Multi-panel comic narratives in Australian First World War trench publications as citizen journalism

Jane Chapman and Daniel Ellin

ABSTRACT: *Although textual expressions by soldiers in their own trench and troopship newspapers are relatively well known, the way that the men created and used cartoon multi-panel format is not. Humorous visual self-expression has provided a record of satirical social observation from a 'bottom up' perspective. The contribution made by illustrative narratives of the armed forces needs to be acknowledged as early citizen journalism. Comic art by servicemen—mainly from the lower ranks—has contributed to the evolution of democratic self-expression in popular culture, and manifests aspects of collective First World War experience that can be construed as a form of journalistic observation. Soldiers' universal concerns about daily life, complaints and feelings about officers, medical services, discomforts, food and drink, leave, military routines, and their expectations versus emerging reality are emphasised. In this paper, we argue that perceptions of Australian identity can also be discerned in the detailed interaction between drawings, dialogue, and/ or text that is unique to this early comic-strip form.*

Self-publication and the illustrative

At a time when scholars are addressing the reasons why independent, citizen journalism has faltered in the context of an extension of media conglomerates' hegemony under deregulated global capitalism (Curran, 2012), it may be timely to offer an expanded definition of the ways in which citizen journalism can be historicised. Whereas today's protagonists turn to their mobile telephones for visual communication, it is easy to forget that, during the golden age of the press in the early 20th century, comic-strip illustrations acted as a comparable tool

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for observation and comment. This ephemeral medium tells us what ordinary soldiers were thinking and how they lived—on a regular basis and at the time—not afterwards or through rose-tinted spectacles, as memoirs do[1]. Previously, the 'voice' of the ordinary soldier was mainly articulated in a literary form by the better educated among them, as letters, diaries, and memoirs. This paper argues that the uniqueness of these sequential narratives is, as a form of democratic self-expression, all the more important because the stories demonstrate spontaneity and immediacy—not as news items, but as ways of interpreting everyday experiences and feelings.

From June 1915 onwards, more than 250 Australian publications circulated among troops, starting first at Gallipoli. This large volume of material is significant[2] because it represents an increase in the number of participant voices in an accessible published form. Although some troop publications were officially supported, many were produced, written, and conceived entirely by the soldiers themselves, and mainly by the lower ranks for their peers—that is, by, with, and for, citizen soldiers. Indicating the range of participation, Australian publications included parodies of news stories and of advertisements, snippets of gossip ('furphies'—see later), jokes, poetry, anecdotes, and cartoons, as well as sequential illustrative narratives. Single panel cartoons have not been included in this study because the aim is to explore contributions made by multi-panel visual observation—sequential narratives—as a neglected popular medium. This article explores how the interaction between pictorial and textual elements in this form of communication makes a distinct contribution as an early form of citizen journalism.

The most famous Australian soldier-artist at the time, David Barker, based his work on notes provided by the soldiers. Statistics on participation in the war indicate that 40% of all Australian men between the ages of 18 and 45 enlisted voluntarily (Seal, 2004, p. 176) and only 5% were professional, compared to 22% who were labourers, 20% who were industrial workers, and 17% who were primary industry workers (Seal, 2004, p. 173). Trench publications gave the non-commissioned volunteer the opportunity to make his views known; furthermore, ordinary soldiers were starting to appropriate a new genre of publishing—comic-strip panels for adults. Yet, academic study has focused only on texts, not early comics formats[3] (Fuller, 1990; Kent, 1985, 1999; Seal, 1990, 2005).

What motivated active servicemen with drawing talent to use their free time to produce illustrative narratives? The main purpose of all

newspapers was to amuse: satire and irony represented an ideal vehicle for recording the human side of the Great War. Men wanted to share stories about living conditions by addressing participants in similar circumstances on topics of daily life. In addition, feelings of geographic isolation prompted them to produce a record for friends and family back home. Comic-strip panels appeared in newspapers, manifesting a perceived editorial motive to unify the ranks—a collective purpose:

> They represent a collective rather than an individual commentary, validated to a large extent by their soldier audience. In addition, they deliberately set out, in many cases, to capture the spirit of the army. They address themselves directly and continuously to a task which letters and diaries tackle only peripherally and randomly. Even without this purpose, the journals were themselves an expression of the collective culture…. (Fuller, 1990, p. 4)

We will explore the nature of this collective culture in a content analysis later in this paper.

Clearly, newspapers at the time would not have survived if they had not published content that was more acceptable to their main readership of the lower ranks in a largely volunteer citizens' force. As Kent points out:

> In a sense the field publications became the corporate diaries of tens of thousands of servicemen. These publications allowed them to recall and share experiences among themselves while also, in many cases, transmitting that experience to the people at home. (Kent, 1999, p. 8)

Recruits, by definition, had positioned themselves for the first time in a new community that needed to express an identity, and they used collective communication to create cohesion. Scholars have recognised that journalism has traditionally also provided a service to, by, and for 'imagined communities' (Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Anderson, 1991; Chapman & Nuttall, 2011) but, to date, citizen journalism has not generally been historicised. It is usually defined as a non-professional exercise of the craft, with scholars who write on the present day phenomenon stressing the range of platforms and manifestations of community journalism (Reader & Hatcher, 2012), but often overlooking precedents such as trench publications.

Precedents for adult comic strips

It should be stressed that the comic-strip genre as it appears in trench publications was not usually formalised by symmetric panel framing and regular characters in the way that later became commonplace. Text captions and balloon dialogue were more frequent than box borders. There were already some precedents in Australian publications for comic strips aimed at adults, as opposed to the main market of imported British comic magazines such as *Puck, Chuckles, Butterfly, Funny Wonder,* and *Sparks* for the children's market. The latter was already well-established prior to the First World War during this 'golden age' of English comics (Perry & Aldridge, 1975, p. 50). For adults, *The International Socialist*, a Sydney based weekly, had a strip with a main character on its front page—'The Adventures of William Mug'— from July 1913 to September 1914. The first Australian newspaper strips to reach a mass audience were by children's author May Gibbs in the *Perth Western Mail* from 1913, with panels, text, and speech balloons, but with content based on subject themes rather than central characters (Ryan, 1979, p. 13). In troop publications, the central comic character was the citizen soldier—a volunteer in the lower ranks. Called 'Anzac' in Gallipoli, 'Billjim' in Egypt and Palestine, this was the ordinary soldier, the everyman as main actor, portrayed as a source of entertainment and morale boosting.

Context of trench publications

It took a while for print communications to be launched at Gallipoli, most likely attributable to the fact that conditions for production were among the worst of any theatre of war in terms of danger and difficulty. Nine Australasian titles were eventually created (although there may have been more—ones that did not survive). Official publications such as *The Peninsular Press* prompted unofficial pastiche reactions, exemplified by the *Dardanelles Driveller*. *Dinkum Oil* (handwritten and reproduced by stencil) is the best known trench publication at Gallipoli, mainly because of the involvement of C.E.W. Bean. His diaries record this and he gave the paper a footnote in his post-War official history[4]. The title *Dinkum Oil* meant reliable information in army slang (or 'slanguage') (Kent, 1999, p. 119; Laugesen, 2005), ironic given the fact that the section entitled 'War News' consisted of outrageous, totally unbelievable snippets of 'water cooler gossip'. In 'diggerese' slanguage these were 'furphies', named after John Furphy, who supplied water carts around which men congregated to chat.

By the latter part of the war there was a widely held conviction among troops in the Near East that their contribution as a successful army had been overlooked and neglected by comparison with the high profile Western Front and the fast-growing Anzac legend that was being fuelled by the popular press in both Britain and Australasia. There were 12 Australian publications produced in Egypt and Palestine. The most sophisticated were the *Cacolet*, journal of the Camel Field Ambulance, and the *Kia Ora Coo-ee*. The latter sold 13,000 per month. 'Kia Ora' is Maori for 'hello and good health', and 'Coo-ee' is a bush call. The launch of *Kia Ora Coo-ee* in March 1918 reflected the troops' desire to communicate the prevailing optimism and their success to the folks back home.

Conditions in Egypt and Palestine were more conducive to the production of journals than Gallipoli. Kent has emphasised that *Kia Ora Coo-ee* had various advantages: it was a magazine for all Antipodeans in these countries, and was not limited to a particular regiment or unit (Kent, 1999, pp. 57, 66). Furthermore, the official status of the journal ensured that regular editions were produced from a permanent base in Cairo, drawing on a pool of former professional journalists, with access to good printing facilities. The journal also benefitted from the creative skills of noted artists such as Otho Hewett and G. W. Lambert for covers, and Private David Barker of the 5th Field Ambulance for cartoons and comic strips based on ideas sent in by troops. As with other official and semi-official journals, *Kia Ora Coo-ee* had a system of subscription (deduction from men's pay packets) and mail order for sending abroad.

Citizen journalism as commemoration

There are 70 surviving troop ship newspapers (Kent, 1999, p. 11). Every boat had one, but the 'bright, breezy and colloquial' style (Seal, 1990, p. 30) became the choice for those commemorative editions produced on return journeys because these were often republished as souvenir collections. For instance, Cecil Hartt's cartoons were sold in England and specifically aimed at a market of servicemen who collected memorabilia; equally, cartoons and illustrative sequential narratives were reproduced in the *Aussie* and passed around within battalions of the Australian Imperial Force—AIF (Wise, 2007, p. 236). By and large, there were more and better produced sequential cartoons in newspapers with greater resources, such as the *Aussie*.

The most famous and successful publication produced for commemorative purposes is *The Anzac Book*. The volume was an instant bestseller with 36,000 pre-sales from the First Anzac Division, 53,000 orders from the AIF by November 1915, and total sales of 104,432 as early as September 1916 (Kent, 1985, pp. 388, 390). Originally, it was intended as a distraction and as a morale booster over Christmas in Gallipoli, a trench publication with its material generated by a competition. Out of the 150 competition entries, 24 people offered sketches, paintings, and cartoons, some of them multi-panel. When the decision to withdraw came, the intended audience for this body of work changed to the folks back home. Although it contained no news items, *The Anzac Book* consisted of journalistic observations in various forms.

Editor Charles Bean, who has been attributed with inventing the Anzac legend (much of which was initially promoted by English journalist Ellis Ashmead Bartlett[5]), was selective about the image he wanted to create[6]. Of course, the 'digger' ideal, although not the word itself, had a longer history, rooted in the bush and rural economy, but Gallipoli provided attribution: 'the ready-made myth was given a name, a time, and a place' (White, 1981, p. 128). Cartoon and multi-panel images tend to project a self-mocking humour by their depictions of the unkempt larrikin, rather than the rural ideal. Both were part of the legend (White, p. 136): the self-image was one of both saint and sinner.

Illustrative narratives also demonstrate irony, depicting situations where endurance was tolerated with good humour, danger was nonchalantly accepted, along with stoicism about the potential outcome, and loyalty to Britain was showed—these ironies were enhanced in importance by virtue of Bean's editorial selectivity. Seal (2005) sums up the significance of the contributions to the heritage of the Anzac 'legend', mainly made by the lower ranks, and submitted to *The Anzac Book*: 'These Works, scribbled and sketched by the guttering light of a candle, probably in a "possie" somewhere along the frozen line, display that spirit of irreverence, stoic humour and casual bravery that we associate with the digger' (p. 61). He does not elaborate on the role of illustrative iconography, although this is central to early comic-strip and two-panel cartoon humour (analysed later in this paper).

Humour

Humour provided a caricature of situations by showing and not simply telling. Implied criticism and visual exaggeration provided just the right balance for the active serviceman's desire to ensure that people elsewhere understood the reality of his hardship while maintaining the spirit of cheerfulness and bonhomie that kept him going. Humorous correction served as a vent for grievances, but as officers often turned a blind eye to criticism of them in publications, the authors were less vulnerable to punishment. Sometimes the blind eye was not optional if complaints were anonymous. However, trench publications could offer a 'sounding-board in the uncertainties of front-line or near front-line existence' (Seal, 1990, p. 30) and alert officers to potential discontents. Humour held the potential to undermine the power of officers and to 'reassert the masculine independence of the rank-and-file soldier, [and] to maintain the "digger" identity' (Wise, 2007, p. 241). As a communications vehicle, the comic-strip format proved ideal for snapshot stories revealing absurdities through the interaction of dialogue, captions, and drawings.

In the Australian case, scholars have seen the soldiers' publishing effort as evidence of a distinctive 'digger' sub-culture, characterised among other ways 'by its language, its projection of an image of casual attitudes to authority, its matter-of-fact laconic humour' (Seal, 1990, p. 30). Certainly, print culture reflected oral traditions, and newspapers responded to their readerships by providing forums in which 'a variety of digger expressions could be articulated and broadcast further than by word of mouth' (Seal, p. 30). This represented an attempt to 'crystallize aspects of talk and belief (or disbelief) into a slightly more formal mode' (Seal, p. 32), based on an obsession with gossip and rumours (or 'furphies'), around which informal communication networks at Gallipoli were based. Examples of these will be analysed later in this paper.

Trans-national approaches and continuities

Illustrations were based on content themes that were common to all theatres of conflict, and by no means relevant only to Australians. Fuller (1990) selected 107 illustrations for study from Britain and the many Dominions, concentrating on 61 that were uniquely produced by, and aimed at, the infantry. The French had 400 trench publications, but only 200 have survived (Audoin-Rouzeau, 1968, p. 7).

Most of the complaints about officers, commonly expressed through humour, seem to be shared across the various nationalities of the Allied side. Attempts to differentiate between 'Tommy' and 'Digger' aspects tend to focus on class. Although class differences clearly existed within the AIF, they were more pronounced in England (Fuller, 1990, p. 51), with the result that British soldiers were surprised by the relationship between Australian officers and lower ranks, considering 'their use of humour to protest against officers and their behaviour unconscionable' (Wise, 2007, p. 238).

While not disputing the pivotal nature of communications dating from this era as evidence of 'digger' identity, shared characteristics must be stressed: repetition of themes such as bad food, the mismatch between the reality of wartime life and the image held by the folks back home, cultural difference of local populations in battlefield countries, perceptions of officer weaknesses, and other aspects, such as discomforts, are common. On the Western Front, British, Dominion, and French troops faced the same enemies: lice, rats, mud, cold, rain, and shells. These were much the same at Gallipoli in winter. In summer, the inordinate heat added flies to the list. However, in comic-strip panels, Australian identity can be clearly discerned in colloquial language through dialogue and text captions, and in visuals through uniform and image. Close attention to detail is required to identify differences in nationality such as the use of specific slang ('cobbers', 'dinkum', 'bonzer') in dialogue and text, and the dress style of the uniforms[7]. In some cases, the same themes appear in later wars. Bedbugs, a serious subject for comic-strip stories, were depicted amid the humidity and cruelty of Japanese-occupied Singapore, in Changi jail by a POW in 1942 (NLS: 95713). For Australian readers during the First World War, bedbugs featured as a front-cover six-panel comic for a special edition of *The Yandoo*, 'Chatty Number: Printed in a Fritz Dugout' (AWM: folder 5, vol.3, part 4, 1 September, 1917).

Thematic data analysis

As the scope of topics was so wide ranging, examples have been grouped according to format rather than content: two-panel and multi-panel. Both categories included observations (sometimes satirical) of a shared experience, but the level of explicit narrative sophistication varied.

Two-panel contrasts
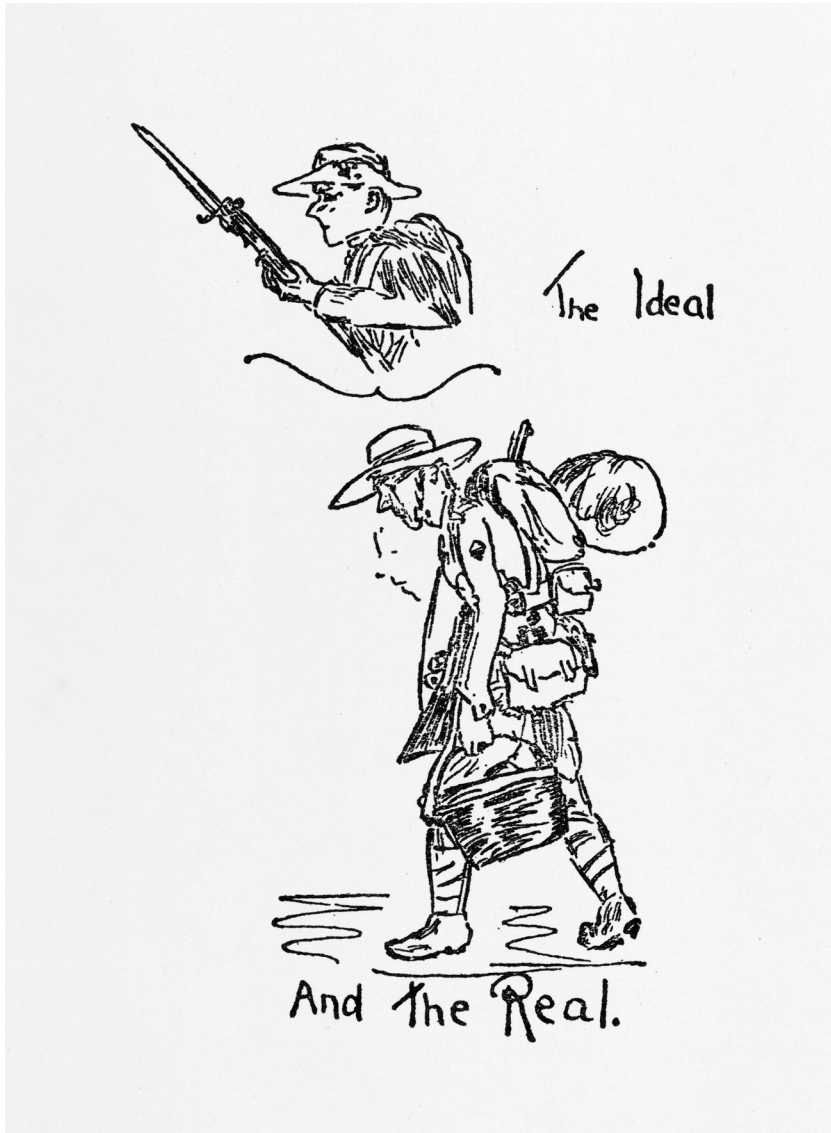
'The Ideal' and 'The Real' (Anzac Book, AWM: MSS1316/ ART00021.003)

The two-panel cartoon can be construed as a precursor to the comic-strip format: binaries can indicate change over a period of time that involves an element of contrast in presentation. Themes embrace 'before' and 'after', or 'at first' then 'later' as a narrative. This style of presentation is ideal for depicting a quick snapshot of change, immediately recognisable because of the brief nature of the summary.

For example, two close-up head-and-shoulder drawings in the *Anzac Book* (AWM: ART00021.004) show a well-dressed businessman sporting a bowler hat, monocle, bow tie, and coat with fur collar in the top panel, and in the bottom panel a down-to-earth soldier, with slouch hat, buttoned uniform, and pipe. A caption at the top states 'it's not what you were–' and the one at the bottom adds, 'but what you are today–'. A variation on this theme appeared on the front page of the first edition of *Dinkum Oil* in 1915 as 'Bomb Throwers' (AWM: folder 73). The panel first shows a scruffy anarchist with a beard, old hat, and a tired-looking checked coat, carrying a hand grenade. The caption reads 'old style'. The second panel shows a smart soldier in exactly the same pose, also carrying a grenade. The caption reads 'new style'.

Some who fought on the Western Front spent leave in England, an experience that was often recorded in illustrations. Cecil Hartt (VA 608.AA.0196) presented the arrival of two new recruits dressed in the iconic slouch hat, cigarettes in mouths, cruising happily and in style in the back of a taxi on their first day. His second panel encapsulates an implied but untold story, and is entitled 'last day'. The same two men sit dejected, heads in hands, on the curbside: clearly they've run out of money. Another contrast that *7th F.A.B. Yandoo* (AWM: folder 8, volume 2, p. 38) noted in its volume entitled 'Camp life in England' was the weather at Christmas. A drawing entitled 'Past–Christmas–Present!' shows, on the left-hand side, the season in Australia, with a man in an all-in-one bathing suit reclining with reading matter on the beach, sun in sky, sea, and seagulls. On the right-hand side is Europe with the same man holding a rifle, standing dejected in pouring rain, and sporting a long raincoat and army hat.

When men arrived at the front, a further contrast with their stay in England became obvious. An anonymous artist addresses 'how we do it in Blighty' with a picture of opulence: two soldiers are served food and drink on platters by a waiter in elegant, stately surroundings—pictures on the wall, marble columns, and mansion décor. The second panel carries a simple title 'and in France'. The setting is depressingly desolate and shows some of the discomforts of life on the Western Front. Standing outside a sandbagged shelter with an (ironic) Australian 'Comforts Fund' sign on the roof, men are enduring the mud and the cold in a waterlogged and shell-ravaged landscape (CUL: *Aussie*, WRL464 reel 15, 1918).

'Xmas Day in Gallipoli'. The top panel is 'what we hope for' and the bottom 'what we'll probably get'—rejected for publication in **The Anzac Book** *(AWM: RCO02954).*

For the Canadian Field Ambulance, the contrast depicted by Sergeant T. W. Whitefoot in *Now and Then* was the 'Fiction' of fast, efficient stretcher bearers in a clear battlefield tending one or two wounded men, whereas 'Fact' involved carrying a heavy soldier on a stretcher through knee-high mud to a derelict-looking medical post, sweating, with a speech caption that says 'censored' (CUL: WRA540, reel 1,

1918). In fact, censorship was surprisingly liberal for most trench publications (Fuller, 1990, p. 19). Again on the Western Front, the reality for *Ça Ne Fait Rien* involved 'what we thought this town would be like' underneath a picture of a happy Australian soldier with two pretty women, one on each arm, contrasted to 'what we got': torrential rain and a long raincoat, the soldier walking alone.

The story of a night out in town, featured as a front page of *Yandoo* with a heading 'Issued in No Man's Land' (AWM: folder 10, part 11, vol. 111, July, 1918), depicted a routine referred to as 'Tummy and Tub'. 'Tub' involved the men's communal cleansing of nits ('chats') in a big bath before they go out. One of the nine nude bathers in the middle of the huge water barrel asks: 'Who says I'm chatty?' 'Tummy' shows a French peasant woman who has rustled up the usual menu for soldiers—eggs and chips. An Australasian soldier sits at her table, happily brandishing a knife and fork. Her speech balloon asks 'Good Oh, Eh Monsieur?!!' He replies 'Oofs and chips. Tray bon madarm'.
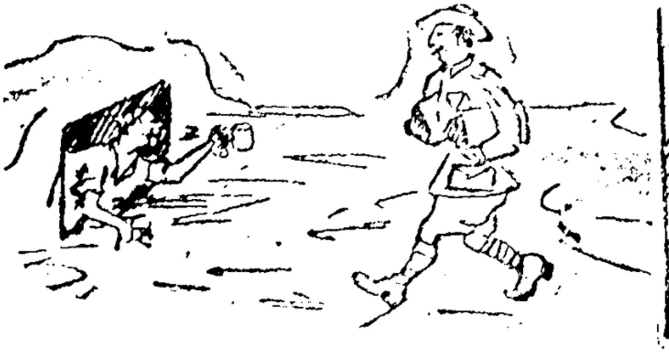
BONZER I—RUM II*
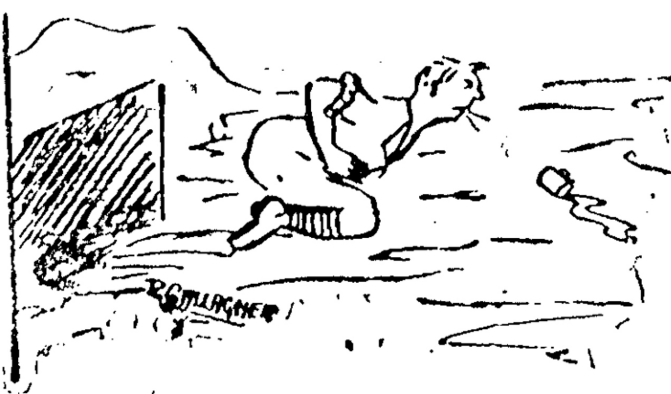
Drawn by A. Gallagher.

"GUTZER II–LIMEJUICE III"

Rum and Lime juice—soldiers wanted food to be part of their everyday story (CUL: Aussie, *WRC 464, reel 15, 1918).*

Food and drink, so essential for physical and mental well-being, was a regular topic. Both British and French armies operated similar ration scales, but in practice most complaints arose from supply problems that rendered ration scales meaningless; thus, bully beef and hard biscuits became the target of much humour, also reflected in the fact that in 1917 the War Cabinet received reports that food was one of the main causes of troop discontent (NAUK: War Cabinet Minute 231, 12 September, 1917, CAB 23/4).

Soldiers believed that the folks back home had the wrong image of life at the Front, and one motivation for publication was to correct this. As the second of these two panels suggests, another motivation was boredom. 'Not always Hun-Hunting' by P. Huthnance shows 'What some folks at home imagine their boy to be doing', namely using his bayonet to rapidly chase a German soldier as shells explode everywhere in the background. 'What he probably is doing' is reclining with his pipe, reading a paper, using his kit as an easy chair, inside a hut (NLA: *Aussie*, 1918).

Probably the most devastating comment in the hundred or so (largely Australian) two-panel samples analysed for this paper is on the subject of war followed by peace, and entitled 'The Profiteer' (NLA: *Aussie*, 15 June, 1920). The first panel is captioned 'France 1918' and shows a war weary soldier walking through mud, burdened with kit, and surrounded by a barren landscape. In the second panel, the landscape is also barren, but it is hot and sunny, and captioned 'Aussie, 1920'. The same man is now a hobo burdened with a backpack of bedding and carrying a billy-can in his hand, this time sweating, but otherwise in the same pose as in the first panel.

Christmas Presents, by C.H. Gould (NLA: Aussie, 1918). An Australian identity emerged through the detailed interaction of text and pictures.

Whereas the two-panel cartoon provided a quick, simple narrative of contrast, longer sequential story lines could add further sophistication. Works in this second category had more complicated storylines with several events, episodes, or milestones. Complaints were central to the genre: these started during initial training, and were not confined to Australians, or to life at the front.
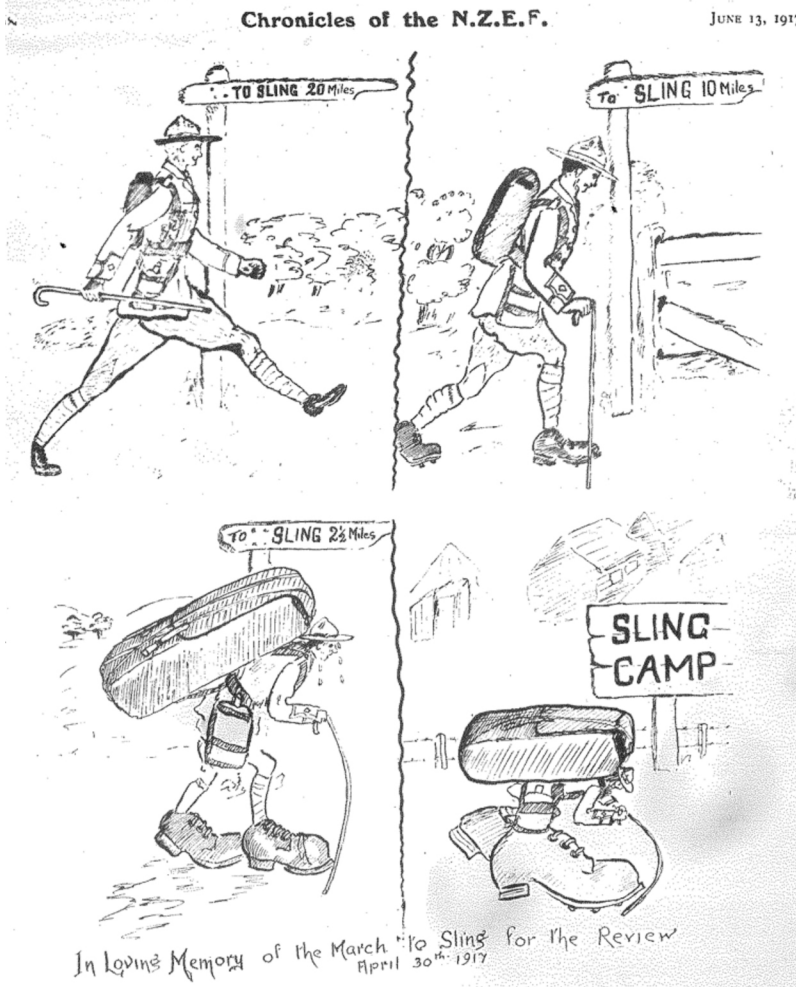
*Sling, the Salisbury Plain camp where reinforcements were trained and casualties rehabilitated (***Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F.** *CUL: WRB 1–2, reel 3).*

Soldiers at Gallipoli spent the autumn of 1915 digging because they expected the Turks to soon use heavy artillery, and this would make Anzac trenches vulnerable. Plate 6 is a complicated illustrative narrative that tackles the subject of officer privilege with an absurd fantasy about the logic of 'dugouts'. It was rejected for *The Anzac Book*. The first two panels represent reality—officers are about to move into their new dugout headquarters 'as comfortable as could be wished for', when the buildings are suddenly destroyed by Turkish howitzer shells.

Panels 3 and 4 are satirical fantasy. The captions read 'why not get some miners and - do the thing properly'. The officer's speech bubble indicates that an (impossible) 50 feet down would be a safe place. Both the original dugout and the imagined one are for the officers, who are identifiable by their boots and the detail of their uniforms. An officer is being lowered down the shaft by a private who labours at winding a windlass.
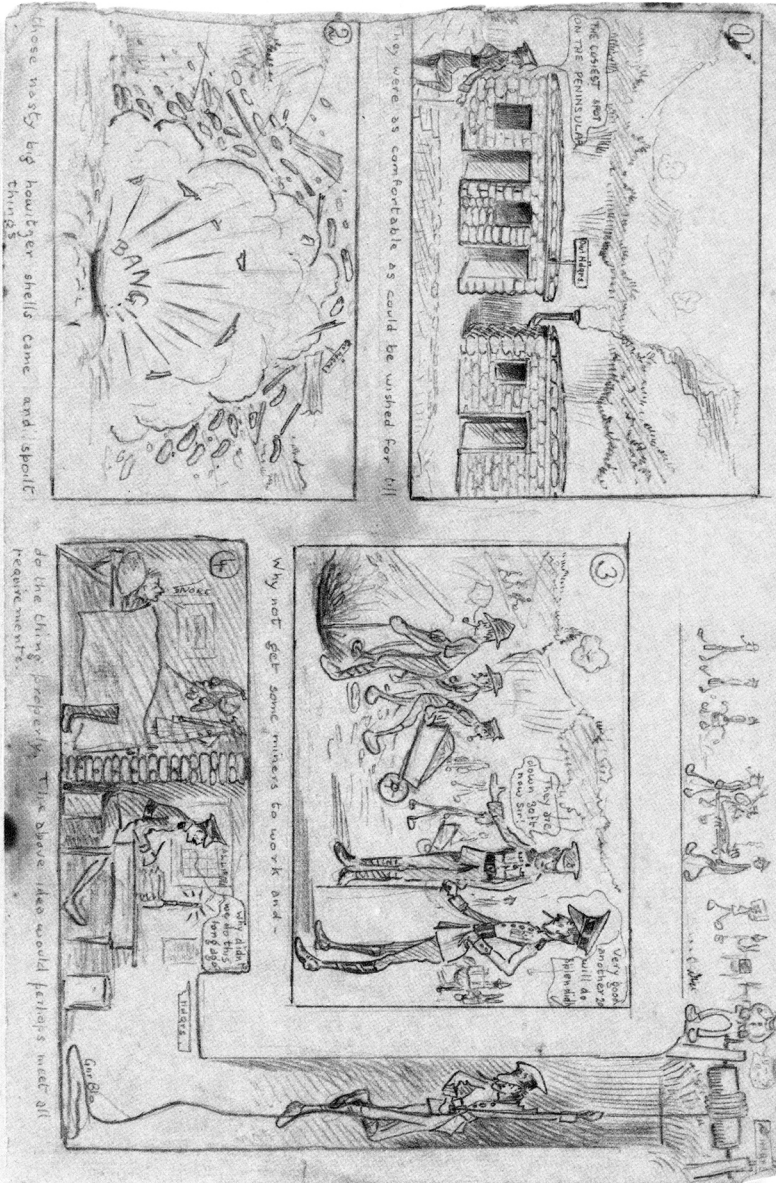
'The cosiest spot on the peninsula' by Gunner Blomfield, 1st Battery, New Zealand Field Artillery was rejected for **The Anzac Book** *(AWM: RC09028 MSS 1316).*

The democratic nature of troop publications resulted in a framing of the lower ranks as victims of hierarchical authority, usually lacking respect for those above them. The different identities of officers and men are perfectly illustrated in Huthnance's narrative strip entitled 'The Sequence of Blame'. The identities are indicated by uniform (the officers wear boots with spurs) and by the anti-hero, Aussie larrikin image of the ordinary characters. Panel 1 establishes the storyline: 'Something went wrong, the C.O. roared at the major', as a nervous, child-like ordinary soldier catches the conversation while removing his boots. The buck is then passed down the ranks. The major roars at the adjutant as two 'diggers' with hands in pockets and cigarettes in mouths, gossip to each other; from the security of his office, the adjutant roars at a startled 'OC company'; the OC roars at the C.S.M. (company sergeant major) as two more ordinary soldiers look on, dumbfounded; the C.S.M. roars at the platoon sergeant, observed by a soldier who looks as though he has just emerged from the bush, with pipe in mouth, trouser braces and axe in hand. Finally, the child-like soldier from panel 1 reappears in the foreground, this time with his slouch hat on, but his finger in mouth, looking puzzled as the entire cast stand behind him: 'Then it was discovered that an unfortunate private was the cause of the whole trouble and they all roared at him' (NLA: *Aussie*, 1918).

'Twenty Four Hours Leave' Captions in this narrative are derivative of the oral tradition of 'Billjim' and digger yarns (NLA: **Kia-Ora Coo-ee,** *1918).*

Multi-panel comic narratives in Australian First World War...

The first panel ('no.1') sets the style of oral narrative as a man starts to tell a story: 'Me and Billo put it on the O.C. for leave to go and see a sick cobber'. The men are seen by the military police before they spot the police, and the soldiers end up in the local jail of Kasr-el-Nil (a river district of Cairo). They receive seven days 'confined to barracks' ('C.B.')—'worth it'—as they could avoid fighting! This strip by David Barker reveals much, in text and drawings, about the difference in identity between officers and troops. The abbreviations used for hierarchy quite naturally assume reader knowledge of ranks (O.C. = officer commanding; A.P.M. = Assistant Provost Marshall—military police). Similarly, a feather in the hat indicates the Australian flagship Light Horse Brigade. Despite differences in ranks, there is a note of shared experience between ranks, indicated by the fact that the officer administering the punishment is sitting on the by now iconic Fray Bentos ('bully beef') box.

By the summer of 1915 in Gallipoli, 80% of the men had suffered from dysentery. On the Western Front, soldiers stated that the medical corps were never seen within 500 yards of the firing line, and referred to Royal Army Medical Corps as the 'rob-all-my-comrades brigands' (Fuller, 1990, p. 61). Yet the medics themselves saw things differently, and articulated this in a somewhat disturbing comic strip with a by-line 'drawn by Doc' about a character called 'Pills'. Each of the eight panels is given a time of the day, starting with 9 am, when the corporal is told (as he is taking a medicine bottle from the shelf) that he is wanted 'right away'. 'Righto' he answers cooperatively. After a fifteen-minute walk he meets his first patient, who has cut his finger on a bully beef tin. By 9.35 am, he is pouring medicines, when he is told that 'a chap' wants him. He arrives to see a group of officers playing cards, and one tells him 'I want to see the dentist tomorrow'. A dialogue balloon of question and exclamation marks indicates that he is unpleased and swearing to himself in frustration. By 10 am, he is administering a syringe to another patient when a man runs in to tell him: 'Shake it up, Doc! You're wanted at once'. The medical orderly sends the contents of the syringe flying everywhere while he swears again. By the final panel, at 10.15 am, he has turned neurotically insane, and is seen running towards his next destination, brandishing an axe, and foaming at the mouth, with a saw and two bottles under his arm (NLA: *Aussie*, 1918).

A similar fast-changing reaction is recorded in a *Ça Ne Fait Rien* story, dated 18 September 1918, about the author's response to news of returning home. C.H. Gould starts off by wishing that he had never signed up, but when he receives his letter about leaving the Western Front to go home, he excitedly shakes hands in a farewell with his superior, telling him : ' 'ooray! Best bon war I've ever seen'.

Ça Ne Fait Rien *18 Sept.1918. (AWM: folder 44).*

Conclusions

Contributions towards the comic-strip format varied in style and purpose. Sequential panels with their unique interaction between illustration and text need to be recognised as a form of self-publishing and as an early form of citizen visual journalism that can be evidenced trans-nationally. Themes tended to be common to more than one nationality and front, with uniforms and backdrops changing, but linguistic differences emerge from the colloquial dialogue that is also a characteristic of comic strips. This form of popular culture reveals collective, amateur self-expression, and the ephemeral spontaneity of illustrative narratives is comparable to today's mobile-phone- and video-based citizen journalism.

The emphasis on gossip and comment is evocative of later mass media tabloid approaches, but in the Australian case it also owes much to the oral tradition of Digger yarns and storytelling. One difference for Australians is that troop publications can be contextualised as part of a longer running cultural development—the invention, re-invention, and ongoing shaping of the Digger and Anzac legends as part of documented scholarship on Australasian identity (Seal, 1990, 2004, 2005; White, 1981). After the war, some newspapers such as the *Aussie* continued as the voice of the returning serviceman, reproducing original cartoons and comic panels as a means of retaining memories. *The Anzac Book* was similarly presented—as a souvenir—by projecting the record to a wider audience.

As a form of social observation, narrative humour relies on recognising absurdity and incongruity in familiar situations. Trench publications were primarily a source of entertainment; the episodes and thoughts that were visualised inevitably portray everyday situations rather than battle, death, or military observations on the progress and strategy of the War. The contribution of works here to the history of citizen visual journalism is one of immediate social observation through the articulation of sentiment. These works provide instant narrative reactions of ordinary people (such as those in Plate 8) through the interconnection of dialogue, captions, and illustrations, offering snapshots that reveal shared feelings and emotions as wartime experiences.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Of the many memoirs and histories, see Blunden (1928), and the works of Lyn MacDonald that draw on accounts of survivors. For historiography of Gallipoli, see Macleod (2004).
2. The only other event in modern history that prompted a similar self-publishing explosion was the French Revolution, when the number of publications mushroomed to 2000 from only one official journal during the Ancien Regime (Chapman, 2005, pp. 15–22; 2008, pp. 131–2).

3. For a general survey, see Ryan (1979), although he does not mention examples of trench publications.
4. For a detailed assessment of Bean's *Gallipoli Diary*, see Fewster (1983). Bean was also involved in *The Rising Sun*, and this paper was later incorporated into *The Aussie*.
5. According to Broadbent (2009, pp. 160–1) 'The hyperbole about courage and dash that surrounds the Anzac Legend is Ashmead Bartlett's. The more human features of the image—the mateship, the robust vigour, and the ability to endure and put a cheerful face on adversity—can be traced to Bean.' See also Fewster (1982).
6. Bean later published some of his rejections for *The Anzac Book* in *The Rising Sun* (Seal, 2005, pp. 51–61). Rejected contributions have been published subsequently in a recent edition of *The Anzac Book* (2010).
7. Wise notes that a single panel cartoon produced by the British soldier-cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather was reproduced to depict an Australian soldier at Gallipoli by changing the uniform and the backdrop—everything else remained the same (Wise, 2007, pp. 237–8).

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