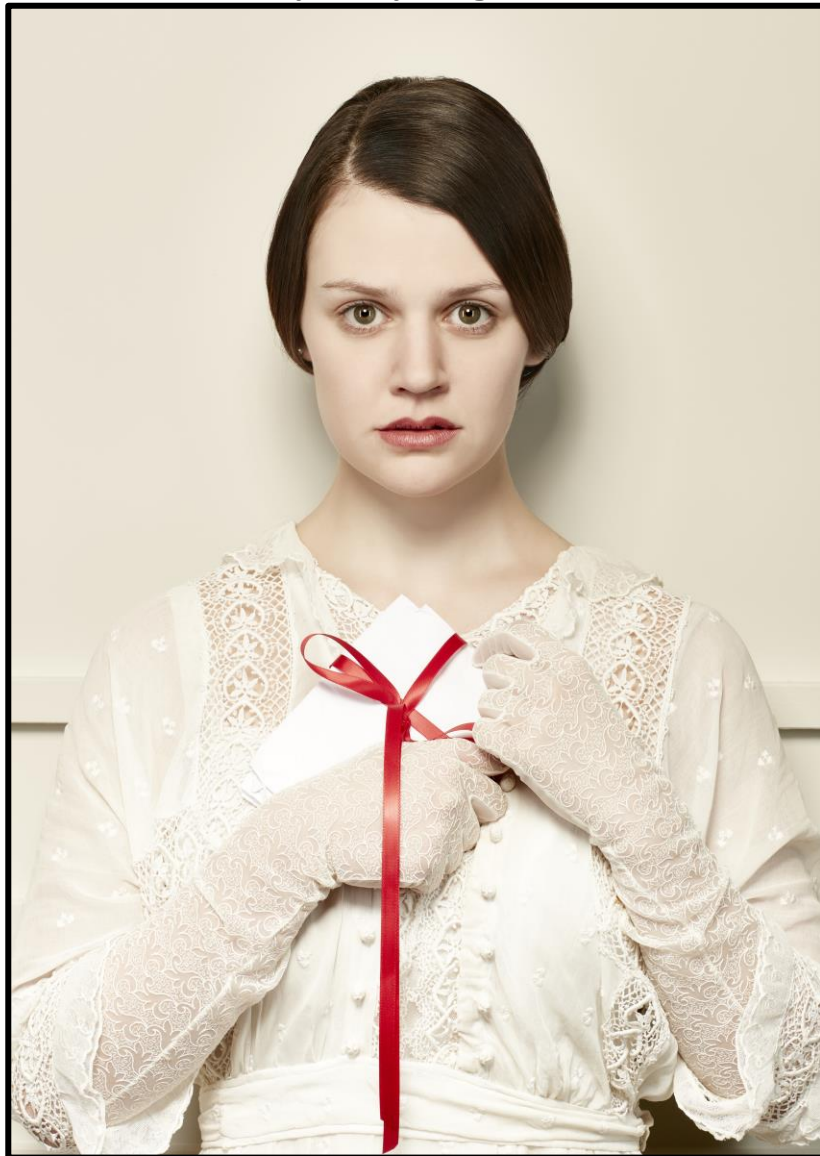


state ed

# Red Cross Letters

by Verity Laughton



**PRODUCTION PARTNERS**



THE SPIRIT  
LIVES  
2014 - 2018



**STATE  
LIBRARY**  
for your information



**CHARITY OF CHOICE**



**CORPORATE PARTNER**



Car and Truck Rental

**STATE SA  
THEATRE  
COMPANY**

**DURATION APPROX:** *75 minutes (no interval)*

**SUITABLE FOR** *Years 9 - 12*

**WARNING:** *Some violent themes*

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# Cast & Creatives

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**Director**

Andy Packer

**Designer**

Geoff Cobham

**Video and Associate Designer**

Chris Petridis

**Composer/Musician**

Matthew Gregan

**Musical Advisor**

Quentin Grant

**Cast includes**

Matt Crook, Lizzy Falkland, Elizabeth Hay, Rory Walker

# Synopsis

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The production starts with a series of individual stories in rough chronological order.

The first is a death at Gallipoli and those that follow range from a light horseman, who drowned in camp in Egypt before he ever got to the Front, to a sapper on the Western Front. The soldiers are married, single, brothers, brothers-in-law, as well as sons.

This is followed by a middle section based around a few days in October, 1917, at Passchendaele, which includes, three brothers from the same family all killed and a fourth brother wounded, and an Aboriginal volunteer, aged 19, who died in a German prisoner of war camp.

The last section is an individual story of one survivor amongst the 'letters', a Salvation Army boy who returned to his family in South Australia, but was changed by his experience.

# About the Show

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In 2012, as part of its contribution to Australia's Centenary of Anzac 1914-1918, the State Library turned to the 8000 packets of letters sent to it by Sir Josiah Symon, an early Library benefactor, when the Red Cross Information Bureau he helped fund closed in 1919.

The collection is the only one of its kind surviving in original form in Australia. Even the Australian War Memorial makes do with copies from Red Cross' London bureau.

To develop interest in the project, in 2013 the State Library asked STCSA to put on semi-staged readings in the Mortlock Wing, using a selection of the letters. Out of all of the letters, 11 stories have been chosen.

# Writer

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## VERITY LAUGHTON

Verity Laughton is a South Australian-based playwright. Her 30+ plays have been produced nationally and internationally. Her works include main-stage adult dramas, plays for radio, a promenade community event, a musical, adaptations, plays for child and family audiences, and for dance, puppets and theatre of image. She also writes poetry and occasional work for the screen.

Her awards include: AWGIE Community Theatre, 2004; Griffin Prize, 2001; AWGIE Radio Drama, 2004; Adelaide Critics' Circle Best New Australian Play, 1999; Inscription Award, 2009; and nominations for the NSW Premier's Award, the New Dramatists' Award, the Griffin Prize, Rodney Seaborn Prize, and the London Warehouse International Festival.



She is represented by Anthony Blair of Cameron's Management.

She is currently undertaking a PhD in political theatre at Flinders University. Another play of hers, a verbatim theatre piece about the 1966 Battle of Long Tan, *Long Tan*, will be produced in April 2017, by Brink Productions. She is also working, with the playwrights' group, 7-ON, on a recent Literature Board-funded project, *The Seven Social Sins*.

## NOTE FROM WRITER

In 2013, I was asked to give a dramatic arc to a selection from 8,000 packets of letters held by the State Library of South Australia. The letters were between the (mostly South) Australian Red Cross Information Bureau, and the bereaved relatives of soldiers lost, killed or wounded during World War 1; that is, the very young men sent away from all parts of South Australia to fight in the European war.

The initial plan was simply to hold readings of this material at the State Library. I had been given about 20 packets of the letters, which I duly transcribed and pondered over, finally using 11 packs. To create a production, I amplified this initial material with more information gleaned from Base Records, which showed sometimes inadvertently comic, sometimes poignant records of these very young soldiers' lives.

The sub-text speaks to the simplicity and modesty of the lives of Australians back then, and the curious innocence of all not directly concerned with the massive slaughter. There is an added piquancy for a South Australian audience in hearing the place names with which they are so familiar in such a different context.

The overwhelming feeling for me is not so much sadness, as a certain thoughtfulness. These people had real dignity, and perhaps much to teach us – children of an emotional, busy and much noisier time – in their slightly repressed rectitude. The task they absorbed as their essential 'duty' was to attempt to live well within the limits of what life had handed them, and in large part they seem to have succeeded.

I hope you enjoy your meeting with them, these ancestors who still live within all of us.

# Director

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## ANDY PACKER

Andy is an Adelaide based theatre, music theatre and opera director and founder of Slingsby theatre company. His work has toured extensively nationally and internationally, including a two week sold out season in New York. The Company has received 12 awards including two Ruby Awards and a Business SA Export Award. Andy has also directed for Adelaide Cabaret Festival, Adelaide Festival, Mumpsimus (co-director), State Opera of South Australia, Up Front Productions, Adelaide Vocal Project, Adelaide Football Club, Windmill Theatre & Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Restless Dance, Urban Myth Theatre of Youth, Come Out Festival and Ricochet Theatre Company and Adelaide Fringe.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

According to Australian War Memorial records, 34,959 South Australians enlisted to fight in the Great War of 1914 to 1918. It is estimated that over 5,000 of these men died on active service during the war. One hundred years on we have become accustomed to seeing images of men at the front, huddling in trenches, neck deep in mud or dust. Fear in their eyes, their purpose unclear. Over time and repeated viewing there is a danger that the faces of anonymous men begin to blur in our minds and lose their potency as a reminder of the futility of war.

The Red Cross Letters offer us a more intimate view of the great sacrifice that families have made. Through their own words we hear parents and siblings searching for answers to the whereabouts and last moments of their sons, brothers and lovers. The enormity of World War I becomes focused on a dozen families; the loss and resilience of those left behind is palpable.

In far more recent history, ahead of the Iraq invasion in 2003, up to 11 million people across sixty countries took to the streets in protest. It has been described as 'the largest protest event in human history'. Yet still our leaders took us to war. The recent Chilcot Inquiry found that the 'case for war was deficient'.

Unfortunately it is all too conceivable that political leaders will once again resort to military conflict. We must not accept war as inevitable; we must rail against the ghastly human and societal consequences. These Red Cross Letters provide the opportunity to steel our resolve – to remember the loss of real, deeply loved humans and then imagine losing those that we love today. It is not impossible that this will come to pass.

In staging these personal letters we have sought to bring the personalities of the correspondents to life through simple staging; to show how simultaneously domestic, and profound, these losses were. I hope what we have created hovers in the space between historical document and powerful contemporary relevance.

## INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR

### **What attracted you to working on *Red Cross Letters*?**

This is a unique collaboration between two of South Australia leading cultural institutions: State Library of South Australia and State Theatre Company of South Australia, a commemoration of some of our states important history brought to life for a contemporary audience. It is an honor to be given the responsibility to guide the staging of these authentic voices South Aussie voices. I am also thrilled to work with Verity Laughton, a wonderful cast and two brilliant artists I have collaborated with many times before, Geoff Cobham and Christopher Petridis.

### **What have been the difficulties in presenting a work based on correspondence?**

We have been very focused on bringing to life the personalities and reality of the people who wrote these letters. The project differs from other Anzac commemoration projects in that it throws our attention on the families and loved ones of the people left to come to terms with the loss of their sons, brothers, and lovers.

The power of this production is making the detailed and nuanced loss palpable for a contemporary audience. Verity has done a wonderful job of selecting sections of correspondence that tell an intriguing story – and we have to find a way to stage these letters that becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Watching 75 minutes of people reading letters could become dead and repetitive – our task is to overcome the feeling of reportage and focus on the emotion of the letter writers.

### **What do you think are the essential themes that run through the piece?**

Love, loss and the search for knowledge of the last moments and resting place of dead sons, siblings and lovers. People do not cope well with the ambiguity of not knowing the resting place loved ones.



# Letters

The stories throughout the show are based on letters about the following soldiers from their families.

**Private M.J Bailey**, killed at Lone Pone (**Fiancée**)

- 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion – Killed in action, Gallipoli, 8 Aug 1915 - 23 yrs

**Trooper Smith**, Light horseman accidentally drowned in Egypt (**Wife**)

- 9<sup>th</sup> Light Horse – Drowned whilst attempting to rescue a French soldier - 23 yrs

**Privates Potter**, 3 out of 4 brothers killed same day (**Brother**) (Image below)

The four brothers, Thomas, Edward, Ralph and Frank, enlisted within weeks of each other in 1915 and were issued sequential serial numbers. All part of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Batt stationed in Mouquet Farm, France.

- Edward – Killed in Action 3 Sept 1916 – 25 yrs
- Thomas – Killed in Action 4 Sept 1916 – 31 yrs
- Francis – Killed in Action 3 Sept 1916 – 22 yrs
- The 4<sup>th</sup> brother – Ralph – Survived the Great War and lived to the age of 68



**Sapper Ted Earl**, 42 hours in mine, died weeks later of 'shock'.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Tunneling Company – Killed in Action 28 July 1917 - 26 yrs



**Private A.E Downton**, Killed instantly by a bomb, friendly fire (**Sister-in-law**)

- 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion – Killed in Action 17 April 1918 – 26 yrs

**Private D.H Hanley**, Stretcher Bearer sniped despite white flag (**Mother**)

- 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion – Died of wounds 2 July 1918 – 18 yrs

## Middle Section (Flanders, October 1917)

**Private P.E Williams**, machine gunner, sad death, mother's illusions (**Mother**) (image left)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Machine gun Company, Killed in action 4 Oct 1917 – 20 yrs

**Private Fred Leahy**, Gruesome death, shell fire (**Sister**) (image right)

- 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion – Killed in action, 11 Oct 1917

**Private B.S Mogg**, Blown up by shell fire (**Mother and sister**)

- 48<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Killed in action 12 Oct 1917 - 20 yrs

**Private G.R Rigney**, Aboriginal POW, died in Germany (**Mother**)

- 48<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Died of chest wounds whilst POW, 5 Dec 1917 – 19 yrs



**Indigenous leaders say Rigney brothers' WWI efforts 'should not be forgotten.** By Nicola Gage

*Despite not being considered citizens at the time, more than 1,000 Indigenous men and women volunteered to fight in the Great War. Many of their stories are still being unearthed and Aboriginal*

*leaders want to ensure they are not forgotten. One of those stories is that of the Rigney brothers from South Australia's Murray Mouth, who never returned home. Aboriginal teenager Rufus Rigney was 16 when he lied about his age to fight in World War I. His older brother Cyril and his cousins had already enlisted, so Rufus left his home at Raukkan Mission near SA's Coorong and headed for the battlefields. Like many other Indigenous men and women, Rufus was granted temporary citizenship to sign up. Relative Daryle Rigney said he wanted to join his brother and cousins and fight for his country.*

"His family wasn't very happy about that and didn't really want him to do that, arguing he was too young but nevertheless he made the decision and went and did that," *Mr Rigney said.* ([www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au))

## **FINAL SECTION**

### **Private Leonard Walker, Gunshot wound - paralysis of the spine (Family)**

- 27<sup>th</sup> infantry Battalion – Survives despite the odds and is shipped home - 21 yrs

### **Bombardier T. Dullea – survived (Mother)**

- 10<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, gassed and wounded – 26 yrs
- Died 13 Nov 1963, aged 74 years

Images courtesy of:

<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people>

# Themes

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## **Communication**

The correspondence undertaken in *The Red Cross Letters* is from family members requesting information about their husband, son or brother. The writer, Verity Laughton says, *"The letters from the families from the home are the jewels in the collection. You can learn about individual people's characters through the Red Cross Letters. The letters reflected a different kind of Australia: a simpler, strangely innocent life, a lack of power and pretension. There was such humility in each as they asked for details of their beautiful boys."*

Families were notified that their loved ones were wounded or missing and then nothing more. The Red Cross Information Bureau set about finding the details, including whether they were Prisoners of War, the details about a soldier's death or the exact location of their grave.

## **Distance**

These letters often went from place to place, travelling locally from the enquirer before reaching the location, often internationally where information could be found. The Bureau and the searchers worked tirelessly to find details about soldiers, however, they received around 100 letters per day from across Australia. There were significant problems for Australian Red Cross in terms of delays with cables (six to twelve days in transition) including congestion and sometimes mutilation of cables, delays in the naming of hospitals; and not providing enough specific detailed information.

## **Bitterness of the Truth**

War was a terrible place and time for everyone, but particularly for the young men who fought for their country and left loved ones behind. Those that stayed behind had no other way to gain information, but to write to the Red Cross. They yearned for knowledge, but were often given the bitter truth. Despite this, all correspondence was incredibly, dignified, polite and respectful.

# Interesting Reading

## RED CROSS MISSION

*"To be a leading humanitarian organisation in Australia, improving the lives of vulnerable people through services delivered and promotion of humanitarian laws and values."*

### ESTABLISHMENT OF RED CROSS IN AUSTRALIA

In response to the outbreak of World War I, the Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society was formed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, 1914 in Melbourne. Within days, State-based Divisions were formed across the country.

In South Australia, the Governor's wife, Lady Marie Galway, and wife of the mayor, Mrs. Simpson, inaugurated the South Australian Division in August 1914. Their headquarters were established at Government House, on North Terrace. They also included circles in Glen Osmond, Hindmarsh and St Peters in Adelaide, and Burra and Crystal Brook near Port Pirie. By June 1918, South Australia claimed 369 circles.

The Red Cross was founded on an enduring spirit of volunteerism and generosity. Hundreds of volunteers signed up during WWI, and by WWII Red Cross had become Australia's largest charitable organisation. From a population of seven million, nearly half a million people were Red Cross members, most of them women.

### ROLE OF RED CROSS

The Red Cross assisted the wounded and sick soldiers, their dependents and allied civilians overseas. They also provided accommodation to those with no living relatives or friends to support them upon returning home from war.



Throughout the war, members sewed, knitted, baked and raised funds for the Australian Red Cross, mainly through their local branches.

In the post-war period Red Cross focused on social welfare, national emergencies, natural disasters, the blood bank and first aid programs, sustained by thousands of volunteers.

## WOUNDED AND MISSING ENQUIRY BUREAU

In response to the Gallipoli campaign, the Red Cross appointed two Commissioners who coordinated their efforts overseas. These Commissioners administered money and goods to the military medical facilities. They also liaised with the British Red Cross Society, in establishing a Bureau of Inquiry for missing and wounded Australian soldiers.

The Red Cross Information Bureau was established in 1915 to coordinate information gathered on the dead, missing and wounded, beyond what was provided by the armed forces. Their Wounded and Missing files were extensive with searchers sent overseas to clarify information, make judgements and resolve conflicting accounts.



### SEARCHERS

*'A searcher must understand a good deal of those rules of evidence which obtain in a Court of Law. In most cases the witness does not tell his story at all, or gives only a few points of it; the Searcher must usually by skillful cross-examination, exact the real truth in the form in which it is of value as evidence'.*

- Frank E. Pulsford (Searcher NSW)

Australian Red Cross searchers were an essential part of the Red Cross Information Bureau. Their task was to

piece together the fate of a soldier through compiling information from eyewitnesses to the extreme chaos of battle, and relaying that information back to the enquirer. Their work came in rushes especially after the Western Front in 1916, 1917 and 1918. The volume of the task at hand, following the catastrophic losses on the Somme, Passchendaele, Ypres, Messines and Villers-Bretonneux reverberated through Red Cross, as volunteers struggled to deal with the flood of requests from distressed relatives and friends. It was an emotionally draining and heart-wrenching job.

Searchers seeking information on the wounded and ill soldiers encountered many problems as they visited thousands of hospitals and camps. The work was monotonous, with only 'five men in every hundred' having any information of value. When an eyewitness to a specific case was located, the searchers set about securing as accurate and detailed responses as possible to verify the circumstances of a soldier's death or injury or whereabouts.

### BUREAU ACTIVITIES

It was only through Red Cross networks that desperate relatives could find out vital information on what had happened to their loved ones. Those concerned would attend the Bureau in person or write a letter. Interviews were then conducted with the enquirers to obtain more details. When an inquiry was received a card containing a complete record of all information was made and was continually updated. From the 6<sup>th</sup> of January to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1916, the South Australia Bureau dispatched 396 cables and 3,031 letters. By 1919, a total of 5,334 cables and 19,147 letters were dispatched.

All of the following was handled by the Bureau:

- Soldiers officially wound or ill
- Soldiers officially seriously, severely or dangerously wounded or ill
- Soldiers missing or wounded and missing
- Soldiers killed in action
- Special cases
- Prisoners of war.

<https://sarcib.ww1.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/about>

Example of cable correspondence:

A.I.F. 10th Battn.

LAMSHED  
W.H. 6535.

"Killed 20.9.17"

On the 20th September 1917 at Polygon Wood, was killed by machine gun bullet, hit in head. I did not see him myself, but his cousin, Pte. C. Lamshed was with him at the time he was killed. C. Lamshed is in London at present, his wife is at Harrods.

Informant:- Pte. S.W. Jacobs, 6525,  
10th Battn.B. Coy,  
Red Cross.

A.D.G.  
London  
16.1.19.

J.E.A. Note:- Written C. Lamshed (cousin) 16.1.19. A.

*Letter ret'd, written again 28.2.19*



# TO END ALL WARS

Letters of love and loss and compassion and grief touch the heart now as they did when they were written.

WORDS LANCE CAMPBELL PHOTOGRAPH PETER HOARE

**W**E RECEIVED THE SAD NEWS A WEEK AGO today." In the Mortlock Wing of the State Library, Lizzy Falkland read aloud to Margie Pitcher and Margot Masters these words of 99 years ago.

"His name and number is Number 938 Private P. E. Williams, 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Machine Gun Company, late of 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Australian Imperial Force Abroad.

"We only know that he was killed in action and are very anxious to know how he was killed and about his last moments, if anyone who was near him could tell us something as to how he met his death, whether he was conscious.

"Some news from one who knows would be greatly appreciated.

"Can you promise any help to ascertain?

"I am his distressed, bereaved mother, "J. E. Williams."

Mrs Julia Esther Williams's letter, dated October 31, 1917, is in the State Library of South Australia. Julia's only son, Philip Edgar Williams, was killed in World War I at his machine gun post during the Battle of Broodseinde on October 4, 1917, the day after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Lizzy Falkner is an actor in State Theatre Company's *The Red Cross Letters* in the Space from August 3 to 6, then on tour around regional SA. Margie Pitcher and Margot Masters are second cousins, great nieces of Philip Williams, and great granddaughters of his distressed, bereaved mother.

Julia addressed her plea to the Red Cross Information Bureau, first set up in the Vercio Building on North Terrace in February 1916 to seek out and communicate news of unaccounted-for loved ones on the killing fields of Europe. By coincidence, Margie and Margot's

personal exploration of their family's connection with World War I started at about the same time as the State Library looked to digitise its own remarkable World War I resource.

The cousins' journey began with a letter from Philip found folded inside a family Bible while Margie was sorting the effects of her mother Joan Pitcher, who died five years ago. In it, the

teenage farmhand assured his mum back in Mintaro that he was fine, but the French were lagging behind the Australians when it came to the latest agricultural techniques.

A ballpoint addition to the letter, believed to be by Margie's grandmother Julia Blanche Warmington, one of Philip's five older sisters, notes that her brother fell at the front exactly one month after he wrote home.

In 2012, as part of its contribution to Australia's Centenary of Anzac 1914-1918, the State Library turned to the 8000 packets of letters sent to it by Sir Josiah Symon, an early Library benefactor, when the Red Cross Information Bureau he helped fund closed in 1919.

The collection is the only one of its kind surviving in original form in Australia, says State Library online services manager Andrew Piper. Even the Australian War Memorial makes do with copies from the Red Cross's London bureau.

But, "It's the letters from the families, from the home front, that are the jewels in the collection," says Andrew. "Along with enquiries about those they hadn't heard from in a long time, there are other insights, such as requests for money because the children were hungry.

"We get an idea of what life was here as well as over there, and the replies might turn out to be the only things the eyewitness ever said about the war." Andrew adds that, almost 100 years down



*Above:* A portrait of Julia and Philip Williams, taken about a decade after their son Philip Edgar Williams died. *Opposite page:* Margie Pitcher and Margot Masters will see their great grandmother Julia Williams portrayed on stage by Lizzy Falkner (left) in *The Red Cross Letters* by the State Theatre Company.



Mintaro Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917  
 To the Bureau.

I see by the paper there is a man  
 formed at Vero's building where anxious  
 loved ones who seek news of sick, wounded  
 or missing. We have had news that our only  
 darling son has been killed in action in  
 France on Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>. We received the sad news  
 a week ago today. His name & name is.

He is 38. pt. p. & Williams  
 9<sup>th</sup> (Australian) machine gun company.  
 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion.  
 Australian Imperial Force Abroad.

We only know that he was killed in action.  
 I am very anxious to know how he was killed  
 and about his last moments. If anyone  
 who was near him could tell us some-  
 thing as how he met his death, whether  
 he was conscious, some news from me  
 who knows would be greatly appreciated.  
 Can you provide any help to ascertain.

I am his distressed, bereaved mother  
 J. E. Williams.

Address. Mrs J. E. Williams.  
 Mintaro.

Red Cross  
 July 10<sup>th</sup> 1916

Dear Sir,

Will you kindly advise me re my  
 son Private E. J. Smith No 2023  
 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 13 company  
 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division A. I. F.,  
 Gallipoli - Hospital No 4  
 Montagu Alexandria Egypt  
 who has been on active service  
 in Egypt for more than 12 months  
 and has not received a letter from  
 me since Sep last year, although  
 I have written to my son every mail  
 from his mother.

Broken Hearted  
 Mother

Mrs J. E. Smith  
 61<sup>st</sup> Florence St  
 Port Pirie



to cable. The Red Cross was helpful, but sorry, the enquiry had to go by letter.

For the Space and the road, Verity has chosen 11 stories "and a final story where a boy does return, but not in the same way as he left home. The temptation was to keep on researching because every soldier has a story, all connected to one another by the range of human beings who loved them."

Verity calls World War I "an irrevocable experience" for all who were touched by it. And the connection with the Great War, the "war to end all wars" that wasn't, continues. Almost every living Australian who had ancestors living in Australia a century ago has a link through a relative to that "irrevocable experience".

Verity had a grandfather, Alexander Davidson, in World War I. Lizzy had a great grandfather, Joe McKenna. Over dinner Margie's daughter Sarah Atkinson and her friend, STC

the track, "You can learn about individual people's character then through the Red Cross letters."

To drum up interest in the project, in 2013 the State Library asked STC to put on semi-staged readings in the Mortlock Wing, using a selection of the letters. Playwright Verity Laughton was brought in to prepare it, and in the eyes of both the State Library and the theatre company, the readings went down well.

"Immediately it appeared that the material was very, very strong," Verity recalls. "The letters reflected a different kind of Australia; a simpler, strangely innocent life, a lack of power and pretension. There was such humility in each as they asked for details of their beautiful boys."

There was also a sense of the large distances the requested information had to travel even locally before it reached the enquirer, rising to "immense distances internationally," Verity says. The wait seemed eternal. To speed up the process, one mother offered



Left: A military portrait of Private Philip Edgar Williams. Above left: The letter sent by Philip's mother Julia Williams, just weeks after he was killed in the Battle of Broodseinde, is in the State Library of SA's rare collection of war correspondence. Above right: A letter to the Red Cross Information Bureau from the mother of a Private E. J. Smith; she had not heard from her son in 10 months and sought to discover his fate. Below: A note from Philip Edgar Williams to his sister, Julia Blanche.

publicist Lindsay Ferris, were discussing shows, one the upcoming *The Red Cross Letters*.

Sarah enquired, and Lindsay confirmed, that "mum's great uncle" Philip Edgar Williams was in it, which is how Lizzy Falkland came to be reading Julia Williams's words to Margie and Margot. Both women have been to Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ypres, Belgium, where their great uncle is honoured, and to Mintaro. Both, with families, will be at the staged production.

Lizzy's reading was moving for Margot. "I welled up. I have a daughter the same age as Philip was, on the cusp of potential, what they might become. I can relate to that as a mother."

Likewise, Margie found the spoken words "emotional. They give life to our family. Because Philip didn't marry and have children, we didn't know much of him. Now we're very honouring of him, very inclusive of him."

Margie and Margot could imagine Julia Williams reading and rereading her letter before she posted it to the Red Cross Bureau of Information, which did its difficult duty. Eventually, on February 18, 1918, Private Henry Buckley replied, "I saw him killed at Zonnebeke. He was caught by shell fragments which hit him in the head and body, death being instantaneous."

Lieutenant Sydney McNulty corroborated, and added, "Your boy was much-loved by his comrades and thought a great deal of by his officers. He faced the stiffest of tasks cheerfully, and died firing his gun."

Philip Edgar Williams was buried in the shell hole where he fell, somewhere on Hill 40. In July 1918, Julia Williams thanked the Red Cross for conveying the last moments of "our very dear and only son".

France  
 Dec 28<sup>th</sup>

Dear Blanche

Just a line to let you know I am still alright and hope you are the same I had a very good time under the circumstances with a lot of love from Edgar

Miss B. Williams  
 Mintaro  
 S.A.  
 Australia

E. J. Williams



# Facts

## World War 1: Map of the Front Lines



[www.spiegel.de/international/germany/world-war-i-map-of-the-front-lines-of-wwi-a-942603.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/world-war-i-map-of-the-front-lines-of-wwi-a-942603.html)

### Battle of Lone Pine

The battle of Lone Pine was fought between the Australian and Ottoman Empire forces during the Gallipoli Campaign of the First World War, between the 6th and 10th of August 1915. The battle was part of a diversionary attack to draw the Ottoman's attention away from the main assaults known as the August Offensive.

The Australians initially managed to capture the main Ottoman trench line in the first few hours of the fighting; however, the fighting continued for the next three days as the Ottomans brought up reinforcements to recapture the ground they had lost. As the fighting intensified, the Australians brought up two fresh battalions. On the 9th of August the Ottomans called off any further attempts and by the 10th of August offensive action ceased, leaving the Australians in control of the position.

Nevertheless, despite the Australian victory, the wider August Offensive failed and a situation of stalemate developed around Lone Pine which lasted until the end of the campaign in December 1915, when Allied troops were evacuated from the peninsula.

### The Australian Light Horse

Were men who rode their own horses and trained in their spare time. When the Boer war broke out in 1899, the Australian colonies sent troops to fight in the Imperial cause. The Light horsemen proved themselves to be expert rough-riding horsemen and good shots. They showed remarkable ability to find their way in the strange country and use its features for cover.

By 1914, when Australia joined the war against Germany, there were 23 Light Horse regiments of militia volunteers. Many men from these units joined the Light Horse regiments of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).



Initially Australia promised four regiments of Light Horse, 2000 men, to fight in the British cause. By the end of the war, 16 regiments would be in action. Many young men from the country, flocked to join. Many brought their own horses and some even brought their dogs. It all seemed like a great adventure.

### To Egypt and Anzac

On November 1st, 1914, Australia's First Infantry Division and the first four Light Horse regiments sailed for England in a fleet of transport ships. Light horsemen worked hard to care for their mounts and exercise them in the limited space available on board.

The Australians landed in Egypt to complete their training there, soon joined by another two brigades of Light Horse. Many were then transferred to Gallipoli as infantrymen, leaving their horses behind. They clambered to their camp in 'Shrapnel Gully,' with bullets cracking over their heads. They quickly proved themselves to be excellent soldiers and readily adapted to the dreadful living conditions at the Anzac front.

By August, when a huge attack was launched on the Turkish, there were ten regiments of Light Horse at Anzac. The 8th, 9th and 10th Regiments were to make a dawn charge across a narrow ridge called 'The Nek'. Plans went horribly wrong and Turkish trenches packed with riflemen and machine-gunners waited for the Australian attack. The first line of the 8th Light Horse charged and were shot to pieces. The second line went over the top and they too were killed. The first line of the 10th Regiment went to their deaths in the same way. The second line waited for the attack to be cancelled. Then, through an error, they too charged and were killed.

In three quarters of an hour 234 light horsemen were killed and 138 wounded in a futile action. They had shown remarkable courage and discipline. Never again would these qualities be wasted so tragically. They were re-united with their horses in Egypt after the evacuation of Anzac. Two regiments were sent to the Western Front in Europe.

[www.lighthorse.org.au/resources/history-of-the-australian-light-horse/the-mounted-soldiers-of-australia](http://www.lighthorse.org.au/resources/history-of-the-australian-light-horse/the-mounted-soldiers-of-australia)



## The Australian Imperial Forces on the Western Front

295,000 Australians served on the western front. Over 46,000 died there and 134,000 were wounded or captured. As with all armies, there was a constant turnover of personnel owing to death, wounds and illness.

<http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/australian-remembrance-trail/where-australians-fought.php>

### Battle of Hill 60 (17 April – 7 May 1915)

Took place south of Ypres on the Western Front. Hill 60 had been captured by the Germans during the First Battle of Ypres. Initial French preparations to raid the hill were continued by the British 28th Division, which took over the line. The plan was expanded into an ambitious attempt to capture the hill, despite advice to the contrary.

The hill was captured quickly with only seven casualties but then it was found that they were vulnerable, surrounded by the enemy. Both sides mistakenly accused the other of using poison gas; German attacks on the hill included the use of gas shells and the Germans recovered the ground at the second attempt on 5 May. It remained in German hands until the Battle of Messines in 1917.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Hill\\_60\\_\(Western\\_Front\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Hill_60_(Western_Front))

### STRETCHER BEARERS

Were part of the Australian Army Medical Service. The role of stretcher bearer was one of the most hazardous medical jobs, who were often the first to see the wounded and to carry them to treatment.

Often short of supplies, and sometimes under attack themselves, they showed great dedication in their service. They often carried the wounded through mud and gunfire on foot to get them treatment.

Many wounded soldiers would cry out for their family, especially mothers, which brought home to them how young most of the soldiers were. In addition to collecting and treating their own wounded, Australian medical staff treated many other nationalities, including Germans.



Below is an anonymous tribute to stretcher bearers written by an Australian soldier in 1918, in the AIF magazine, *Aussie*.

### STRETCHER-BEARERS

Stretcher- Bearers! Stretcher-Bearers!

Seeking in the rain  
Out among the flying death  
For those who lie in pain,  
Bringing in the wounded men-  
Then out to seek again.  
Out amongst the tangled wire  
(Where they thickest fell)  
Snatching back the threads of life  
From out the jaws of Hell;

Out amongst machine-gun sweep  
And blasts of shatt'ring shell.  
For you no mad, exciting charge,  
No swift, exultant fight,  
But just an endless plodding on  
Through the shuddering night;  
Making ('neath a star-shell's gleam)  
Where ere a face shines white.  
Stretcher-Bearers! Stretcher-Bearers!  
To you all praise be due,  
Who ne'er shirked the issue yet  
When there was work to do;  
We who've seen and know your worth  
All touch our hats to you.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/medical/>

### **WHITE FLAG**

The white flag is an internationally recognized protective sign of truce or ceasefire, and request for negotiation. It is also used to symbolize surrender. A white flag signifies that the negotiator is unarmed, with the intent to surrender or communicate. Persons carrying or waving a white flag are not to be fired upon, nor are they allowed to open fire. The use of the flag to surrender is included in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_flag](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_flag)

# Set & Costume Design

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*The Red Cross Letters* production is a semi-staged reading or oratorio. An oratorio is a large-scale, usually narrative musical work for orchestra and voices, typically on a sacred theme, performed without costume, scenery, or action. Because the show is filled with letters containing details and statistics on soldiers, the actors have scripts in their hands. There are also minimal costumes and one set, consisting of a wall of photos. Lighting and projection create the visual effects, with specific dates and text and live music on-stage develops the emotional narrative.

*The Red Cross Letters* starts in the Space theatre, before touring to eight regional centers.

## SET

The set is a simple back wall of frames of all different sizes... places to capture the images and memories of the soldiers. Projected onto this will be original photos of the letter writers and their origins. This surface will be also be used as a landscape for projected texture to accentuate the emotional content of the letters. There are 12 chairs which slowly populate the space and come to represent the missing soldiers.

## COSTUMES

Head of Wardrobe, Kellie Jones has put together various costumes for the show.

Drawing from the silhouettes and newly federated atmosphere of Australia in 1915, the costuming of *The Red Cross Letters* reflects the modest and enduring lives of those who wait for news of loved ones from home. The combination of a subdued, neutral colour palette with soft cottons and sedate, textured wools, lends the production an intimacy and comfort, allowing audiences to be drawn into the stories that were - at the birth of our nation - so painful and heartfelt.





# Essay Questions

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1. Analyse the poem of the stretcher-bearer, talk about how it creates the image of their work and the respect that other soldiers gave them.
2. Choose either one of the stories from the show, or online, and write a poem related to their story. Use the following links to help:  
[www.awm.gov.au/education/schools/resources/research-a-soldier](http://www.awm.gov.au/education/schools/resources/research-a-soldier)  
<http://www.notjustanameonawall.com/task.htm>
3. Research the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the quick succession of events after that brought about World War 1.
4. Create a mind map detailing the reasons that soldiers enlisted to fight in the war.
5. Research the role of the RSL and how they have helped soldiers and their families.
6. Write a letter to a loved one at home from the perspective of a soldier on the war front. Research online journal entries to help.
7. Discuss how various elements of the staging and production created the emotional landscape for the play.

## DEBATE

*"Young men should want to fight for their country."*

OR

*"Is war between the Islamic State and the West inevitable?"*

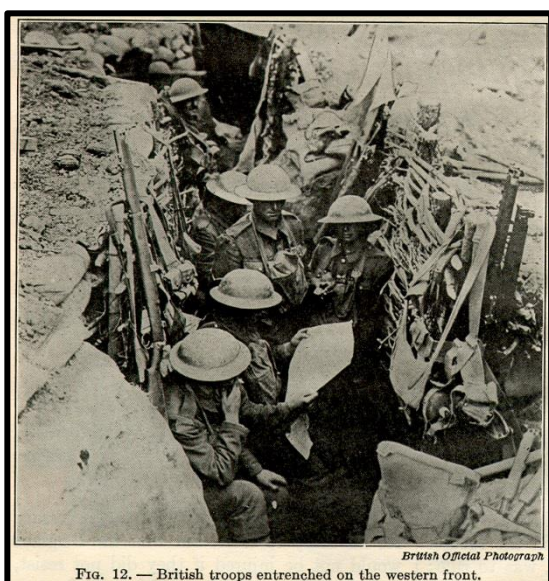
## WRITING

Choose an element from history that you have been studying. Create a short script for a staged reading. Think about how to portray the elements of the topic in an interesting way.

## WORKING FROM IMAGES

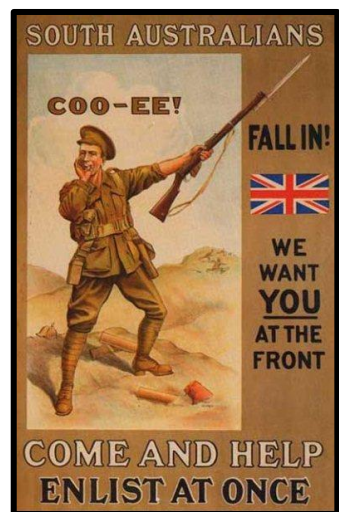
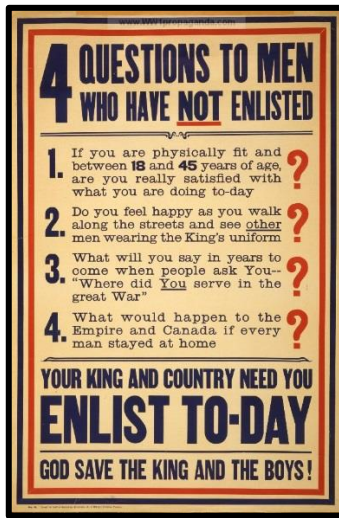
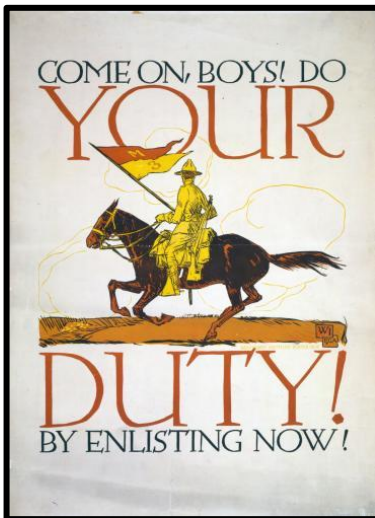
### TASK #1

Choose one of the following images and write a story, using one of the soldiers as your protagonist.



## TASK #2

Look at various poster images for enlisting in Australia. What types of messages are these sending to young soldiers?



### **EXTENSION TASK – FILM *Gallipoli***

Watch Peter Weir's 1981 film, *Gallipoli* and makes notes under the following headings.

- a. The reasons Australia invaded Turkey.
- b. The reasons young men volunteered for service.
- c. The conditions at Gallipoli.
- d. The attack at Lone Pine.
- e. The qualities displayed by the ANZACS at Gallipoli.

<http://dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/1581/>

### **MORE EDUCATIONAL TASKS AVAILABLE ON-LINE**

[http://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/curriculum/Sarah-Day\\_WA.pdf](http://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/curriculum/Sarah-Day_WA.pdf)

<https://schoolhistory.co.uk/gcse/links/wars/firstwwlinks/worksheets/maincauseswwi.pdf>

[http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/pdf/aaw\\_primary\\_p1.pdf](http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/pdf/aaw_primary_p1.pdf)

<http://schools.natlib.govt.nz/resources-learning/first-world-war-resources-new-zealand-schools/first-world-war-resource-guide>



# Further Reading

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## **State Library South Australia**

[http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/children\\_WW1](http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/children_WW1)  
<http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/RedCross>  
<http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/centenaryofanzac>  
<http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/Militaryresources>  
<http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/forstudentsandteachers>

## **The Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau**

<http://anzaccentenary.sa.gov.au/story/the-red-cross-wounded-and-missing-enquiry-bureau/>

## **The South Australian Red Cross Information Bureau Database**

<http://anzaccentenary.sa.gov.au/story/the-south-australian-red-cross-information-bureau-database/>

## **A century after World War I, State Library brings families back together.**

<http://anzaccentenary.sa.gov.au/story/a-century-after-world-war-i-state-library-brings-families-back-together/>  
<http://blogs.redcross.org.uk/tag/wwi>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Lone\\_Pine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Lone_Pine)

## **Australian War Memorial – Australia’s involvement in World War 1**

[www.awm.gov.au/1914-1918/timeline](http://www.awm.gov.au/1914-1918/timeline)  
[www.awm.gov.au/education/resources-activities](http://www.awm.gov.au/education/resources-activities)

# References

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[www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)  
<http://dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/1581>  
[www.awm.gov.au/education/schools/resources/research-a-soldier](http://www.awm.gov.au/education/schools/resources/research-a-soldier)  
[www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/medical](http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/1918/medical)  
<http://www.notjustanameonawall.com/task.htm>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Hill\\_60\\_\(Western\\_Front\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Hill_60_(Western_Front))  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_flag](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_flag)  
[www.lighthorse.org.au/resources/history-of-the-australian-light-horse/the-mounted-soldiers-of-australia](http://www.lighthorse.org.au/resources/history-of-the-australian-light-horse/the-mounted-soldiers-of-australia)  
<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people>  
<https://sarcib.ww1.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/about>  
[www.spiegel.de/international/germany/world-war-i-map-of-the-front-lines-of-wwi-a-942603.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/world-war-i-map-of-the-front-lines-of-wwi-a-942603.html)  
[www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/australian-remembrance-trail/where-australians-fought.php](http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/australian-remembrance-trail/where-australians-fought.php)