

MAITLAND REMEMBERS

# Passchendaele





# Third Battle of Ypres



The lines demonstrate how slowly the Allied forces advanced eastwards.



- Allies initial front line
- ..... 15 June 1917
- 31 July 1917
- - - 20 September 1917
- · - · 7 December 1917





## EXHIBITIONS ACROSS MAITLAND

### Maitland's Own

MAITLAND REGIONAL MUSEUM

BROUGH HOUSE

29 September – 28 November 2017

### Passchendaele: photography and the moving image in battle

MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY

14 October 2017 – 28 January 2018

### Walls that talk

MAITLAND CITY LIBRARY

9 October – 13 November 2017



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HUBERT WILKINS INSPECTING  
THE CROSSES IN THE MILITARY  
SECTION OF THE GRAVEYARD IN  
THE VILLAGE OF VLAMERTINGHE,  
3 OCTOBER 1917.

Frank Hurley [Australian  
War Memorial E00848]



A line of soldiers silhouetted starkly on a skyline. Mud, duckboards, skeletal remains of trees in a devastated landscape. A startling burst of sunrise over shattered bodies and a waterlogged battlefield. These are among iconic images of the First World War. They were taken to record and portray the Third Battle of Ypres in late 1917. They were taken by newly appointed official Australian war photographers, Frank Hurley and Hubert Wilkins.

The photographs echo those by war photographers from other countries, and are among images that have been used and re-used as the centenary of the First World War has been marked and re-marked. They also sit in public and private exhibitions, publications and collections that pre-date that centenary and that stretch from the war itself to the present day. Sometimes they edge their way into becoming a part of our memories, and are often vehicles for remembering.

It is the power of visual images, still and moving, that sit as the focus for fractured narratives about the Battle of Passchendaele, about men recruited from the Maitland district who were at that battle, and about the ripples and waves of the impact of that battle – and implicitly the First World War more broadly – on the men themselves, their families, and their communities.

**TRACK ACROSS THE WESTHOEK  
RIDGE NEAR ZONNEBEKE,  
29 OCTOBER 1917**

Frank Hurley [Australian War  
Memorial E01265B]

Passchendaele



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The 34th Battalion was a part of the 9th Brigade of the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF). It was known as 'Maitland's Own'.

The 34th was formed in early 1916 at Maitland Showground. The recruits were to come from Maitland and district. In the end, they came from across the north west of New South Wales, recruited partly through the 'Wallabies' march that started at Walgett on 15 December 1915, arrived in Newcastle on 8 January 1916 and then returned to Maitland. By the end of the march there were 265 new recruits who formed the core of the Battalion. Other new recruits joined them.

In January 1916 the Battalion began training while in Maitland. It was first stationed at the Showground and then at Rutherford Military Camp before setting out for the journey that would take the men to the battlefield on the other side of the world.

## 'Maitland's Own'

They sailed to England where they received further training, mainly at the

Lark Hill Camp on Salisbury Plain, not far from Stonehenge.

From England, they embarked for the Western Front, just in time for the harsh winter of 1916-1917. Their first major battle was at Messines in June 1917. After several stints in the trenches and a period of rest and training, the 34th entered battle again on 12 October 1917 around Passchendaele in Flanders where the Battalion suffered over fifty per cent casualties.

CLAUDE BATES, 1919  
unknown photographer  
[Australian War Memorial  
P03236.330]



Passchendaele





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## Studio portraits

As men enlisted and trained in Australia, photographers visited the military camps and brought soldiers into their studios in order to capture their images on glass plates. The postcard-size portraits often remained with families at home. They were visual and tangible reminders of sons, brothers, fathers, uncles, husbands, and friends who soon left for overseas and the battlefield. Many of these men never came home.

The names of the photographers have occasionally survived. In and around Maitland, there was Cameron Studio, Galloway Studios, Electric Studio and Webb and Woolston. Backdrops and props were repeated. The framing and positioning of head-and-shoulder portraits were similar. Full-length portraits showed off military uniforms, sometimes borrowed from the photographer. Faces were often to the front, eyes in contact with viewers. These were proud men in uniforms. These were men facing uncertain futures.

Studio portraits were also taken of wives and families. These were visual mementoes often carried by the men or sent to them while they were overseas.

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**OVER THE TOP, c 1918**

Frank Hurley [Australian War Memorial E05988B]

[left]

**PERCY ROLAND MEARS, 1916**

Galloway Studios, Kurri Kurri [Australian War Memorial P04700.002]



HUBERT WILKINS AND  
WILLIAM JOYCE (LEFT)  
STANDING WITH TRIPOD  
AND CAMERA ON A BRITISH  
MARK V TANK, 4 OCTOBER 1918

unknown Australian official  
photographer [Australian War  
Memorial E03915]



The First Battle of Passchendaele began on 12 October 1917. It was a part of the continuing Third Battle of Ypres. It was a disaster. Poor planning, torrential rain, mud and waterlogged trenches caused high casualties. The name Passchendaele has become a synonym for slaughter. The battle also turned what were

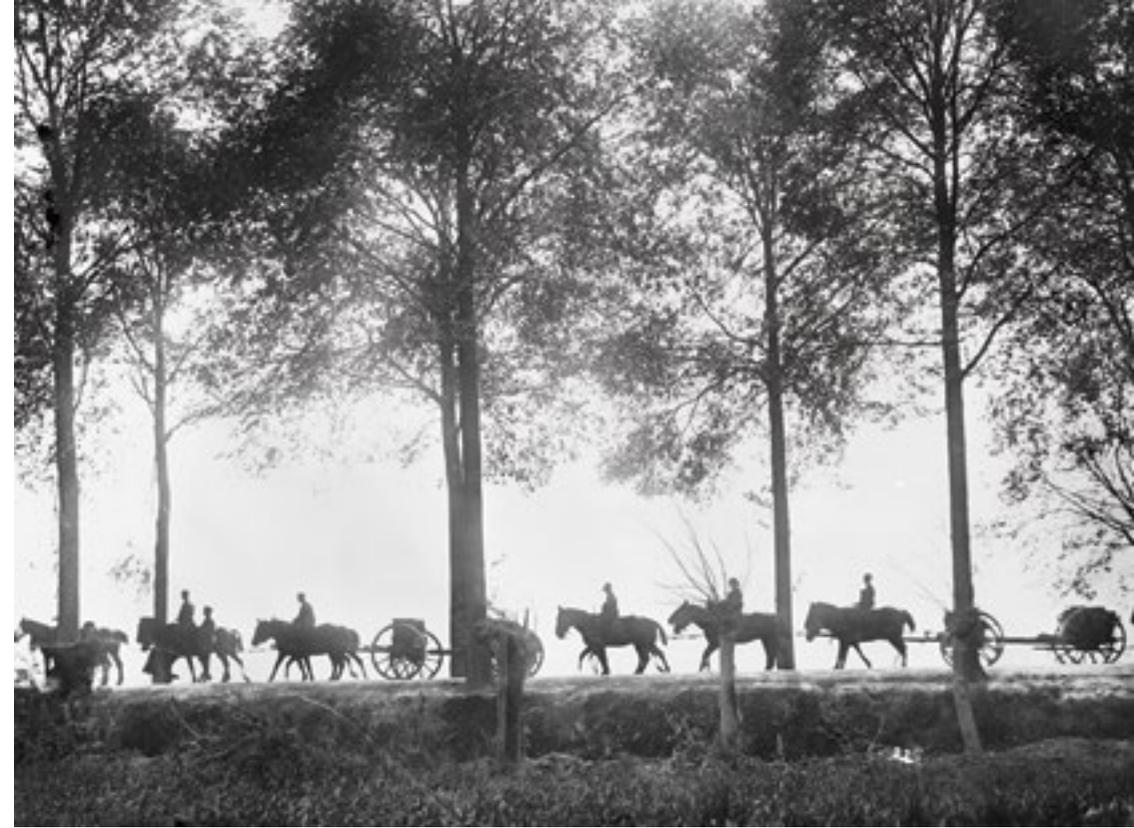
beautiful, romantic villages and tree-filled countryside into piles of debris and forests of wasted trees.

## Passchendaele in pictures

Australia's official war photographers, Frank Hurley (1885–1962) and Hubert Wilkins (1888–1958), arrived in time to photograph the battle and other fighting in Flanders. Their task was to take photographs and film for propaganda purposes, newspaper reports and war records. Charles Bean (1879–1968) supervised their work. He was Australia's First World War correspondent, historian and founder of the Australian War Memorial.

Bean valued photographs for what he saw as their objective documentary value and their ability to capture 'the plain, simple truth'. Many of the photographs taken by Hurley and Wilkins were in accord with this sentiment. Their carefully framed photographs record the waterlogged dugouts, craters, duckboards, denuded trees and devastation of the countryside around Passchendaele. They also provide static images of soldiers in battle, the aftermath of battle, and men on the march. These are graphic and powerful images.

Hurley also created composite photographs. He declared that a single negative was a 'hopeless' way to convey what 'modern battle looked like' and argued for, and practised, combining several negatives to create his visual accounts of the battlefield. Bean described these composite photographs as 'fakes' and only



**SILHOUETTED TREES,  
25 SEPTEMBER 1917**  
Unknown Australian  
Official Photographer  
[Australian War  
Memorial E00829]

reluctantly allowed Hurley to include some of them in officially sponsored exhibitions.

Hurley and Wilkins also took moving pictures. As part of their equipment they were provided with a Debie Parvo hand-wound wooden cine camera. The footage they took ended up in the 22 minute film *Fighting in Flanders*. Here the fighting could be seen in motion: soldiers move to and from the trenches, artillery recoils, and men look and wave at the camera in the hope that they might be seen – and remembered – by someone back home.



- Many of the photographs created by the official Australian war photographers have become iconic visual representations of the First World War. Over the years they have been reprinted, used and re-used in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. They have become one of the most effective means for imagining and remembering Passchendaele.

Similarly, the families of men and women who served at Passchendaele and elsewhere during the First World War have kept the letters and postcards their men sent home, their medals, their photographs, and other memorabilia and

ephemera. Some items remain within families; others have been donated to public collections. Seeing

## Remembering Passchendaele

the images, words, messages and personal effects of the men who served, and the families and communities who supported them, provides another potent means for remembering the impact of the war.

**MEMBERS OF THE 34TH  
BATTALION, BULFORD  
ARMY CAMP, SALISBURY  
PLAIN, ENGLAND, 1916**  
J. Boak [Australian  
War Memorial P09102.001]



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*Passchendaele: photography and the moving image in battle, Maitland's Own and Walks that talk*. It provides an overview and context for, and memento of, the exhibitions.

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MRAG Cultural Director Brigette Uren

### ESSAY

Janis Wilton

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### CURATORS

Kim Blunt

Joe Eisenberg

Janece McDonald

Janis Wilton

### DESIGN

Clare Hodgins

### PRINTING

WHO Printing, Newcastle

### EDITING

Joe Eisenberg

Cheryl Farrell

Nikolas Orr

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**AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS DANCING  
ON BOARD THE CAPE VERDE  
ON THEIR RETURN TRIP TO  
AUSTRALIA, FEBRUARY 1920**

unknown photographer

[Mrs Cecilia Hodgson and

Sr Helen Apthorpe]

Passchendaele



[cover] **FOUR AUSTRALIAN TROOPS WALKING OVER DUCKBOARDS IN WATERLOGGED FIELDS, OCTOBER 1917**

Frank Hurley [National Library of Australia nla.obj-160182782]

[1] **PARADE TO MARK FRENCH AUSTRALIA DAY, HIGH STREET, MAITLAND, 1916**

unknown photographer  
[Maitland and District Historical Society]

[2] **RECRUITS AT MAITLAND SHOWGROUND, EARLY 1916**

unknown photographer  
[Mrs Cecilia Hodgson and Sr Helen Apthorpe]

[3] **TRAINING AT RUTHERFORD CAMP, 1916**

Galloway Studios, Kurri Kurri  
[Mrs Cecilia Hodgson and Sr Helen Apthorpe]

[4] **WAR CHEST DAY, ECCLESTON, 1918**

Edgar Marceau  
[Janece McDonald]

[5] **SIMMONS FAMILY, 1917**  
Webb and Woolston, Maitland  
[Australian War Memorial P11668.002]

[6] **WAITING AT FARLEY STATION, 1916**

Galloway Studios, Kurri Kurri  
[Mrs Cecilia Hodgson and Sr Helen Apthorpe]

[7] **MEMBERS OF THE 34TH BATTALION AT RUTHERFORD CAMP, LATE SEPTEMBER 1916**

Galloway Studios, Kurri Kurri  
[Australian War Memorial PR05502]

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