you a while back, a week if you had wet clothes - did that come over?

When you were in the line - we might mention that - when you were in the line, in the trenches, particularly in bad weather, when the trenches were full of mud and water, raining constantly - no overhead protection - you got thoroughly and sopping wet. Your clothes would be sticking to you and you'd be that way for the time you were in the trenches until you got out again. It was a case of - why we didn't get pneumonia, I don't know, but we didn't - but it happened time after time, when you went up, that it would suddenly start to rain, or it would be raining all the time.

Now, Villers-Bretonneux, for example, when we were rushed down there, when the Germans broke through at Villers-Bretonneux and we were sent down - fifty minutes flat out, ten minutes on the

side of the road; fifty minutes flat out, ten minutes on the side of the road. They didn't advance any further when we got there. But the point was, we couldn't dig proper trenches, we dug potholes, about twelve feet long, and just wide enough for us to get in - raining like blazes. And in those times there was water and mud about that deep in the trenches.

And anyhow, just over behind where we were there was an old hanger - aeroplane hanger - made out of corrugated iron - a lot of the sheets were loose - so I said to George Emery, who was my particular cobbler with me in this little shell hole - there was only three of us in the pothole, in each one, see, with big gaps in between. I said, 'As soon as it gets dark we'll go over and get two or three sheets of tin, George.' He said, 'Righto.'

So when it got dark we went over and we got the three sheets of tin. And I'm walking in the front with these sheets, and George is behind, we are trotting along. And I said, 'By God, it's a long while reaching the shell hole.' All of a sudden a flame flare goes up right in front of us. We'd walked between two of the (inaudible) and gone right out, almost into German lines. Well, there's so much rubbish over there - smashed timber and all this sort of thing - that we just stood, didn't want to move, and as soon as the flare went out we (inaudible).

As a matter of fact, until George died some years back - he and I were still corresponding until he died - George, ever time I saw him he said, 'Got me sheets of tin, Ted.' He never forgot those sheets of tin. That was the sort of thing.

Well, now, at Villers-Bretoneaux it was so crook underneath - one of us had to watch all the time, waiting for a counter-attack, the other couple would try and sneak a little sleep. You'd put your ground sheet on, which, as you know, is rubber underneath, the top is (canvas) - put it down and you lie on top. After a little while the mud would come over the top and come over you. You'd have to get up and push it out, and shift the mud all out, and put it down in another spot and go, see. Well, that sort of thing made it a little bit difficult to sleep well, but it's the sort of thing that you had to put up with.

On top of that it was a case of, as I say, the mateship that I mentioned before, that carried on just the same. And the Australian soldiers in France and Belgium, they were no sooner there than they started to carry on the way they had in Gallipoli, and in no time they were represented to being fighters without anyone beating them in the world, they were suppose to be a top lot - and they proved it, time after time. The only trouble was, that after a while, the powers that be started to use us as shock troops instead of our usual line in the group. When anyone lost something they said they'd take it back, which meant we lost a lot of (inaudible), until Billy Hughes went over and stopped that. He blew up properly over that, he said they were sent over to do their turn, do their share, but not to take everybody else's share, and they were to be used as ordinary troops in future or they will be pulled back to Australia. Well, that set them up immediately, straight

away.

But that sort of thing was the thing that did happen, that was one of the reasons, of course, why casualties hiked to billyo. But the same time, they were so good in themselves, they fought so well, that there was never any worry. When the Aussies were in the place, it was pretty right.

The one others that we always liked were the Scotties, they were good, by God, they were good.

They had a long history of fighting, of course.

Oh, they were good, believe me, they'd stick there. Like with the 5th Army, down below, when they did a bolt in front of the Germans, you know; at one stage a lot of them cleared out, they threw their stuff away and bolted. We met some of them running away. We got down there, there's a mob of Scottish still there, they were the only ones there. So, you know, they were really good.

(Orchestra playing *Waltzing Matilda*)

To an Anzac Day special on 2AAA FM.

Song: *Kiss Me Goodnight, Sergeant Major*

*Kiss me goodnight, Sergeant Major,
Tuck me in my little wooden bed,
We all love you, Sergeant Major,
[When we hear you ball ...]*

*Don't forget to wake me in the morning,
And bring me round a nice hot cup of tea - cor blimey
Kiss me goodnight, Sergeant Major,
Sergeant Major be a mother to me.*

Song: *Tomorrow is a Lovely Day*

*It's a lovely day tomorrow,
Tomorrow is a lovely day.
Come and [feast your weary eyes],
On tomorrow's clear blue skies.*

*If today your heart is weary,
If every little thing looks grey.
Just forget your troubles and learn to say,
Tomorrow is a lovely day.*

*If today your heart is weary,
If every little thing looks grey,
Just forget your troubles and learn to say,
Tomorrow is a lovely day.*

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

Song: *Keep the Home Fires Burning*

*Keep the home fires burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though the boys are far away,
They dream of home.*

*There's a silver lining,
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark clouds inside out,
Till the boys come home.*

Song: *Mademoiselle from Armentieres*

*Mademoiselle from Armentieres, [parley vou].
Mademoiselle from Armentieres, parley vou.
Mademoiselle from Armentieres,
Hasn't been kissed for forty years.
Inky dinky parley vou.*

*Mademoiselle from Armentieres, parley vou.
Mademoiselle from Armentieres, parley vou.
Mademoiselle from Armentieres,
She hasn't been kissed for forty years.
Inky dinky parley vou.*

One aspect of the Western Front that was always well remembered was the incessant noise of battle, especially when there was a bombardment in progress. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, for example, it was said that the roar of the guns could be heard in London.

English poet, Richard Adlington, has drawn a picture of this aspect of war in his poem, *Bombardment*:

*Four days the earth was rent and torn by bursting steel.
The houses fell about us. Three nights we dared not sleep,
sweating and listening for the imminent crash which meant
our death. The fourth night, every man, nerve-tortured,
racked to exhaustion, slept, muttering and twitching while
the shells crashed overhead.*

*The fifth day there came a hush. We left our holes and
looked above the wreckage of the earth to where the white
clouds moved in silent lines across the untroubled blue.*

Not all days in the trenches were like this. Ted describes an 'average' day.

Well, I don't know that you could ever get anything really 'average', Geoff. See, if you were in the line there, just in the trenches, for example, and it was ordinary where there was no attack by us or by them. Well, the average thing, you see, when you got up in the morning, first go off, you had to stand-to in case there was an attack because that's the time, practically, all attacks happened, at dawn or just after, see. So you woke up and you got up straight away, and you were all ready with your rifles and everything ready there in case there

was an attack. When the stand-down came, alright, then, with a bit of luck you got some breakfast - with a bit of luck - and you had your bit of breakfast and that was it.

Well then, during the rest of the day, there were so many things. See, some would be placed on sentry duty for the time being, and changed every so often. Others would be on the job, fixing up the trenches, or putting extra stuff on the parapet itself, ether one or the other, whatever you are doing, and that sort of thing. You are always doing something. Or you might be fixing up the A-frames and putting new duckboards down. You were doing something. And then, of course, when it came on the afternoon, the same thing, you had to be very careful there wasn't an attack just before dusk.

That's what's called 'average', I suppose, the extent that you were on the job doing something all the time. It mightn't have bee a great deal, it was just that you had to be on the job.

Song: *Lily Marlene*

(German voice speaks over song)

My lily of the lamp light,
My own Lily Marlene.
My own Lily Marlene.

Underneath the lantern,
By the (inaudible),
Darling I remember the way you used to be.
(inaudible) tenderly,
(inaudible)
My Lily of the lamp light,
My own Lily Marlene.
My own Lily Marlene, (fades)

Many times the brutality of war shows through the memories. Here, Ted Drake recalls the flammenwerfers, the flame throwers, and a gas attack.

I wasn't in one, Geoff. I'll tell you what happened once; we were going up the line and there'd been a gas attack before we got there. And it was a fairly flat plain, and they are coming out of the trenches, and there's one bloke in the front who could see a bit, and the rest were on his shoulder, or hand on his shoulder, coming out, half of them blind from gas.

Terrible.

Yeah. Well, now, I was in the [Tripore] Hospital at one stage - I got his in the leg - nothing much, but they dug me in for a little while - and it shows what this gas is like. One poor devil was brought in, two beds from me. He had slipped into a shell hole full of water, and unknown to him a mustard gas shell had burst in it and it was all impregnated with mustard gas. They dragged him out and from the neck down he was one blister, and he was screaming all the time. They put him on a water bed that moved with him - he lasted three days and he

kept on screaming for three days.

Terrible.

That's the way gas, that sort of thing, is. In the water it would be worse than the other because it got your lungs and everything out, certainly, but you can imagine what blisters like that would be like, see.

It was either mustard gas or chlorine.

Well, they had chlorine, they had mustard gas, and they had - oh, they had another one too that was just as bad. The chlorine, of course, it was good for the lungs, it used to hit them quickly. Mustard gas was lousy, there is no doubt about that.

But another thing too that was always pretty dicky was the flammenwerfers - they were flame throwers. They used to have a container, a metal container, on their back with all the liquid in, and this tube coming out, and a nozzle at the front, and you turned the thing and that sparked the thing and set it alight. It could throw a flame right out, oh, from here up to the door there, see, just phew, like that. And it only had to touch a bloke with it, he just went up in flames. Well, you can imagine what he was doing before he died. He was just burning down and drop, and in the finish drop as a sort of a black stump sort of business, see.

Well, we always tried to make sure that we didn't kill those blokes outright, that carried them, we aimed for their container so that it went up in flames and so did he. See, we thought, well, alright, if he could do it to us, we can do it to them. It's not that you want to do those things, perhaps, but it was just a case of, alright, that was the only way to stop him. He's going flaming this, well, if you don't stop him somewhere he's going to get some more.

(Break in interview)

... all the guns, you see. Well, even when there was nothing doing, even, as I mentioned, with that little poem about the poppies, see. The rumble of the guns is going on all the time, that's why you hardly heard the larks, see, because of the guns.

You see, rifle and machine gun fire was static stuff - you know - tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap - all the time, the same with rifles - click-click-click. But with the guns it was a case of you'd hear them rummmbbble-rummmbbble - and they are coming over your head; you'd hear them - schzzzzzz - over the top. And that was, of course, a cacophony of sound all the time, they were belting in your ears.

The most I ever jumped in a business like that was - we were supposed to be out of the line - it was a lovely little lane going along, and it had a side bit like that, you know, a little bit up, some trees at the back. And myself and this

cobber (inaudible), we are talking away, and unknown to us there's a French gun emplacement just behind our heads. And it went off, and I'll guarantee I went two feet in the air when it went off behind. It was terrific, it went crack! in your ear like that, straight behind us. He was only about ten yards behind us. Of course, the gun was over here and we were down here, but you can imagine that sudden crack like that, just behind you, unexpectedly, and then dead silence. But God, didn't I jump.

Wilfred Owen's poem, *Dulce et Decorum est*, takes up Ted's theme:

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.*

*Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.*

*In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

*If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud of vile,
Incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

Not all the soldiers' lives was unremitting brutality. When they were out of the line, usually for a week, depending on conditions, life had its lighter moments. Food, of course, was of considerable interest to the men at the front, but not all of the food ended up in men's stomachs.

In the morning, for example, if we were out of the line, you'd go along - and you had a dixie, a lid, one you've got tea in, and the other one you turned over, and you'd get what they called a bit of burgoo in it, a little bit of porridge - lumps galore in it, of course, always had lumps in it. And you'd get in the other, with your tea, you'd get one little bit of bread

with one bit of bacon on the top. That was a full breakfast and that had to last you till you got some more.

Well, mostly again, if you were out of the line, you got bully beef stew, things like that - nothing of any consequence. Well, as a matter of fact, the biscuits that we got in the First World War, they had two wonderful values. First of all, they made very good photo frames. It took you about an hour and a half to dig out enough to put a picture in because they were that hard, they were just like concrete, but you put it out and you pushed a little picture in that. That was one thing. And then, particularly when the snow and that was on, they'd get a tin of these biscuits. You'd dive a few holes with your bayonet, put a bit of paper in the bottom and light it, and after a while it would go into one magnificent red glow. It would last for hours and hours.

Briquettes.

Yeah, the complete tin, just blood red, real red, it was warm as could be. But they were really good for that.

And then you've got to eat them.

The biscuits? Well, I suppose - well, if you were that hungry and have a chew at them, you'd generally stick them in water or something to get them down a bit. But when you got some, you know, when you went out and forgot and left a rifle out, and you touched the metal, you'd take the skin clean off your fingers, you know, straight off, you did. But it was a case of knowing what to do and when to do it, and what to dodge and what not to dodge.

But as far as the food was concerned, sometimes you were unlucky. Now, when we were at Messines, for example, the cookhouse was away to blazes - it was very flat coming across - and they used to come across with a long - great big, long, thick stick, and they'd have a couple of dixies on that, on the hand, swinging on this, you see, and they'd walk along each side. And this particular day they were coming up - we could see them coming - and Fritz opened up with a shell and it went straight through and took the two dixies clean off, and the shell burst back there and we had nothing to eat at all. The two blokes were okay, they got out of it. Of course, the shell took it right back before it burst, you see - it just went poof, and away it went.

That was your breakfast gone.

No, dinner.

Song: *The Quartermaster's Store*

*There was bread, bread, hard as Jerry's head,
In the store,
(Chorus) In the store,
In the store,
(Chorus) In the store.*

*There was bread, bread, just like lumps of lead,
In the quartermaster's store.*

*My eyes are dim, I cannot see,
I have not brought my specks with me,
I have not brought my specks with me.*

*There were rats, rats, big as bloomin' cats,
In the store,
(Chorus) In the store,
In the store,
(Chorus) In the store,
There were rats, rats, lying round on mats,
In the quartermaster's store.*

*My eyes are dim, I cannot see,
I have not brought my specks with me,
I have not brought my specks with me.*

*There was steak, steak, tough as cattle cake,
In the store, in the store.
There was steak, steak, to give you tummyache,
In the quartermaster's store.*

*My eyes are dim, I cannot see,
I have not brought my specks with me,
I have not brought my specks with me.*

Many men had narrow escapes.

I also mention Dayores, that was where they were hit with the shells when they were having their dinner - do you remember?

Right.

Anyhow, we were in there for a while and we were supposed to advance further on, and while we were in there he started to shell it again. So we all went down on our tummies and started to crawl across behind what's left of the buildings there. And there's one bloke just in front of me, and he's going along - we all had our packs on our backs - and all of a sudden I heard a thud! and he went oh! I went over, not a move out of him. So I fished around and felt his pulse, it was going - he was unconscious but it was going - and directly he started to (pant), and I said, 'What's the matter?' He said, 'I don't know, I don't know whether I'm dead or not.' So I had a look. In his pack at the back, this great hunk of shell had gone through, and I found out a little bit later, when he told me - he had only come back a few days from his leave to London, and while he was over there he bought a beautiful pair of boots with soles about that thick, and he had them together, one another, in the back of his pack. And the shell had gone through this, through the first sole, and stuck three parts the way through the second one. And the terrific hit had winded him and knocked him out.

Lucky.

When he got round he started to go crook about his boots, see. He said, 'God, blimey, I've only had the damn things a week. Look at them!' he said, 'Look at my boots!' I said, 'Listen, if it hadn't been for those boots you'd have been dead.'

After almost four and a half years of slaughter, the armies were exhausted and negotiations were begun to end the war. On November 11 1918, at eleven o'clock in the morning, an armistice brought an unnatural quiet to the Western Front. Ted describes how it felt.

What were your feelings on that day when the war ended? - probably relief, I would say.

Oh, it was relief for everybody, yes, they first said, Well, thank God that's over. You knew that every time you went up the line there was a chance you wouldn't come back, but if you didn't have to go up the line any more it was okay.

I've never, ever seen it written, or anyone speak about the actual - what happened on that day. The message came down the line?

Yes, it was shot through and they send messages up, you see, to the different areas, that the battle was over, it was finished.

At eleven o'clock?

Yeah. Everything went up. But the thing about it was, too, that when we found out - we were dumbfounded in a way, too; you know, the very fact that we had been going ahead, we had been shooting through all through, we were driving him back all the way, but you didn't expect it to sort of finish like that, we thought we might have to go a lot further. So you were very, very exultant about the thing being over, very happy and very cheerful about that - a lot of them danced for joy - but at the same time, it was hard to realise that it was over, that was the thing about it, it's all over. And of course, the point about it, we always said that was the war to end all wars.

What happened after that - the cease-fire?

We were gradually taken back, we went back out of the lines, back to our different billets and so on, then we were sent to England. Now, I was quartermaster in one of the bloomin' camps for quite a while there in England. Now, the point about it, what they do, you know, you get word that 150 were leaving the camp, sent to a ship to go away. You'd have to get them all in, gather all their blankets and every other damn thing, get the whole lot in, get them in, stack them back in. You'd have them in about two hours and a message would come, We've got 250 blokes coming. We'd have to get them all out again and issue them out to these blokes - see, whatever it was. It was a case of in, out, in, out, in, out, all the time. But still, it was getting rid of them gradually. I came back from the *Kildonan Castle*, which, oh, it was a beautiful ship to come back on.

(Orchestra plays *Waltzing Matilda*)

But in the four and a half years of the First World War, every hour of that four and a half years, one or more Australian soldier gave his life for his country.

Today we've had the privilege of an intimate glimpse into the horror that was World War I. In doing so we wish to pay tribute to all those men and women who gave their lives for freedom and for peace.

(Orchestra plays *Waltzing Matilda*)

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(Orchestra continues *Waltzing Matilda*)

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B - END OF PROGRAM

04/02