PROTECTION OF AUTHOR'S COPYRIGHT

This copy has been supplied by the Library of the University of Otago on the understanding that the following conditions will be observed:

1. To comply with s56 of the Copyright Act 1994 [NZ], this thesis copy must only be used for the purposes of research or private study.

2. The author's permission must be obtained before any material in the thesis is reproduced, unless such reproduction falls within the fair dealing guidelines of the Copyright Act 1994. Due acknowledgement must be made to the author in any citation.

3. No further copies may be made without the permission of the Librarian of the University of Otago.

August 2010
A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts
at the University of Otago, Dunedin,
New Zealand.
1994
ABSTRACT

Every year on 25 April New Zealanders commemorate Anzac Day. The day is set aside to remember the nation’s war dead. This thesis examines the observance of Anzac Day from 1946 to 1990 and argues that as New Zealand’s most important day of commemoration it unlocks the changing social and cultural system of which it was a part.

The thesis primarily examines Anzac Day historically although an anthropological examination is also undertaken by deconstructing Anzac Day 1955. This deconstruction reveals not one but two rituals. The public ritual expressed sorrow and pride. It was provided with meaning by the public mythology of war. On the other hand, the ritual of ex-service personnel was primarily concerned with a renewal of their wartime culture and provided meaning by shared experiences of the reality of war. The two rituals were thus opposed although they continually overlapped during the day and shared its central axiom - remembrance. Anzac Day also expressed a national mythology of New Zealand as a harmonious and egalitarian nation. A close reading of the day’s observance, however, discloses the limitations of that mythology and the reality of social and cultural divisions.

The proximity of the Second World War losses made Anzac Day 1946 a holy day. The passage of time ameliorated the nation’s grief so that by the late 1950s Anzac Day was just a holiday for many New Zealanders. This development led to the statutory introduction of the half-day observance in 1966. During the late 1960s and early 1970s Anzac Day became the centre of controversy as anti-Vietnam War protesters challenged the meaning of the day. This same generation and their children returned to Anzac Day services during the 1980s and in the process revived the day. Anzac Day now provided an opportunity for New Zealanders to commemorate their new sense of national identity and their feelings about war and peace. By 1990, Anzac Day was a holiday for New Zealanders but it also continued to be their most important national day - “the one day of the year”.

Anzac Day is also important to the historian because it provides a reading of the New Zealand way of life and how it has changed since the Second World War. The changing observance of Anzac Day from a holy day to a holiday between 1946 and 1990 revealed the wider secularisation of New Zealand society. This thesis further concludes that Anzac Day does not provide evidence for the existence of a New Zealand civil religion. New Zealanders also became less militaristic and war
less central to their sense of national identity. They also became less imperialistic and more overtly nationalist in an independent and indigenous sense. Anzac Day expressed these changes. The day’s observance also reflected changes in social relations (between men and women, Maori and Pakeha, Protestant and Catholic) and particularly the declining numbers and influence of ex-service personnel. Above all, this study of Anzac Day provides an insight into how New Zealanders slowly emerged from the shadow of war.
# Table of Contents

PREFACE page v

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS page viii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS page x

PROLOGUE page 1

INTRODUCTION page 3

1. RITUALS OF REMEMBRANCE
   AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ANZAC DAY page 11

2. FROM HOLY DAY TO HOLIDAY (1946-1958) page 47

3. TIME FOR A CHANGE (1959-1967) page 75

4. OLD WREATHS, NEW MESSAGES (1968-1973) page 100

5. FROM LAST POST TO Reveille (1974-1990) page 124

CONCLUSION page 143

EPILOGUE page 151

BIBLIOGRAPHY page 153
PREFACE

Every year on 25 April New Zealanders commemorate Anzac Day, the day set aside to remember the nation's war dead. From the time of its inaugural commemoration in 1916, Anzac Day has been, variously, a holy day as well as a holiday. The death of over 11,500 New Zealanders during the Second World War made Anzac Day 1946 a holy day. During the next four decades, however, New Zealanders increasingly stressed the "holy" over the "holy" in their observance of the day. By 1990, Anzac Day was a holiday when one could attend a variety of sporting fixtures, see the latest film, go for a drink at the pub or do some shopping (at least, in the afternoon). Such activities would have been unthinkable in 1946. Many New Zealanders, however, including those too young to have experienced war or its impact, still felt the sacred significance of the day when they participated in commemorative ceremonies or viewed them on television. Anzac Day 1990 was undeniably more mundane than sacred but the mix continued to make it the nation's most important day of commemoration in the year. This thesis studies the changing observance of "the one day of the year" from the end of the Second World War to 1990. It argues that Anzac Day is worthy of study because it provides an insight into the New Zealand way of life and how it has changed during the postwar period.

The methodology, then, is that of microsocial analysis or microhistory in which a "microscopic example" can have macroscopic implications. The study primarily utilised printed sources, particularly newspapers. For practical reasons, I undertook a year-by-year survey of the major newspapers in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. These newspapers covered the observance of Anzac Day throughout their circulation areas. The *New Zealand Herald*, for example, carried reports of ceremonies held in the city and province of Auckland, Northland, Waikato, and the Bay of Plenty. To further counter any potential city bias I also surveyed the observance of Anzac Day in the small rural town of Milton, Otago. When issues of importance arose in other parts of the country I used other newspapers and sources.

The best source for the national observance of Anzac Day, and one specifically providing an ex-serviceman's and woman's viewpoint, was the official journal of the Returned Services' Association: *RSA Review*. Not every ex-serviceman and woman belonged to the RSA (about half of the total ex-service population were members at any one time). This still made it by far the largest and most representative ex-service personnel organisation in the country. The RSA also operated as an umbrella organisation for smaller ex-service personnel organisations (such as the War
Amputees’ Association and South African Veterans’ Association) which were affiliated to the national body. Most importantly for this study, the RSA organised most of the Anzac Day ceremonies throughout the country and was generally the “Keeper” of Anzac Day. These reasons explain this study’s extensive use of RSA sources. The records held at NZRSA Dominion Headquarters in Wellington were particularly useful: especially the Minutes of the Annual General Meetings of the NZRSA Dominion Council, the Annual General Reports of the NZRSA, the Minutes of the NZRSA Dominion Executive Committee as well as miscellaneous material on the observance of Anzac Day. These sources may appear biased towards activities at a national level but most document issues initially raised by sub-Associations. The activities of local RSAs were also reported in RSA Review and local newspapers. I would like to take this opportunity to note that the definitive history of the RSA has yet to be written, and is well overdue, as such a study would provide an invaluable addition to our understanding of the impact of war on New Zealand society throughout the twentieth century.

I dispensed with an oral component after reading transcripts of interviews with over ninety First World War veterans conducted by Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton during the late 1980s. These interviews comprise the bulk of the World War One Oral History Archive at the Alexander Turnbull Library. In the interviews veterans were questioned on their past involvement in Anzac Day activities and their feelings about the day. The replies revealed that remembrance is as personal as the immediate responses to death. The number of interviewees that would have been required to obtain a representative sample placed an oral component beyond the scope of this study. In any case, the interviews with First World War veterans added little to the information available from reading ex-servicemen’s correspondence in RSA Review. The printed sources alone provided a comprehensive view of the public and ex-service personnel observance of Anzac Day from 1946 to 1990.

The prologue in this thesis briefly examines the observance of Anzac Day from 1916 to 1945 to place this study in context. The introduction outlines why the observance of Anzac Day from 1946 to 1990 is worth studying. This is followed by a brief theoretical discussion of the place of ritual in human experience. Chapter One specifically examines the ritual form and meaning of Anzac Day from an anthropological perspective. This is done by deconstructing the observance of Anzac Day 1955. The chapter reveals what Anzac Day says to and about New Zealanders. The remaining chapters historically examine the observance of Anzac Day from 1946 to 1990. Chapter Two follows the transformation of Anzac Day from a holy day in 1946 to a holiday by the late 1950s. Chapter Three examines the public call for the liberalisation of the day’s observance and the RSA’s response during the
early 1960s. The chapter ends with a description of the inaugural half-day observance of Anzac Day in 1967. The same year an anti-Vietnam War wreath was laid at an Anzac Day service for the first time. Chapter Four recounts the anti-Vietnam War protests at Anzac Day services during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The chapter also explains how these protests set a precedent for later groups by extending the meaning of Anzac Day beyond remembrance of New Zealand servicemen and women. Following the protest era the observance of Anzac Day waned during the mid 1970s before being revitalised by an upswing in attendances of younger people during the 1980s. Chapter Five examines the day’s revival, particularly why New Zealanders born since the war came to embrace the day. This chapter ends with a description of the seventy-fifth commemoration of the Gallipoli campaign on Anzac Day 1990. The conclusion outlines what the changing observance of Anzac Day tells us about New Zealand society and its culture since the Second World War. Finally, the epilogue contemplates the future for Anzac Day in the twenty-first century.

In completing this thesis I have inevitably incurred a considerable debt of appreciation. I would like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the NZRSA in providing me with a Special Award of the Kippenberger Memorial Fellowship to assist my study. The grant enabled me to travel to Wellington to undertake research at NZRSA Dominion Headquarters. My fortnight “occupation” was made both profitable and enjoyable thanks to the friendly assistance of the staff. I would particularly like to thank Senior Administration Officer Jan Mandahl and Chief Executive Pat Herbert for all their help and encouragement. The staff at HQ truly exemplify their Association’s motto of “People Helping People”. I would also like to thank all those librarians and archivists who have assisted me. Thanks especially to the staff of the Hocken Library, Dunedin who must have dreaded seeing my face appear as the lift door opened and, particularly, David Macdonald. Kerry Otto and Danny Flanagan kindly undertook the laborious task of proof-reading. Most of all I wish to thank my supervisor and mentor, Professor Erik Olssen, for all his friendly and invaluable assistance, suggestions and encouragement over the years.

Finally, one does not finish a thesis without the love and support of those close to you. I owe my parents a special debt for always being there. My greatest debt, however, is to Jaimie for her patience, faith and, above all, undying love. In the first instance this work is dedicated to Jaimie and in the second:

To all those remembered
and who remember
on Anzac Day
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Auckland’s citizens’ service, Anzac Day 1955
(Free Lance Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. F68204 1/2) following p.15

Fig. 2 Ex-servicemen’s parade in Wellington, Anzac Day 1950
(National Publicity Studios, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 34040 1/2) following p.21

Fig. 3 Dawn Services continued to grow in popularity throughout the 1960s. Lower Hutt War Memorial, Anzac Day 1970
(New Zealand Weekly News) following p.78

Fig. 4 Afternoon services and parades subsequently attracted smaller attendances throughout the 1960s. New Plymouth’s ex-servicemen’s parade, Anzac Day 1970
(New Zealand Weekly News) following p.78

Fig. 5 “Anzac Day 1967” by Sid Scales (Otago Daily Times) following p.97

Fig. 6 “Anzac Day 1968” by Sid Scales (Otago Daily Times) following p.97

Fig. 7 The Mayor of Christchurch, A.R. Guthrey, removes a placard depicting the My Lai massacre and a bunch of flowers placed on the War Memorial by members of the Progressive Youth Movement, Anzac Day 1970
(New Zealand Weekly News) following p.105
Fig. 8 Senior-Sergeant E.S. Tuck requests Progressive Youth Movement members to move away after they tried to replace their My Lai placard on the Christchurch War Memorial, Anzac Day 1970

(New Zealand Weekly News) following p.106

Fig. 9 An ex-serviceman attempts to prevent a member of the Progressive Youth Movement from placing a picture of the My Lai massacre at Christchurch's citizens' service, Anzac Day 1971

(Christchurch Press) following p.108

Fig. 10 A member of the Women's Action Group laying a wreath with the inscription "We remember all the forgotten women. All those who died in battle, those raped and mutilated, our sisters who have had their lives destroyed by the wars of this century", Auckland Cenotaph, Anzac Day 1978

(New Zealand Herald) following p.121

Fig. 11 Ex-servicemen clash with Maori protesters who hold banners which read "For our tupunas who died in capitalist wars" and "The capitalist system killed our people in foreign wars and still rips us off today", Auckland's Dawn Service, Anzac Day 1979

(New Zealand Herald) following p.122

Fig. 12 "Anzac Day 1980s style". First World War veteran, Thomas Scott, with his daughter and grandchildren pass a group of "Women for Peace" campaigners at the Auckland Cenotaph, Anzac Day 1983

(New Zealand Herald) following p.132
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DEC  Dominion Executive Committee (of the Returned Services' Association)

EP   Evening Post

NZH  New Zealand Herald

ODT  Otago Daily Times

PYM  Progressive Youth Movement

RSA  Returned Services' Association
By 1946, Anzac Day already had a thirty year history. This earlier period requires a brief explanation to place in context the observance of Anzac Day after the Second World War. The following overview summarises Maureen Sharpe’s unsurpassed study of Anzac Day in New Zealand between 1916 and 1939.1

On the first anniversary of the Gallipoli landing in 1916, a general demand arose spontaneously for a day of remembrance for the dead. The Government gazetted a half-holiday. Returned soldiers and many citizens thought that combined services would be the most appropriate means of commemoration. Some clergy found their religious principles would not allow them to join in such gatherings but returned soldiers did not want to be split up among the churches. The fact that most towns held a combined service testifies to a belief that the soldiers had earned the right to speak on such matters. Many elements from this first observance became traditional: the parade of returned servicemen to the combined citizens’ service; the reunion dinner and concert for ex-servicemen; and lest the dead be forgotten, school services were considered vital. The day was commemorated with a mixture of sorrow and pride.2

Anzac Day’s solemnness intensified during the next few years as the day came to commemorate many more dead. Several problems over the day’s commemoration also had to be resolved during this period. In 1917 Anzac Day coincided with municipal elections while in 1918 and 1919 confusion arose over the closure of shops, factories and offices. In response the Returned Soldiers’ Association (as it was then called) approached Government with the request to make Anzac Day a “close” holiday analogous to a Sunday or Good Friday. The Anzac Day Bill introduced in 1920 would have fulfilled this request except for a late amendment which removed the words, “in all respects as if Anzac Day were a Sunday”, and instead prohibited the operation of hotels and race courses. The change meant Anzac Day 1921 was unsatisfactory for many people, especially the Returned Soldiers’ Association. Although most businesses had closed, some theatres and picture shows remained open. With the passage of the Anzac Day Amendment Act in 1922, however, Anzac


Day finally became a “close” holiday and for most people a holy day.  

The solemnness of Anzac Day throughout the 1920s reflected the mood of the nation. By the 1930s, however, the lapse of time since the war meant that, “The young and others, began to extract from the day meanings unseen by the grieving eyes of the war generation”. The major criticism came from those associated with the growing peace movement, who believed that the day emphasised militarism and glorified war. The anti-war movement tried to use Anzac Day to make their point. Criticism also came from a small number questioning New Zealand’s relationship with Britain. They found it difficult to uphold a day associated with war and British imperialism as one of national birth. The manner of observing Anzac Day was also challenged during the mid 1930s. There were suggestions that entertainment be allowed in the afternoon or that the day be transferred to the nearest Sunday.

The RSA provided the major bulwark against criticism and calls for change although many New Zealanders also believed in the significance of Anzac Day. The number of ex-servicemen attending Anzac Day services certainly increased during the decade. This development underpinned the popularity of ex-servicemen’s reunions and the introduction of the Dawn Service in a number of places during the late 1930s. It was the outbreak of the Second World War, however, which finally silenced critics and fully rejuvenated the spirit of Anzac Day. The whole nation once more found comfort in the day during the war years as the list of dead grew longer. By 1946, then, Anzac Day had come full circle since its inaugural commemoration thirty years earlier.

---

Why study Anzac Day? What can one learn from a single day? The argument of this thesis is that Anzac Day between 1946 and 1990 was not just any day but “the one day of the year” - New Zealand’s most important commemorative occasion. National commemorative occasions are important, moreover, because they endeavour to express the collective feeling of the nation. They also convey this message to participants in a relatively coherent manner. If the meaning of national life is unclear on mundane days, the reverse is true of commemorative ones. In other words, commemorative days express the national ethos. They offer a key to some of the fundamental values and assumptions underlying any particular society. To interpret and account for Anzac Day since the Second World War is, therefore, to unlock the social and cultural system of which it was a part.

This study of Anzac Day reveals the impact of the First and particularly the Second World Wars on New Zealand society. The nation’s martial past manifested itself in various ways on Anzac Day. Its solemnity disclosed the private grief of the many New Zealanders who had lost loved ones. The day also revealed the division between ex-service personnel and civilians which influenced postwar society but was invisible on other days. Finally, New Zealanders’ attitudes to past wars, to war in general and the means of preventing its occurrence in the future were communicated through the day’s observance.

The popular perception of Anzac Day as a national day, if not the National Day, meant New Zealanders’ sense of national identity found expression on 25 April each year. Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips believe that Anzac Day is “the closest thing we have to a ceremony of nationalism”.1 As a national day, Anzac Day also concealed divisions and tensions within New Zealand society. In some years, however, its observance confirmed that certain sub-cultures did not subscribe to the national mythology. A close reading of the day thus discloses class, gender, religion and race relations.

Anzac Day was a holy day during the 1940s, arguably the holiest day of the year. The secularisation of New Zealand society intensified during the next four decades. Census statistics show that the proportion of New Zealanders who had

---

“no religion” increased from 0.7% in 1945 to 16.4% in 1986. Conversely, church attendances fell. The attendance at worship of Presbyterians, for example, fell from a national figure of 119,041 in 1960 to 45,613 in 1990 - a decline of 61.7%. By 1990, empty churches and busy supermarkets on Sunday were visible signs of the impact of secularisation. Christian holy days - Good Friday, Christmas, and Saints’ Days - also lost much of their religious significance over the period. The changing observance of Anzac Day provided another indicator of the process of secularisation. In addition, this study examines whether the observance of Anzac Day provides evidence for the existence of an indigenous “civic” or “civil religion” during this period.

After the Second World War the Returned Services’ Association (RSA) continued to serve as the “Keeper” of Anzac Day. Local RSAs virtually organised every community’s commemoration during this period. Anzac Day was definitely the RSA’s “one day of the year”. At national level the Association vigilantly defended the day from criticism on the one hand and apathy on the other. One of the major themes of this thesis is the challenge to Anzac Day and the response of the RSA. The criticism fell into two broad categories: those who questioned the manner of observing the day; and those who questioned its meaning. By far the greatest threat, however, was public apathy. In response the RSA fought a rearguard action to maintain the status quo until change became the only realistic option. The importance of Anzac Day to the RSA and vice versa, explains this thesis’ concentration on the Association. The debate within the RSA also provides a barometer of the public observance of Anzac Day. In short, public consensus over the day’s observance brought little or no discussion while criticism provoked much debate within the RSA. This thesis therefore provides an insight into one of New Zealand’s most important social institutions and political pressure groups of the twentieth century.

In general, Anzac Day reflected and expressed the broad cultural, social and political changes in New Zealand between 1945 and 1990. And New Zealand changed immeasurably over those forty-five years. The frontcover of Michael King’s After The War: New Zealand Since 1945 explains that the book details, “How an insulated, emotionally secure and dependent British colony of the 1940s was transformed into an independent nation by the late 1980s, open to technological and cultural influences sweeping the globe”.

A study of Anzac Day therefore fits into the emerging field of cultural studies.

---

Through the close examination of one form of cultural expression a whole range of meanings can be revealed. As the American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, noted two decades ago: “in close reading, one can start anywhere in a culture’s repertoire of forms and end up anywhere else”. Anzac Day shall be placed under the microscope in the following chapter with the aim of demystifying what, in Ken Inglis’ words, is “a privileged item of discourse”.

To understand a commemorative occasion on this level, however, requires one first to consider the place of ritual in human experience. The view of ritual presented here is best summed up in the well-known biblical phrase “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). In other words, once survival is assured, humans require a dimension of existence in addition to the utilitarian basis of everyday life. Humans are symbol-producing animals, setting up systems of meaning in which to experience life. Robert Bocock, writing about ritual in modern England, argued that, “Models of man which do not take this capacity seriously into account will be seen to be faulty, especially in the way they handle, or fail to handle, the part played by ritual action in human society, including modern, industrial society”. Bocock defined ritual as “the symbolic use of bodily movement and gesture in a social situation to express and articulate meaning”. He distinguished two dimensions in ritual: “There is the group itself who participate in some way in the ritual, and here participation importantly includes the appreciative audience; and there is the ritual’s symbolic system”.

There exists considerable disagreement among anthropologists over the relationship between ritual, symbol and myth. This thesis follows the view of the British anthropologist, Victor Turner, that, “The symbol is the smallest unit of ritual” - in other words, its “building-block”. A ritual is dependent upon its symbols to enhance and maintain its underlying meaning. Symbols can literally take any form and may be interpreted by their name, physical appearance, position in the ritual, or

---


their history. The relationship of myth to ritual is not as clear-cut. Myth can provide the underlying meaning being expressed by ritual and symbols. Reality too, in the form of shared experiences and understanding, can also fulfil this function. In summary, this thesis presents the view that ritual and symbol are interrelated but the underlying meaning can be provided by either myth or reality.

The most important point is that rituals basically "do" and "say" something. More specifically, rituals serve three purposes: social, psychological and expressive. Socially, ritual can bind people to their group, community or nation. By participating in a ritual, one feels related to other members of the group and its value system. In this way, ritual can function to assimilate people to the mores of society and remind them of their obligations. Thus rituals can maintain cohesion within society. These ideas about the social purpose of ritual are based on the work of Emile Durkheim and later exponents of the "consensual" model of society. The central premise of the "consensual" view of the world is that each part of a structure functions to maintain the whole. To "maintain" is to keep it in "equilibrium" (an analogy from the world of nature). This view underpinned the influential social theory known as "functionalism".

One American sociologist's functionalist work is particularly relevant to Anzac Day. In the 1950s, W. Lloyd Warner studied an American city's observance of Memorial Day (the day when Americans commemorate their war dead). Warner argued that the Memorial Day ceremonies function "periodically to integrate" the community in which they are staged. In fact, for Warner, that was their vital function. He noted that any society, though supposedly a whole, is not normally united. On the contrary, its members are divided through belonging to a variety of distinct social, religious and ethnic sub-groups. Commemorative observances, such as Memorial Day, thereby bridge the separations of everyday life by initially bringing everyone together physically, and then by asserting through powerful symbolism that diverse affiliations and concerns are secondary to more important shared values and goals.

This type of community bonding has been described as "secular" or "civil" religion because it fulfils the social function of religion. The origin of the concept of civil religion is usually attributed to Durkheim, although it can be traced back to

12 For the original idea and following discussion of the three purposes of ritual I acknowledge M. Sharpe, "Anzac Day in New Zealand, 1916 to 1939", pp.11-3.


Rousseau and the French Enlightenment. In the late 1960s, Robert Bellah identified a civil religion in America which he claimed "at its best is a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experience of the American people". In this functionalist framework, civil religion articulates in "religious" language and ritual what is meant by being an American citizen. In civil religion, therefore, symbols, myths and rituals become part of a liturgy of group or national self-worship.

Apart from possibly giving people a feeling of belonging, rituals fill a human need to make sense of the world around them. At this psychological level, ritual appears to be most important at a time of crisis, particularly death. Loring Danforth, studying death rituals in modern rural Greece, has written of the power of death to disrupt:

...death is an extreme example of a crisis that threatens to bring about the complete collapse of our socially constructed world. Death emphasizes the precarious, unstable qualities of our lives. The loss of a significant other threatens the individual with a sense of meaningless and disorder because it confronts him with the loss of his sense of reality and identity.

In the case of mass death, such as war, the structure of society may be threatened. "However, it is clear that in spite of their knowledge of their own mortality the majority of people in all cultures are able to live meaningful lives in socially constructed worlds, which, though at times delicate and fragile, do not collapse", argued Danforth because rituals "legitimate, justify, and explain such phenomena...[and thereby overcome] the threat of social paralysis". Thus rituals enable people to cope by reaffirming the order and continuity of the world. In general, rituals enable humans to cope with everyday existence by expressing what is most important to them.

Expression of meaning is the most important and universal purpose of ritual. Together with other human symbol systems such as language, art, and religion, rituals and particularly commemorative days communicate the ethos of society. W. Lloyd Warner believed ritual worked in this manner:

From one point of view, human culture is the symbolic organization of the remembered experiences of the dead past as newly felt and understood by the living members of the collectivity. Language, religion, art, science, morality, and our knowledge of ourselves and the world around us, being parts of our culture, are meaningful symbol systems which the living generations have inherited from those now gone. We use these symbols

---


18 Ibid.
briefly, modify them or not, and then pass them on to those who succeed us. Thus, in fact, communication between living and dead individuals maintains continuity of culture for the species.\textsuperscript{19}

For Warner the expressive role of symbolic systems, such as rituals, functioned to “maintain” social equilibrium.

Warner’s academic career spanned the period when the functionalist approach dominated sociology and social anthropology from about the 1920s to the 1960s. During the 1960s, however, the functional approach to the study of religion and ritual was severely criticised for its inability to deal with social and cultural change. Clifford Geertz, among others, convincingly argued that functionalism with its emphasis on balance, equilibrium and stability has failed to explain the dysfunctional aspects of symbolic behaviour and its ability to contribute to the transformation or disintegration of social and cultural systems.\textsuperscript{20} A more sophisticated approach was required that appreciated the role of ritual in the creation, development and communication of systems of meaning.

The response came in the form of interpretative anthropology, particularly in the work of Clifford Geertz, in which a semiotic approach to the concept of culture was adopted. For Geertz, “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs”.\textsuperscript{21} In other words, culture consists of “socially established structures of meaning”\textsuperscript{22} embodied in systems of symbols. It is through these “structures of meaning” or “webs of significance” that humans order experience and make sense of the world. In short, “the symbolic systems of a culture communicate; they convey information; they express meaning”.\textsuperscript{23} Interpretative anthropologists, like Warner, thus viewed symbolic systems as means of expression. Unlike Warner and other functionalists, however, they did not assume that symbolic systems necessarily have positive functions. They believed only that “societies, like lives, contain their own interpretations” and attempted “only to learn how to gain access to them”.\textsuperscript{24} The focus of anthropology ever since has been on finding ways of gaining access.

Interpretative anthropologists devoted particular attention to the study of ritual as a symbolic system and one that plays an important role in the expression and

\textsuperscript{19} Warner, \textit{The Living and the Dead}, pp.4-5.

\textsuperscript{20} Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures}, pp.142-69.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, p.5.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p.12.

\textsuperscript{23} Danforth, \textit{The Death Rituals of Rural Greece}, p.29.

\textsuperscript{24} Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures}, p.453.
construction of culture. In his much celebrated essay “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”, Geertz explained that rituals talk about important cultural themes. Through these narratives, people interpret their order of things to themselves. They are stories people tell themselves about themselves. Using literary analogies rather than conversational ones, Geertz described ritual as a “metasocial commentary”, a “text” which can be read or interpreted by both performers and observers of the ritual. Anthropologists of the “processional” school of ritual, foremost Victor Turner, questioned whether observers can know the true meaning of a ritual. For Turner, meaning was only accessible through the performance of ritual, “the doing”, and the cognitive and emotional “transformation” which this brought about for participants. This difference aside, rituals express the ethos of a group, community or society.

This does not mean that rituals always reveal or contribute to a state of social equilibrium. A society and its culture is forever undergoing redefinition. Rituals can therefore express and bring about change and conflict as well as consensus. In the case of national commemorative days conflict may arise when sub-cultures do not share their meaning with the nation as a whole. When the meaning of a ritual contradicts the reality of social life, furthermore, its performance can produce social conflict. The dysfunctional potential of ritual reminds us that it “is not just a pattern of meaning; it is also a form of social interaction”. In other words, rituals can model, as well as mirror, social reality. Finally, rituals are themselves forever changing in order to continue to be meaningful to those who perform and observe them. Once a ritual is devoid of meaning it no longer functions as a symbolic system and, apart from surviving as an anachronistic ceremony, will usually lapse.

It seems we have come full circle, rituals do not just “say” something, they can “do” something. They can have a function! One can utilise the concept of “function” without accepting the reductive theory of functionalism. There is no a priori reason to accept the universal existence of social orders as integrated, homeostatic social-systems. Instead, what rituals “do”, whether beneficial or

26 Ibid, p.448.
28 For a case study of a dysfunctional ritual which caused social disruption see Geertz’s description of a Javanese funeral rite. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, pp.142-69.
30 Handelman, Models and mirrors, pp.22-62.
detrimental for society, is effect social life in some way. It is this causal interpretation of function which lies at the core of any conception of ritual. Above all, it is vital to the ongoing existence of any group or society that there exists a medium through which members can collectively express to themselves their ethos and what is most important to them. Rituals, particularly national commemorative days, fulfil this function.

When New Zealanders attend Anzac Day ceremonies, they are expressing in ritual form their feelings about the war dead, and the impact of war on their nation and sense of identity. Anzac Day, again invoking Geertz, *is a New Zealand reading of New Zealand experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves*. By studying this day over the postwar period, one gains a reading of how New Zealand society and its culture has changed since the Second World War.

---


32 Ibid, p.15.
CHAPTER ONE

RITUALS OF REMEMBRANCE

AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ANZAC DAY

This chapter describes and deconstructs Anzac Day 1955 in Auckland and, in less detail, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Matamata and Milton. The tool-kit of the ethnographer and anthropologist is used on this field-trip into the past. The aim of this “thick description”? To gain an understanding of the dynamics and meaning of Anzac Day and its expression in ritual form. In short, this chapter discloses and explains what the day says to New Zealanders and how it says it.

More specifically, this chapter deconstructs not one but two Anzac Day rituals: a public and an ex-service personnel ritual. The two rituals expressed each group’s vastly different experiences of war. During the day, however, both rituals continually overlapped and shared a desire to remember the dead. They were, above all, rituals of remembrance.

Anzac Day 1955 was chosen because of its typicality. A decade had passed since the end of the Second World War. The day was therefore free of the “abnormal” solemnness which characterised Anzac Days during the late 1940s. Anzac Day 1955 was the fortieth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign but this barely changed the day from any other during the 1950s. In fact, the day resembles in structure and, to a lesser extent, rhetoric those up until the mid 1960s. Much of the symbolic and ritual expression remained unchanged in 1990. Let us now go back in time to 25 April 1955, where at the Auckland War Memorial the Dawn Service is just about to begin.

A loud drum roll broke the silence of early morning at the Cenotaph.¹ This heralded the commencement of Auckland’s seventeenth Dawn Service, organised by the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) Association in conjunction with the Auckland RSA. The pitch black sky and floodlit Cenotaph created a solemn effect. The time was a few minutes after 5.30 am.

Fifteen minutes earlier returned servicemen had “fallen in”, at the nearby kiosk, in preparation for the short parade up the hill. A few, undoubtedly, had partaken of

¹ The following account of Auckland’s observance of Anzac Day in 1955 is based on reports in the New Zealand Herald (NZH), 26 April 1955, p.12 and from a survey of Anzac Days in Auckland during the 1950s as reported in the same newspaper.
the traditional predawn tot of rum. The Governor-General, Sir Willoughby Norrie, dressed in full military uniform, had led the parade of 900 ex-servicemen, eight abreast, the short distance up the hill to the Cenotaph. Nursing sisters and ex-servicewomen had not paraded as they had already "fallen in" on the steps below the Cenotaph at 5.25am as instructed.

Once at the Cenotaph, ex-servicemen and women joined with members of the public in singing the first hymn of the service, "Abide With Me". Following this hymn former AIF chaplain, Canon R.E. Scott, offered prayers for those who gave their lives, those sick and bereaved, the Queen, all those entrusted with the power of governing, and for the cause of peace. Then came the hymn most associated with the day, Kipling's "Recessional" ("Lest We Forget"), its words expressing the hope that people would not forget the dead. After this hymn, the Governor-General pronounced the Anzac Dedication:

"At this hour, upon this day, Anzac received its baptism of fire and became one of the immortal names in history. We who are gathered here think of the comrades who went out with us in the battlefield of the two Great Wars, but did not return. We feel them still near us in spirit. We wish to be worthy of their great sacrifice. Let us, therefore, once more dedicate ourselves to the service of the ideals for which they died. As the dawn is even now about to pierce the night, so let their memory inspire us to work for the coming of the new light into the dark places of the world. We will remember them."

Many recited with the Governor-General the words, "We will remember them", and then everyone together, in one determined voice, repeated these words.

Sir Willoughby walked forward and placed a simple laurel wreath at the foot of the Cenotaph. The most solemn moment of the service followed, the sounding of Last Post as the flags on the Cenotaph were lowered to half-mast. With the last note of the bugle fading, the floodlights went out, leaving the crowd in darkness to remember the dead during the minute's silence.

With the Court of Honour still in darkness, the silence was broken by a voice over the public address system intoning the famous lines of Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen":

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn, At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them."

The floodlights came back on as the Auckland Commercial Travellers' Association male choir sang "There Is No Death". Canon Sutton gave a brief address relevant to the themes of the day. The crowd joined together to sing "O God Our Help in Ages Past". During this hymn, the Governor-General placed a white cross in the Field of
Remembrance, an area of the lawn adjacent to the Court of Honour specially marked out in the shape of a cross, which provided next-of-kin with the opportunity of paying tribute to loved ones. Canon Sutton pronounced the benediction. Reveille was sounded, clear and confident, as the flags were raised to the top of their staves. The first hint of dawn was now visible. The service concluded, as it had commenced, with a drum roll followed by the National Anthem, "God Save The Queen".

The parade of ex-servicemen then reformed and marched silently back down the hill to the kiosk where the men were dismissed. Some of the ex-servicemen went on to the breakfast reunion organised by the AIF Association and attended by the Governor-General, the Mayor of Auckland and Government representatives. Back at the Cenotaph, meanwhile, next-of-kin briefly paid their own private tributes before dispersing quickly and quietly out of the dawn cold. When the Court of Honour was once again quiet, the sunlight fell on not one but sixty white crosses in the Field of Remembrance. "The people had said 'We Will remember them'", reported the *New Zealand Herald*.

The Dawn Service was a sombre, restrained service. Participants did not engage in conversation to any extent, and when they did, they conversed in low tones. The darkness, calm and chill of the early morning; the single tap of the drum as ex-servicemen slowly marched up the hill to the Cenotaph; and the mournful notes of Last Post sounded by a lone bugler all combined to give a feeling of deep solemnity. The intensity of the symbolism and the shortness of the service undoubtedly contributed to the powerful impact that the service had on participants.

A distinctive feature of Auckland's observance of Anzac Day, on account of its size as the largest city in New Zealand, was the large number of parades and services held in the suburbs. Parish churches of all denominations also held services providing people with the comfort of prayer on this day of sad memories. The suburban ceremonies took place during late morning and early afternoon and were well attended. They followed a common format. A parade of ex-servicemen to the local war memorial or borough hall where a short service and wreath-laying ceremony took place. These services, attended by residents living within a relative close proximity, were more personal than the large combined services at the Auckland War Memorial. The suburban ceremony was a community one and, despite taking place within the confines of a rapidly growing metropolis, more akin to those held in small towns throughout New Zealand.

After the suburban service, some ex-servicemen went on to the local RSA club

---

2 In 1955, Anzac Day ceremonies were held in the Auckland suburbs of Onehunga, New Market, New Lynn, Mt. Roskill, Glen Eden, Papakura, Papatoetoe, Devonport, Northcote, Birkenhead, and Brown's Bay. *NZH*, 26 April 1955, p.14.
for a special morning tea or lunch and, undoubtedly, something stronger was imbibed. Most did not stay long, however, as they had to be at the Domain by 2 pm for Auckland’s main ex-servicemen’s parade and citizens’ service.

At the Domain, thousands of Aucklanders lined the one kilometre parade route from the assembly point in Grafton Road to the Cenotaph. They stood shoulder to shoulder in the chilly autumn wind as the sun fitfully appeared from behind clouds. The crowd waited silently. Meanwhile on Grafton Road, returned men gathered. Silence was not a feature of their reunion as old friends greeted one another with vigorous handshaking and laughter. This joviality came to an end, however, with the command to “fall in”. The disciplined manner in which they formed ranks revealed the seriousness of the occasion.

At 2.30 pm sharp the parade moved off in three columns under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel W. Murphy. The band of the 1st Battalion Auckland Regiment started up with a quick march. Appropriately, 260 Anzacs stepped out next. A good number considering the landing had taken place forty years earlier and with many veterans in Wellington for their inaugural national reunion. Australian units followed, symbolising the Anzac bond. Further back came South African War veterans, the legendary predecessors of the spirit of Empire and of the Anzac Tradition. Veterans of the Royal Navy, Royal Navy Reserve and Volunteer Reserve and Merchant Service, King’s Empire, Old Contemptibles, Royal Air Force and other Imperial units recalled ties with Britain. After these units, marched ex-members of various allied forces, such as the Canadians, recollecting the alliances of past wars.

Then marched returned New Zealand servicemen of the First World War from the Scottish Regiment; Mounted Rifles and Cyclists; Artillery; Engineers, Signallers and Tunnellers; and the Machine Gun Corps. The local Infantry Regiments came next with the 3rd Auckland, 6th Hauraki, 15th North Auckland, 16th Waikato and all other regiments combined. Further back to the Rifle Brigade; Pioneer Brigade; Army Service; Medical and Veterinary Corps; Ordinance, Pay, Postal and all other units combined.

In their wake came a younger generation of veterans from the Second World War. Here marched men from the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force Divisional Cavalry Regiment; Armoured Corps; Artillery; Signals and Engineers. The 210 men of the local 24th Battalion, the only infantry battalion to march as a unit, dominated this section of the parade. They were followed by members of other Infantry Battalions and all other units. Finally, the Royal New Zealand Air Force brought up the rear as no Korean veterans marched as a unit.

In all, approximately 2,000 veterans, representing forty separate and distinct groups, took part in the march. “The biggest muster for many years”, reported the
New Zealand Herald. The number of Second World War ex-servicemen was certainly larger than previous years, although still a small proportion of the parade. The crowd, estimated at 5,000, was also one of the largest for many years. Despite the size, spectators were subdued, with none of the excitement, cheering, or pushing generally associated with parades.

The parade also displayed little colour. The majority of ex-servicemen wore dark suits, with their medals and ribbons on their left breast and a red paper poppy on their lapel providing the only colour. A record $5,000 worth of poppies had been sold by the RSA in Auckland on Poppy Day. Almost every ex-serviceman and woman and most spectators wore a poppy. Some women, next-of-kin of deceased ex-servicemen, also dressed in mourning attire as a mark of respect. The military bands of the Auckland Regiment and Northern Military District Artillery; the brass bands of the Newton Salvation Army, City Silver and City Boys'; along with the Auckland District, Municipal, City and Police Highland Pipe Bands provided bursts of colour but most importantly the music. They played a mixture of martial, patriotic, and popular tunes from past wars.

As the parade made its way up the Domain and the last unit had passed, onlookers suddenly swarmed across the grassy slopes to take up vantage points near the Cenotaph. Elderly mothers of the fallen were saved this indignity as they were honoured with reserved seating within the Court of Honour enclosure. When the first band reached the Court of Honour, the music changed to the slow, mournful notes of the “Dead March” from Saul, the muffled drums beating the solemn rhythm. The step of the marching columns slowed accordingly. Upon the parade passing the Cenotaph, unit Colours were lowered and each man turned “eyes right” as a mark of respect to fallen comrades. A stillness fell over the large crowd. All bared and bowed their heads. The last ex-servicemen units finally assembled around the Court of Honour. The men stood “at ease” in columns behind their dipped Colours.

Auckland’s main citizens’ service, organised jointly by the RSA and City Council, was set to begin.

At 3 pm sharp, the Governor-General emerged from the colonnaded entrance of the Auckland War Memorial Museum and walked through ranks of boy scouts to the foot of the Cenotaph, where he laid a wreath. The Parade was called to attention for the singing of the National Anthem. Those present then bowed heads as the Governor-General began to read the Anzac Day message from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, followed by his own reply. The assembly sang the hymn “All People that on Earth Do Dwell”, which expresses faith in God’s mercy.

A bugler sounded Last Post while representatives of the armed services lowered and removed the six flags on the Cenotaph. “Abide With Me” was then sung. With
Fig. 1

Auckland’s citizens’ service, Anzac Day 1955

(Free Lance Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, F68204 1/2)
the notes of Reveille, six new flags were raised. As was traditional, the Governor-General presented the old flags to representatives of six schools from throughout Auckland province. Then followed the official wreath-laying ceremony during which a lament was piped. The Mayor of Auckland laid a wreath on behalf of citizens followed by various representatives who laid wreaths on behalf of the New Zealand Government, Australian Government, United States Consulate, RSA, Royal New Zealand Navy, New Zealand Army, Royal New Zealand Air Force, New Zealand Army Nursing Sisters, and the Merchant Navy. Other wreaths were laid by representatives of the judiciary, ex-service organisations, local bodies, school children and finally private tributes from next-of-kin. The laying of wreaths brought the short service to a conclusion.

The parade reformed and marched to the outer Domain where it was dismissed “under unit arrangements”. In other words, participants were informed where and what time their reunion gathering was to take place. In most instances, however, this did not result in immediate dispersal. Many stayed together to renew old bonds and catch up on the latest news concerning one another and absent comrades. A large number of the public, meanwhile, remained at the Cenotaph to inspect wreaths and read their dedications.

In time, however, a few ex-servicemen successfully recruited others to leave with them for an early start to their unit’s reunion celebrations. Later, considerable numbers of ex-servicemen arrived at their unit reunions or their local ex-service club. Here, meals and a open bar were commonly provided. As people imbibed, the president would take the floor to warmly welcome visitors and publicly acknowledge the efforts of the men and women who had helped organise the day’s events. A round of toasts followed, not least, to “absent friends”. With the formalities over, people relaxed and began mingling and reminiscing with one another. These gatherings went well into the night.

Some departed early for the Auckland Town Hall and the RSA’s Anzac Concert. This event was so popular that many people had to be turned away. Entertainment for the variety show was provided by ex-members of the Kiwi Concert Party and the Watersiders’ Silver Band. The sounding of Last Post and observance of a minute’s silence at 9 pm, as was traditional at RSA gatherings, reminded everyone of the date. The greater part of the evening, however, was full of reminiscences and laughter. It was late by the time many people arrived home in a happy but tired state. Anzac Day was over for another year.

Anzac Day is most appropriately seen as a funerary rite, held on a recurrent, nationwide basis. The day’s proceedings were primarily directed towards the departed but, by their nature, also served as a means through which the living were
assisted in coming to terms not simply with the deaths of others, but with their own continued existence as well. This view is based on the work of Philip Kitley and his application of the ideas of Arnold van Gennep to Anzac Day in Australia.³

Van Gennep recognised that mourning, like all rites of passage, is a transitional period for survivors, marked at the beginning by rites of separation and, at the end, by rites of re-integration into society. During the transitional or liminal period, participants are neither in one state or the other. Van Gennep pointed out that although one would expect rites of separation to constitute the most important part of funerals, in fact, transition rites dominate.⁴

The Dawn Service conformed to van Gennep’s thesis. Structurally, the ritual fell into two phases separated by the minute’s silence. The first phase of the ritual was a rite of separation. It requested participants to put aside their present thoughts and concerns to remember the dead. The Cenotaph, symbolising the graves of New Zealand service personnel buried in other lands, provided the setting and focused emotions on the dead. The hymn “Lest We Forget”, the Prayer for the Dead, the Anzac Dedication with its concluding line “We will remember them”, and the simple laurel wreath were all clearly concerned with recalling and mourning the fallen.

The climax of this phase was the sounding of Last Post. The call sounded in barracks at night as soldiers retire to sleep as well as at military funerals. Last Post symbolically represents death as “everlasting sleep”. Its sounding at the Dawn Service told those present that this was a funerary rite for the fallen. The lowering of the flags to half-mast, the traditional mourning position, visually expressed this sentiment. Finally, the fading last note of Last Post coinciding with the floodlights going off for the minute’s silence - indicative of the timelessness of death - again reminded the group that they were remembering the dead. Death was now symbolically represented by darkness and silence.

The minute’s silence created a void: a time for each individual to reflect on deceased relatives, friends and comrades. Participants were also reminded of their own existence and inevitable death. The minute’s silence was the most symbolic and emotional part of the service. In many ways, it provided the climax of the service. The preceding activities and symbolism had all led up to this moment. It also constituted the liminal phase of the rite when participants were “betwixt and between” focusing on death and life. The subsequent part of the service was primarily “concerned with the re-adjustment of the mourners to the mundane facts of on-going life”.⁵

The hymn "There Is No Death", which ended with the lines "All is eternal life/There is no death", assured those present that there is life after death. "O God Our Help in Ages Past" also had a simple message. God is spoken of as a shelter, as one who helps his people through troubled times. Following the silent reflection on death, the hymn threw the burden of the mourners' grief upon God. The planting of a cross by the Governor-General in the Field of Remembrance symbolically reminded participants of God’s protection over the dead wherever they laid buried. The pronouncement of the benediction further requested God’s protection.

The sounding of Reveille brought this phase to a climax in an inversion of Last Post in the earlier phase. Reveille is the soldier’s wakening call. It symbolises Resurrection - of the Archangel Gabriel calling on the faithful to rise on Judgement Day. It comforted mourners by emphasising the new arising or awakening the war dead had attained through death. Reveille is symbolic too, of a new day. In fact, the first light of the day was evident by the time of its sounding. It reminded the assembly, in Kitley’s words, “that another day has dawned, that in the midst of death, we are in the midst of life, to reverse the phrase”.  

The raising of the flags visually expressed the sentiments of Reveille. The flags were “symbols of pride surmounting sorrow”, reported the New Zealand Herald. “God Save the Queen” proclaimed the continued loyalty of the living to the present monarch. Finally, the quick march of ex-servicemen from the Cenotaph and rapid dispersal of other participants to begin the new day, symbolised on-going life. This last phase was, therefore, concerned with re-integrating participants back into society through an emphasis on life here on earth and the inception of one everlasting in heaven.

The Dawn Service was a “sympathetic” ritual, that is, “its symbolism relies in part on the impact of like acting on like”. It was timed to match the dawn landing of Australian troops at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. In later years it became the hour for the commencement of other engagements and so recalled the dawn “stand-to” for many New Zealand ex-servicemen. The symbolism of light, the service began when it was still dark and concluded in the light of the new day, brought the dead to life in the memory of the living. Christian doctrine of the ascended soul in heaven was also involved, as Last Post and Reveille acted as metaphors of the death of the body and the wakening of the soul to everlasting life. The Dawn Service through its symbolism and structure thus expressed “regret and respect for the dead, and at the same time

---

7 NZH, 26 April 1955, p.12.
the necessity for the living to have a positive future orientation".9

The main citizens' service in the afternoon incorporated many of the symbols familiar from the Dawn Service. The solemn music and step of the "Dead March", Last Post, the lowering of the old flags, the lament and the wreath-laying ceremony again focused attention on the dead. The wreaths were particularly important as poignant symbols of remembrance and mourning. According to Kitley, "The fragile beauty of the flowers, and their short life once cut symbolize the selfless death of the soldiers untimely killed in battle".10

The hymn "Abide With Me" here provided the liminal period between death and life. Its simple melody and even rhythm gave a feeling of calm. It reminded all present that one day they, too, will die and requested them to call on God for assurance: "In life, in death, O Lord, abide with Me".11 The Reveille, the raising of new flags, and the quick march of ex-service personnel from the Cenotaph, again symbolised on-going life.

Like the Dawn Service, the citizens' service was a funerary rite concerned with mourning for the dead and continued existence for the living. Like any funeral, therefore, Anzac Day was concerned with the dead and the living. In fact, Anzac Day ritually united the living with the dead.

The funeral analogy does not just offer an explanation for the formal ceremonies but for the whole observance of Anzac Day. To truly understand a ritual occasion, one must delve in and consider the entire performance. This means, in the case of Anzac Day, considering not only the formal services but the informal activities of the day. The two recognisable themes of the services (lamentation and adaptation), in fact, shaped the observance of the entire day. From this wider perspective, services were primarily concerned with lamentation. During the ex-service reunions and concerts, the requiem facet was overshadowed by an emphasis on the here and now. This was achieved through the presence of lively music and entertainment, boisterous joking and drinking. These informal gatherings were like wakes. They emphasised life and were primarily concerned with adaptation. Participants returning home, after services or reunions, were also confronted with the positive realisation of their continued existence.

In summary, each part of Anzac Day stressed both lamentation and adaptation in varying degrees, and joined together to create a ritual in which both notions were given prominence. Thus participants were transported into the day's

---


10 Ibid.

11 Ibid, pp.61-2.
commemorations by way of rites honouring the dead, and carried out of them through ones focusing on life and the living.

The ritual form and sentiment of Auckland’s Anzac Day was universal to the day’s observance throughout New Zealand. What made each community’s commemoration distinctive were differences in ceremonial form. In Dunedin, a record 1,600 people braved a heavy frost to attend the Dawn Service. In the afternoon, over 1,400 people marched through the main streets to the Cenotaph, for a short wreath-laying ceremony. At this ceremony, a firing party of school cadets came up to the “present” and fired three volleys. The salute by gunfire is a military symbol of protection and traditionally observed at military funerals. Hence, another symbolic reminder that this was a funerary rite for all New Zealanders who had died in war. At the conclusion of the wreath-laying ceremony, the parade proceeded to the Town Hall for the main citizens’ service. Unlike Auckland’s secular afternoon ceremony, Dunedin’s service had a strong religious content. A member of the clergy read Scripture and pronounced benediction. The hymns included “O, God, Our Help In Ages Past”, “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” (sung by the RSA Choir), and “God of Our Fathers” which begs God’s protection and contains the lines, “be with us yet, lest we forget - lest we forget”.

In the evening, First World War veterans had their traditional Barn Reunion which recalled the informal gatherings and concerts held in barns behind the lines on the Western Front. Veterans of the Second World War attended their 8th Tin Hat Club Tattoo in the Town Hall Concert Chambers. The street outside had been turned into a “war zone” with sand-bags, barbed wire, a fully-working artillery gun, and smoke bombs for effect! The 400 ex-servicemen then had to pass through a sand-bagged dug-out passage to enter the Concert Chamber. During the night, the guest speaker, Wing Commander Derek Hammond, spoke of his service with Coastal Command in places such as Norway and Egypt during the Second World War. At 9 pm, all lights were extinguished except for a luminaed white cross, helmet and poppies on the stage as Last Post was sounded. The major part of the evening, however, was filled with reminiscences, humour and entertainment with comic sketches, sea shanties and songs recalling the war years.

Further north, the number of men and women marching in Christchurch’s mid-afternoon parade was down on past years, although still in the thousands. Second World War ex-servicemen, apart from those who belonged to regimental associations, were more noticeable among the crowd than in the parade. The Christchurch Press

---

12 The following description of Dunedin’s observance of Anzac Day 1955 is based on reports in the Otago Daily Times (ODT), 26 April 1955, p.5 and the Evening Star, 26 April 1955, p.4.

13 The following description is based on reports in the Christchurch Press (Press), 26 April 1955, p.14.
noted that many ex-servicemen of the Second World War preferred the Dawn Parade, more than 1,000 people had attended, and the more personal suburban mid-morning services. A contingent from the 1st Canterbury Regiment, led by the regimental band, formed a khaki phalanx at the rear of the parade. The participation of fully uniformed regular service units and large numbers of reservists (because of the Compulsory Military Training Act) was common until the late 1950s. The military presence, however, was never prominent at Anzac Day parades, lest war was seen to be glorified.

The route of the parade from Cranmer Square to King Edward's Barracks was fairly well lined but “would have made up only a small proportion of a Ranfurly Shield procession crowd”, noted the Christchurch Press. At the Bridge of Remembrance, the parade briefly paused to lay a wreath and men removed their hats as they passed underneath the bridge's memorial arches as a mark of respect for the dead. At King Edward's Barracks, a crowd of 4,000 people assembled for the traditional citizens’ service. At the completion of this service, the parade proceeded to Christchurch's War Memorial, in Cathedral Square, for the wreath-laying ceremony. The four corners of the Memorial were guarded by members of the Legion of Frontiersmen in their distinctive uniform: brightly shining buttons and epaulettes, riding boots and pointed lemon squeezer hat. They stood motionless in the “rest on your arms, reverse” position; rifles resting on their boots and heads bowed over folded hands. After the wreath-laying ceremony, next-of-kin planted poppies in the Field of Remembrance which concluded the afternoon's observance. In the evening, the traditional Toc H service in Christchurch Cathedral brought the day's observance to a conclusion.

14 The Legion of Frontiersmen had traditionally taken part in Anzac Day services since before the Second World War. The official organ of the Legion, The Frontiersmen, explains that it was originally founded in London in 1904 by Captain Roger Pocock as “a world-wide organisation of men with no political creed save that of service to the British Empire and the country in which they live”. The Legion was a para-military organisation whose objectives included: “The safety and national well-being of the Empire; the practice and encouragement of military training for the defence of the Empire; enrolling in peace time of men who have had frontier, naval, military, or other training or experience which may be considered useful to our Empire in time of need; to render assistance to the Defence Department, and to assist and encourage the youth of New Zealand to recognise their duty and responsibility to King and Empire”. In 1955, the Legion had just over 900 members nationwide. The Frontiersmen, Vol. VII no.6 (June 1955), p.5.

15 Toc H was a Christian fellowship group founded by Padre Tubby Clayton in Belgium during the First World War. The name derives from morse code and stood for the name of a house situated in Flanders, Talbot House, set up by Padre Clayton as a resting place for soldiers and named after a friend killed during the War. In the upper room of Talbot House a carpenters' bench and lamp served as a chapel. The lamp became the fellowship's symbol. The light of the lamp symbolised the light of the world, the burning wick their own life being consumed in their endeavours to serve God. The men who gathered at Talbot House decided to continue to do so after the war and to establish a Christian fellowship. The movement was established in New Zealand in 1921. At its height during the 1920s and 1930s, Toc H had thirty branches throughout the country. By 1984, only three remained (Wellington, Nelson and Dunedin). RSA Review, Vol. LXI, no.7 (Feb. 1984), p.16.
Fig. 2
Ex-servicemen's parade in Wellington, Anzac Day 1950
(National Publicity Studios Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, 34040 1/2)
In Wellington, ceremonies attracted record attendances. The Dawn Service watched by 1,500 people, was described as “one of the best”. The crowd at Wellington’s Cenotaph for the citizens’ service was “exceptionally large” and the space provided for the general public was packed. The hymns benefited from the 250 voices of the Wellington Choral Union. The parade and services also received a boost from over 1,000 Gallipoli veterans who had travelled to the Capital from around the country for a reunion to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign. The formal observance of the day ended at the Cenotaph with an armed service unit and band Beating the Retreat (the traditional military ceremony of lowering the Colours at the end of the day).

In smaller towns up and down the country, nearly every citizen took part in the Anzac Day service. Certain elements were universal to the observance of Anzac Day in the countryside: the parade of ex-servicemen, a short service, the laying of wreaths with the inevitable sounding of Last Post and Reveille. The mood of each towns’ observance of Anzac Day, however, was distinctly local. The closeness of such tight-knit communities made the observance like a family funeral. Those remembered were next-of-kin of many present and known to most. The names of the fallen inscribed on the local war memorial thus had faces, in contrast with the large city observances where the remembered became, inescapably, an anonymous mass. For this reason, emotions were intense at Anzac Day services in the countryside as the whole community came together to grieve the war dead. In his examination of Anzac Day in the Waikato dairy-farming community of Matamata between 1938 and 1950, Duncan Waterson noted:

Another powerful image, certainly more poignant in country New Zealand than in the large cities, was the ‘martyred family’. These were the parents of sons killed during the wars....[and] more people emerge[d] to lay personal wreaths. This type of individual mourning was more powerful in small rural communities than it was in the great group celebrations at the Auckland War Memorial.

The observance of Anzac Day thus varied in terms of ceremonial structure, content and emotional intensity between communities, city and country. The day also expressed issues and concerns specific to the locality. For all these reasons, each community’s observance of Anzac Day had its own milieu. These differences should

16 For Wellington’s observance of Anzac Day 1955 see the Dominion, 26 April 1955, p.8 and p.11.
17 ODT, 26 April 1955, p.5.
18 For the observance of Anzac Day in a country town see Bruce Herald (Milton), 26 April 1955, p.3.
not be exaggerated, however, because as part of a national commemorative day they all addressed the main themes.

What did Anzac Day specifically say to New Zealanders? First and foremost, the day was one of and for remembrance - of those who paid the greatest sacrifice for their country. A call to recall was repeatedly framed and restated during the course of the day. The public observance, for example, was packed with oft reiterated phrases like "lest we forget" and "we will remember them". Moreover, those in attendance were directed through prayers, hymns, readings and addresses to remember the dead. On another level, remembrance was contained within and communicated through a profusion of symbols: the red poppies and wreaths; the sounding of Last Post and Reveille; and the use of the slow, burial march, to name just a few of the prompters. The inducement did not end with symbolism as remembrance was assisted, even demanded, by participation in the day's events - via "the doing". Thus Anzac Day told New Zealanders to remember.

With remembrance of the dead, came sorrow for the living. As a funerary rite, Anzac Day constantly addressed the issue of death. Lloyd Warner claimed that, "in the Memorial Day ceremonies the anxieties man has about death are confronted with a system of sacred beliefs about death which give the individuals involved and the collectivity of individuals a feeling of well-being". Anzac Day too, collectively spoke to and reassured New Zealanders about the death of servicemen and women, as well as death in general, thereby providing a forum for them to release their grief.

For Warner, furthermore, the Memorial Day rites were a "modern cult of the dead". A cult "because they consist of a system of sacred beliefs and dramatic rituals held by a group of people who, when they congregate, represent the whole community". The cult confronted and ameliorated the fear of death. Warner believed that:

Each man's church provides him and those of his faith with a set of beliefs and a mode of action to face these problems, but his church and those of other men do not equip their respective members with a common set of social beliefs and rituals which permit them to unite with all their fellows to confront this common and most feared of enemies.

The Memorial Day ritual "partially satisfies this need for common action on a common problem. It dramatically expresses the sentiments of unity of all the living among themselves, of all the living with all the dead, and of all the living and dead as

---


21 Ibid, p.278

22 Ibid.
a group with God.” The unifying and integrating symbols of this cult were, therefore, the dead. Warner concluded:

The Memorial Day rite is a cult of the dead but not just of the dead as such, since by symbolically elaborating sacrifice of human life for the country through, or identifying it with, the Christian Church’s sacred sacrifice of the incarnate God, the deaths of such men also become powerful sacred symbols which organise, direct, and constantly revive the collective ideals of the community and the nation.

The Memorial Day ritual thus functioned as a form of “civil religion”.

The concept of civil religion did not attract serious scholarly attention in New Zealand until the 1980s. The foremost advocate for the existence of a New Zealand civil religion has been Hans Mol, for whom Anzac Day provided the strongest evidence. Civil religions, Mol argued, transcend religious institutions because they are “too important to be left to organisational partiality of the denominations, however much these denominations represent and sum up the meaning system on which civil religion is based”. This partly explains why ex-servicemen’s organisations, foremost the RSA, closely controlled Anzac Day ceremonies. For Mol, Anzac Day with its marches, prayers and hymns was “more awe-inspiring and solemn than the average church service. It is the nation as a whole which mourns its dead”. Other writers have been less convinced by the arguments in support of the existence of a New Zealand civil religion. After assessing the state of the civil religion thesis, Colless and Donovan stated: “In present scholarly opinion, ‘civil religion’ is regarded more as an exploratory idea than a proven reality”.

Anzac Day became the litmus test in the search for a New Zealand civil religion. In his MA thesis “The Insubstantial Pageant: is there a civil religious tradition in New Zealand?”, Mark Pickering declared, “Here surely, on Anzac Day, if there is a civil religious tradition in New Zealand, this is where we would find it”. Pickering identified “something unusual” in Anzac Day ceremonies:

- Not exactly a Christian service, yet neither is it secular; a ceremony usually held in close physical relation to church buildings yet not in them, and kept distant from the church service that may be ‘offered’ after the Anzac commemoration; a ceremony where God is rarely mentioned and Christ not at all; a ceremony with much symbolism of its own which is deeply

---

24 Ibid, p.279.
26 Ibid.
meaningful to the participants. It is no wonder that Anzac Day more than any other event is pointed to when the suggestion of a New Zealand civil religion is mentioned. Indeed, Anzac Day and its associated symbols are so obviously important to the concept of civil religion that without them, it would be very much harder to make any convincing argument for a civil religion.29

Despite this, Pickering argued that Anzac Day’s emphasis on male and military values “raises a question over how accurately it can be accommodated to appeal to an entire population” and that it “arguably stands as much as part of the male mythology that may exist in New Zealand, as of any supposed civil religion”.30 In another examination of the civil religion thesis, Michael Hill and Wiebe Zwaga also concluded that Anzac Day’s concentration on “a mythology of mateship and the prowess of the New Zealand male” and “its links with the RSA have prevented it from becoming a ceremony of broader civic resonance....As a celebration of nationhood, let alone as a focus for civil religion, there are obvious inconsistencies”.31 In any case, Anzac Day alone would not provide sufficient evidence to claim the existence of a New Zealand civil religion. While not discounting the concept altogether, Pickering concluded that “the evidence for a current civil religion in New Zealand is tenuous” while Hill and Zwaga believed its plausibility was “highly questionable”.32

Anzac Day 1955 certainly fulfilled many of the functions of a civil religion, or more correctly, a civic ritual. The day served to unite people of many different denominations, and of none, in one ritual. The medium of recitation, the Anzac Dedication and Binyon’s lines for example, unionised participants in an ecumenical sense.33 The local community and the nation state, furthermore, was the limit of concern for most people. The day remembered the war dead of a specific area and of New Zealand. Yet, it was also a religious ritual, albeit mainly Protestant Christian, in that it was intended by most participants to relate to God. The Christian element, particularly the themes of death, sacrifice and Resurrection, reassured participants when remembering the dead. In fact, both the civic and Christian aspects of the day assuaged mourners of their grief. The civic elements told mourners that the dead had made the greatest sacrifice for their country and that they had not died in vain. The

29 Pickering, “Insubstantial Pageant”, pp.52-3 and p.86.
30 Ibid, p.56 and p.86.
Christian elements expressed that the dead had now gained everlasting life. The ritual of Anzac Day was therefore a “mixed ritual”, in that, for many participants the civic aspect was important while the focus on the dead had a spiritual significance.34 This mix of civic and Christian was evident in the form and symbolism of Anzac Day. Waterson noted that Matamata’s Anzac Day services comprised “the well-known mixture of mainstream Protestant religious sentiments and, as Ken Inglis has pointed out, the recital of Greco-Roman sacrificial virtues intermingled with received notions of honour and Christian duty from the New Testament”.35 The mixture of secular classical and Christian themes was also evident for Anzac Day participants in the form, iconography and inscriptions of war memorials around which they gathered.36 In reply to Ken Inglis’ question “Anzac and Christian - Two Traditions or One?”,37 New Zealand’s Anzac Day had elements of both, was upheld by exponents of both traditions (the RSA and the State on the one hand, the Churches on the other), and yet belonged to neither. It was not two traditions but one - a synthesis of civil and Christian sentiments intricately woven into the day’s ritual form - a hybrid.

Along with sorrow, remembrance of the service and sacrifice of New Zealanders in past wars also brought feelings of pride. The pride of New Zealanders in their war contribution was still in the imperial sense during the 1950s. New Zealand servicemen and women had again served King and then country during the Second World War. The country’s phenomenal reception to the royal tour of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip in 1953-4 provided unequivocal evidence that New Zealand was still very much an imperial dominion.38 Many elements of Anzac Day 1955 also revealed this fact: the Union Jack was still draped over many a dais throughout the country, the National Anthem sung at services was, of course, the imperial “God Save the Queen”, and her Anzac Day message always received a prominent position in newspapers. Above all, this imperial nationalism had long underpinned the myth of Anzac.

The Anzac myth, firmly established by the first Anzac Day in 1916,39 expressed that at Gallipoli New Zealand achieved nationhood. Jock Phillips has persuasively

argued that this extraordinary claim can only be understood in terms of the
crassiveness of imperial culture in New Zealand from the late nineteenth century. 40
In short, the Anzacs' triumphant manhood and heroic sacrifice at the behest of the
Mother Country "was seen as proving New Zealand’s very nationhood". 41 With
the myth established, Phillips argues, "The story of the New Zealand troops in the
Great War and also in the Second World War became subsumed under 'the spirit of
Anzac' or 'the Gallipoli Tradition' ". 42 The mythology of the Second World War
"merely represents an updating in a new setting". 43
The mythology gained abundant expression in the rhetoric of Anzac Day
during the 1950s. The feats of the Anzacs at Gallipoli were still eulogised in
newspaper editorials and features on the eve of Anzac Day, and in public addresses
the next day. The original tributes to the Anzacs were also repeated endlessly after
the Second World War. John Masefield’s immortal description of the Anzacs as "the
flower of the world’s manhood...the finest body of young men ever brought together
in modern times", was still being heard by Wellingtonians in 1983. 44 Tributes to New
Zealand forces during the Second World War were also repeated as proof that "the
spirit of Anzac" had been passed onto the next generation.
The chivalric language heard on Anzac Day 1955 also dated from the original
descriptions of the Anzacs’ feats in 1915. Words and phrases such as "gallant",
"valour", "warrior", "baptism of fire", "legendary feats" or "deeds", "glorious
sacrifice", "for the fallen", "lest we forget" and many more. The use of "high"
diction, essentially a romantic feudal language often used to describe war, 45 reflected
the heroic mythology of Anzac Day.
It was the myth of national birth and achievement through the "glorious
deeds" of New Zealanders in war which made the 25 April a national day of pride as
well as sorrow. The concentration on war as a source of national pride was most
readily received by public participants at Anzac Day ceremonies, mainly next-of-kin,
rather than ex-service personnel. The mythology of Anzac and of war in general
provided the underlying meaning of the public ritual of Anzac Day.

Wellington, 1989, pp.91-109; and J. Phillips, “75 Years Since Gallipoli” in Towards 1990: Seven Leading
Historians Examine Significant aspects of New Zealand History, A. Anderson et al., Wellington, 1989,
pp.91-106.

41 Phillips, A Man’s Country?, p.163.

42 Ibid, p.165.

43 Ibid, p.199.

44 Cited in Ibid, p.165.

The public mythology of war centred upon unity and collective self-sacrifice. During the 1940s and 1950s in particular, the war was viewed as a time when men and women, irrespective of class, religion and race, had worked together in an egalitarian and harmonious spirit. This applied not only to New Zealanders in the services overseas but also to the community at home. It was a time to look back upon with pride and one to inspire the same virtues of self-sacrifice, unity and common purpose in the future. Anzac Day expressed this myth in its rhetoric, symbolism, and ritual form. The day honoured servicemen and women of all classes, all religions and all races. A closer reading of the day, however, exposes the reality of divisions within New Zealand society.

First, the war mythology which spoke of common sacrifice abroad and at home supported another popular myth, that of New Zealand as a classless and egalitarian society. "The male digger warriors, by their presence [at Anzac Day ceremonies], were an antidote to class conflict and urban-rural strains." The mythology of Anzac Day told New Zealanders that they should have nothing to do with class divisions or class organisations. The 1951 waterfront strike showed the tenuous nature of the egalitarian myth but so did Anzac Day.

In most places, Anzac Day ceremonies reflected the power of influential middle-class male elites who dominated all public occasions - civic dignitaries, military officers, clergy and prominent citizens. The presence of "male digger warriors" may have given the impression of an egalitarian and classless society but who led their parades, laid the wreaths, and addressed the services? These honours were rarely performed by rank and file - former Privates, now labourers or shop assistants, with little or no social standing! At Auckland's citizens' service in 1955, for example, a Lieutenant-Colonel led the parade; the Governor-General, no less, conducted the service; and the official wreaths were laid by the Mayor, City Councillors, Members of Parliament, foreign diplomatic staff, serving and ex-military officers, and the judiciary. In Matamata too, Waterson notes, the parade marshal had invariably been an officer who "usually came from the ranks of the so-called gentleman-farming community, those who owned land and stock but did not personally involve themselves in day-to-day farm labour". The parades themselves in Auckland, Matamata and other places, furthermore, were highly stratified in terms of wars, military merit, service and community function. A caste system which ranked individuals in terms of their military experience. In contradiction to the war mythology of Anzac Day, therefore, class and caste stratified the social structure on this day as on any other.


Second, the war mythology proclaimed that religious differences had been subjugated during war. Protestant, Catholic and Jew had died together and were buried side by side in war cemeteries all over the world. Services for the dead were held in churches of all denominations on Anzac Day. In most towns and cities during the 1950s, however, an almost complete sectarian division existed based on the Protestant/Catholic divide and on separate education for their children. This divide was no less evident on Anzac Day. Roman Catholics, and Jews, held their own services because their faith prohibited them from attending the combined citizens’ service conducted by Protestant clergy. The war mythology spoke of religious distinctions not playing a part during war but the living preferred to uphold them for the purpose of remembering the dead on Anzac Day.

Finally, and most importantly, the war mythology expressed the belief that racial distinctions and conflict had been overcome during war. In both World Wars, a Maori battalion was organised and achieved a remarkable reputation. Phillips has argued:

Among some Maori people as among Pakeha, the myth was promulgated that through war Maori people showed themselves loyal members of the Empire, and in the brotherhood of the trenches Maori and Pakeha became one people. One need only look at a number of the magnificent war memorials on North Island maraes to accept the power of this myth.48

At the unveiling ceremony of one such memorial, the Tehokowhitu-A-Tu Memorial Arch dedicated to Awara soldiers of both World Wars on 22 April 1950, Lieut-Colonel Arapeta Awatere told the gathering of 2,000 people that their attendance symbolised the merging of two peoples in a common cause. “It was this we [Maori] fought for under the British flag”, he said.49

The overwhelming majority of the Maori contingent during both World Wars, however, was filled by certain tribes - Arawa, Ngati Porou, Ngapuhi and Ngai Tahu - who tended to have a kupapa (friendly) history. In other areas, where raupatu (land confiscation) grievances remained strong, resistance had been greater. During the First World War, for example, the contribution to the Pioneer Battalion from Tainui, Taranaki, Tuhoe and their allied tribes was non-existent. The Maori response to the Second World War was more widespread, although Awara, Ngati Porou and Ngapuhi still provided three-quarters of the 28th Maori Battalion’s strength.50

The Second World War brought Pakeha appreciation and higher regard for the Maori. It also increased Maori consciousness and confidence. Returning Maori

49 NZH, 24 April 1950, p.8.
servicemen believed they had proven their loyalty and increasingly demanded equality. This demand did not signify Maori support for the myth of New Zealanders as “he iwi tahi tatou” (“one people”) because Maori viewed this, realistically, as meaning assimilation into Pakeha society. Instead, Maori subscribed to the theme enunciated by another Governor-General, Lord Bledisloe, almost a century after Hobson, that of New Zealand as “two peoples, one nation”.51 It was this sentiment which provided the underlying meaning for Maori Anzac Day services.

Anzac Day as an occasion to remember the dead was just as important for Maori as Pakeha, particularly in areas where enlistment and casualties had been high. The day also recalled for Maori the price they had paid for Pakeha recognition of their status as loyal citizens. On maraes and in predominantly Maori areas, Anzac Day services were similar in form and symbolism to Pakeha services except for the partial or full use of Maoritanga.52 With Maori migration to the urban centres during the 1950s, however, increasing numbers of Maori ex-servicemen joined their Pakeha comrades at Anzac Day services. The sight of Maori and Pakeha ex-servicemen standing side-by-side to remember the dead, symbolically invoked the mythology that in war both races had become “one people”.

This mythology was frequently stressed at Pakeha-dominated Anzac Day services during the immediate postwar period. On the other hand, Anzac Day in Matamata (“situated in an area where recruiting for the Maori battalions of both wars was infinitesimal” 53) reflected the reality of Pakeha views towards Maori in the 1950s:

The Maoris were still divided into what were termed ‘good’ (i.e. respectable, loyal, hard-working and thrifty) and ‘bad’ (reckless, discontented, in ill-health and politically suspect 54). Needless to say, those Maoris who had served overseas were in the ranks of the ‘good’ and were encouraged to march. If they had a decoration they were admitted to the front ranks.55

This ethnocentric and paternalistic division of Maori into “good” and “bad” by Pakeha periodically surfaced at Anzac Day services. At Milton’s service in 1958, for example, the speaker reminded the overwhelmingly Pakeha audience:

In time of war the gallantry of the Maori soldier has been acclaimed, but today the fact could not be denied that the Maori was New Zealand’s

---


54 A few miles to the east of Matamata, a strong Ratana settlement at Te Poi had been suspected during the Second World War, quite unjustly, of holding pro-Japanese sympathies. *Ibid.*

No. 1 social problem. Everyone should appreciate that they had an obligation to fulfill to the Maori in time of peace, as the Maori had fulfilled his obligation in time of war.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus Anzac Day expressed the Pakeha ideal of Maori assimilation and view of those who resisted, or “failed”, as a social threat.\textsuperscript{57} The racial melting-pot mythology of Anzac Day, however, provided one means of proclaiming the “success” of assimilation to date.

In such ways, the war mythology stressed on Anzac Day served as a means of disguising conflict and real division within New Zealand society. The day had always tried to symbolise a united community, even when this had been in stark contrast with a divided New Zealand. Anzac Day spoke to New Zealanders about what they felt was most important and what they liked to believe the dead had died to preserve: an harmonious and egalitarian society, free of discrimination on grounds of class, religion, or race. In short, the mythology reassured mourners that the dead had not died in vain. The deaths, in turn, invested the Anzac Day mythology with a sanctity. To malign or criticise it was to dishonour the dead and insult their families. The demystification of this “privileged item of discourse” through a critical examination of the myth and ritual performance of Anzac Day has revealed, however, the limitations of the mythology and the reality of social conditions within New Zealand. The divisions and tensions of Anzac Day meant that while for many New Zealanders Anzac Day was “the one day of the year”, for others it was not and could never be a truly national day.

In many ways, the war mythology was promulgated by an “official culture” - the ruling elite of New Zealand - as it certainly served important domestic considerations.\textsuperscript{58} It is incorrect, however, to view the public’s acceptance of the mythology solely in terms of cultural hegemony. Ritual and ceremony can certainly be used by those in power to strengthen national cohesion, promote conformity or ostracise dissenters, but for it to be effective people must need such a dimension in their lives.\textsuperscript{59} The Anzac Day mythology’s focus on unity and cohesion restored a sense of purpose to the deaths for those mourning. It enabled New Zealanders to make sense of the war experience. This explains the mythology’s extraordinary hold upon New Zealanders during the 1940s and 1950s.

This emphasis on the dead dying for a better world was a major theme of Anzac

\textsuperscript{56} Bruce Herald, 28 April 1958, p.1.

\textsuperscript{57} As late as 1985 Robert Muldoon still used “the memory of the loyal and courageous Maori Battalion as a contrast with the ‘stirrers’ of contemporary Maori activism”. Phillips, “War and National Identity”, p.97.

\textsuperscript{58} Phillips, “War and National Identity”, p.97.

\textsuperscript{59} Sharpe, “Anzac Day in New Zealand, 1916 to 1939”, p.13
Day. Apart from providing solace for mourners, the ideal requested and inspired the living to continue to work together for a better New Zealand. In this way, participants kept faith with the memory of the dead and the ideals for which they had died. This resolution was repeatedly framed in the rhetoric of the day in 1955. The Chief Justice, Major-General Sir Harold Barrowclough, told those present at the Dunedin Town Hall service:

It is our responsibility and also that of the younger generation to preserve the heritage of freedom. If we, and those who follow us, allow the precious gift of freedom to be filched then we have become false to the memory of the deaths which we have been taught to honour and revere. Our brothers will have died in vain.\(^6^0\)

Further south, the people of Milton heard the same message from C. A. Hardisty who spoke on the “Significance and Spirit of Anzac”:

If they paid the price and we do not get the peace they brought with their lives, then their sacrifice was just a waste. It was the responsibility of all to find the peace they paid for and if this could be done the spirit of Anzac would be something living, not just a stone monument. If the Cenotaph did not give people a mental jolt and remind them that there was still work to be done before war could be abolished, it would be neither of value to the world to-day nor to those whose names it bears.\(^6^1\)

This challenge to the living was repeated at Anzac Day services up and down the country.

In his study of Memorial Day, W. Lloyd Warner concluded that, “Its principal themes are those of the sacrifice of the soldier dead for the living and the obligation of the living to sacrifice their individual purposes for the good of the group so that they, too, can perform their spiritual obligation”.\(^6^2\) Anzac Day too, focused on the idea of sacrifice. Services repeatedly spoke of the sacrifice of the soldier dead. The living symbolically reciprocated by remembering them. The public ritual told participants, moreover, that they had an obligation to sacrifice for the good of their group, community and nation in the future. For people to cope with their losses such ideas were important. Grief was assuaged by the belief that loved ones had not died in vain.

In summary, then, the public ritual of Anzac Day was primarily one of remembrance for the dead and talked to participants about their feelings of sorrow and pride, as well as beliefs and obligations as New Zealanders. This thesis argues, however, that one can observe a second ritual. The ritual of ex-servicemen and

---

\(^6^0\) *ODT*, 26 April 1955, p.5.

\(^6^1\) *Bruce Herald*, 26 April 1955, p.3.

women (although it was more an ex-servicemen's ritual). This ritual expressed *their* experience of war which differed greatly from that of the public. In fact, the reality of the ex-servicemen's ritual denied the mythology of the public ritual. The public ritual expressed the public myth of national achievement and pride through the glorious deeds of "our boys". The ex-servicemen's ritual, on the other hand, was anything but glorious, instead concerned with a "down-to-earth" renewal of mateship. The two rituals were necessarily different as rituals depend for their credibility upon "groups of people who share some sets of expectations in common". The civilian and ex-serviceman's experience and understanding of war were worlds apart. The identification of two rituals on Anzac Day is a direct extension of Jock Phillips' thesis that when New Zealanders have ventured off to war there has developed two cultures and two myths: of those who went to war and of those who remained at home. This division has shaped New Zealand society for most of the twentieth century but only on Anzac Day has it been openly expressed.

The public and ex-service rituals continually overlapped during the day, often addressing the same issues, although public and ex-service participants interpreted ceremonies in terms of their divergent experiences of war. Both rituals shared the desire to remember the dead. They were, above all, *rituals of remembrance*. The sorrow for the dead led participants of the public ritual to stress pride in the deeds of those who paid the greatest sacrifice while participants of the ex-service ritual renewed their wartime esprit de corps in order to ameliorate the pain. The fact that remembrance was central to both rituals proves that it was the central axiom of Anzac Day.

An examination of the Anzac Day ritual of ex-service personnel begins with the work of Lee Sackett. Sackett undertook an ethnological examination of Adelaide's observance of Anzac Day in 1977 and came to the conclusion that remembrance for ex-service personnel:

...is facilitated, even demanded by the very progression of the day's events. That is, people who take part in the celebrations not only recognize it as an opportunity for recollection and find themselves being encouraged to recall the past, the flow of the ritual actually prods them to do so. It does this by in a sense reconstructing in an abbreviated way the conditions and movement of the past.

Sackett's thesis is influenced by the work of Victor Turner and what has popularly been labelled the "processional" view of ritual. Central to this approach is the
notion "that rituals - through their very unfolding - work to transform participants. That is, they, via their structure and symbolism, move people".66

Sackett viewed the Anzac Day ritual as a pilgrimage. This view inverts the claim made by Victor Turner that pilgrimage, like ritual, necessitates the participant to abandon mundane life in order to enter "a new, deeper level of existence than he has known in his accustomed milieu".67 For Sackett, Anzac Day rites possess the characteristics of pilgrimage:

...only through them instead of travelling to a distant sacred site in the company of strangers, ex-Diggers in a way journey back in time in association with mates of longstanding. In this crusade they vicariously recapture and re-experience what was for them the immensely wrenching and transformative period that was their wartime service.68

More specifically, Sackett explained that ex-service personnel are asked by the ritual:

...to re-immense themselves in the process of separation and return they first underwent as youthful service personnel. Thus, Anzac Day morning they leave their families, friends, and the day-to-day routine behind; move into and through a field dominated by quasi-military relationships and forms; only to quit this and rejoin the rest of the population in the afternoon or evening. The outcome is that actors resume the roles they earlier had stepped out of much like pilgrims returning from a quest - emotionally recharged.69

The tripartite structure of van Gennep's view of ritual as separation, transition and reintegration is readily identifiable in Sackett's understanding of Anzac Day.

Sackett observed only an ex-service personnel's ritual on Anzac Day. The public in his view were mere spectators. Nonetheless, Sackett's application of the pilgrimage-analogy to interpret Anzac Day is enlightening. Let us now briefly revisit Auckland's Anzac Day in 1955 to examine the participation of ex-service personnel in terms of Sackett's thesis.

First, Sackett argued that the emotional and cognitive impact of the Anzac Day ritual on participants owes much to the arrangement of the symbols:

...in a fashion which mirrors the source of the memories they work to reawaken. Anzac Day rites symbolically reconstruct and re-present essential ingredients in the sequence of wartime experience. Indeed, they do this in a manner which parallels the original unfolding of that experience.70

---

66 Sackett, "Marching into the Past", p.18.
68 Sackett, "Marching into the Past", pp.20-1.
69 Ibid, p.20.
70 Ibid, p.28.
A brief outline of that original process is necessary, therefore, to understand the reality underlying the ex-service ritual. During both World Wars and other conflicts in which New Zealand has been involved, men and women have been called upon to leave families, homes and civilian life, and combine with others to form a military force. The service personnel have then journeyed overseas to fight. At the completion of hostilities, the survivors have returned home, where they have been released from the services and gone about settling back into civilian life. This pattern of departure, submersion and return is clearly evident in the Anzac Day ritual of ex-service personnel.

In Auckland, for example, ex-servicemen and women left homes and families to gather with other ex-service personnel for the various ceremonies during the day. Whether ex-servicemen attended every or only one ceremony influenced the length and intensity of their pilgrimage. In contrast with the large dawn and mid-afternoon citizens’ services at the Auckland War Memorial, however, the suburban services provided only a limited break from routine for participants. They were still by-and-large residents of the same area, that is, men and women who possibly saw and socialised with one another regularly at local RSA functions. The real separation came, therefore, when people physically left their families, neighbours and neighbourhoods behind, to travel to the city for the ceremonies at the Auckland War Memorial.

At the Auckland Domain, they mixed with those they had actually served with and briefly refashioned their former units. Their ranks reconstituted, they marched, as they initially had to war. The destination was now, however, not some theatre of war and potential death but the Cenotaph. Sackett argued that the battlefields and the war memorial are symbolically one “being as each is the locus and focus of altruistic acts. Each, moreover, is an altar of offering”.

The parade enabled participants to submerge themselves into the ritual of remembrance via a physical re-enactment of a common wartime experience. This prompted remembrance of their war service and past comrades. After the service, this process continued for those participants who attended RSA functions, unit reunions and concerts in the afternoon and evening. The ex-servicemen’s pilgrimage concluded when participants returned to the homes and families they had left at the beginning of the day. The following morning brought with it a return to the realities of everyday life.

The ex-servicemen’s ritual, however, did not merely parallel the type of movement once experienced by its participants. It also, Sackett argued, recreated via concentrated symbolic forms the more notable facets of their wartime experience.

---

71 Sackett, “Marching into the Past”, p.27.

The “ritual” of veterans dressing-up in dark formal suits, polishing shoes, and pinning on campaign medals and ribbons were reminders of the daily military routine of getting one’s uniform and kit ready for inspection. The early morning tot of rum was more than just alcoholic fortification against the cold. It was regarded as a pre-battle drink. “In taking it participants in a very real sense prepare themselves for and start edging into the rigours that are to follow.”73 Troops received rum to steady their nerves but they were also provided spiritual fortification. Prior to combat, prayers were said and God called upon for protection. In a similar manner, the prayers and hymns of the Dawn Service petitioned God for continued leadership and protection. The heavily mournful dawn and citizens’ services also resembled that which was the inevitable aftermath of the battles they engaged in - military burial rites for close comrades. The service, however, also encapsulated the thanksgiving services held after campaigns. The parade, as noted, did more than provide an occasion for the reestablishment of old service units: “Through its military-like commands, orderly columns, cadenced step, etc., it carries veterans back to the time when they march not for remembrance, but as soldiers, sailors or flyers”.74 The next phase of the day’s proceedings, down at the “club”, where participants drank and reminisced with much joviality was “directly analogous to the wakes cum binges troops staged during lulls or leave from the hostilities”. It also recalled the end of war “booze ups” of demobilising units. At the reunions, Sackett noted, “the conviviality occurs within the confines of a configuration that is disintegrating to make way for a more conventional structure”.75 The return of participants to their homes and families was finally reminiscent of the postwar homecomings.

The ritual symbolically renewed, therefore, the ex-servicemen’s wartime experiences and culture for the purpose of remembrance. This was nowhere more evident than at the reunions and smoke concerts held later in the day. These gatherings were, in fact, a celebration of that culture.76 In contrast with the high diction of services, reunions centred upon an earthly renewal of mateship with veterans drinking, smoking, singing, laughing and telling “war stories”. For the most part the stories related lighthearted tales about mates during their war service. Sackett noted: “In these [stories] the names of men and women now dead were not

73 Sackett, “Marching into the Past”, p.29.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 First World War veterans have spoken of Anzac Day in terms of a celebration of comradeship. See the abstract books for interviews with Laurence Blyth, p.79; Albert Simpson, p.10 and Herbert Thomas (Bert) Hughes, p.10. World War One Oral History Archive (WWIOHA), Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.
avoided, but neither were they dwelt upon. Thus, while remembering continued, there was a decided shift in the concentration of attention.”

Kitley suggested that the anti-authoritarian and rowdy behaviour during the afternoon in Australia was partly explained by the ambivalent feelings of ex-servicemen about their role as heroes in the eyes of the public. This perhaps explains the joviality of the ex-servicemen’s reunions in comparison to the solemnness of the public ceremonies in New Zealand. More importantly, however, the character of the afternoon sessions reflected the ex-servicemen’s desire to renew the bonds and culture of their war service. The afternoon drinking sessions continued, therefore, to encapsulate the reality of war in contrast with the public myth. The gulf explains why ex-servicemen’s reunions on Anzac Day periodically attracted public criticism for their joviality and drinking customs. This public stereotype and the role of alcohol in the ex-servicemen’s ritual requires further explanation.

It has already been established that the ex-servicemen’s ritual was fundamentally a renewal, even celebration, of their wartime male culture. Alcohol had been central to that culture and so it was to the ritual. Jock Phillips has argued that alcohol has always provided the “lubricant of mateship” for New Zealand males. In both World Wars heavy drinking and drunken hi-jinks played a major role in men’s war service. On Anzac Day, therefore, the consumption of alcohol not only initiated ex-servicemen back into the bonds of wartime mateship but physically reminded participants of wartime experiences because the drinking sessions were analogous to those held during the war. Like the parade earlier in the day, this was a case of a symbolic physical re-enactment bringing forth reminiscences of the original wartime experience.

Traditionally, alcohol has also been provided at gatherings after funerals, partly because it is a social gathering and partly to lessen the pain of grieving. This partly explains the drinking sessions of ex-servicemen on Anzac Day:

Alcohol eases the pain of the memory of death and affords the individual some support as he attempts when confronted by the disturbing memories of Anzac Day, to adjust to the fact that he is alive, a civilian and at home, while many of his friends and compatriots lie in mass graves on foreign soil.

Anzac Day reunions, however, were accompanied by a degree of revelry not normally associated with funerals in New Zealand. The wake of the Irish did not

79 Phillips, A Man’s Country?, pp.184-7 (WW1) and p.208 (WWII); also McLeod, Myth or Reality, pp.122-33.
become established in this country. In fact, New Zealanders have been very reserved in the face of death, treating funerals as serious and solemn occasions. The solemnity of the public ceremonies on Anzac Day was in keeping with the traditional response to death. The ex-servicemen’s reunions, therefore, went beyond normal cultural responses to funerals or other acts of commemoration of the dead in New Zealand.

The reason lies in the wartime experiences of ex-servicemen who required different means of dealing with mass death. Heavy drinking was particularly evident after battles and heavy casualties, undoubtedly, as a means of ameliorating the pain and as a relaxant. The Anzac Day reunions were analogous to the wakes cum binges of servicemen during the wars. In Alan Seymour’s novel *The One Day of the Year* (written after the play of the same name), Hughie describes the afternoon’s drinking session as: “The wake and then the...binge. Carnival after Lent. The solemn dawn then the rambunctious reunion”.81 The manner in which troops dealt with death during their war service was thus emulated on Anzac Day when ex-servicemen remembered those who died.

The Anzac Day “booze-up”, perhaps the most popular stereotype of ex-servicemen on Anzac Day and one generally criticised as “improper”, was therefore as relevant and logical as the solemn and formalised elements of the public ritual. The public criticism of ex-servicemen’s drinking habits over the years reveals the gulf between the two rituals of Anzac Day, and the failure of the public to understand the ritual and war experiences of ex-servicemen.

By leaving families and the ordinary routines of the present for a reconstitution of the community and activities of their war past, ex-servicemen were virtually compelled to remember through their participation in the ex-service ritual. Sackett based his study, as noted earlier, on the observance of Anzac Day in Adelaide. The day’s observance in New Zealand’s larger cities, such as Auckland, closely followed the pattern observed by Sackett. In fact, the ex-service ritual operated most completely in the larger centres because participants were able to make a greater break from families, friends and everyday acquaintances in order to join with other ex-service personnel to recapture the past.

At combined city services, participants came together with others they might see only occasionally and with complete strangers. The one thing each participant held in common was their war service, strengthening the ex-service bond over all other ties. This bond encouraged participants to remember their war past and dead comrades. The sheer size of city parades, services and reunions, furthermore, intensified the power of the ritual to facilitate remembrance. In Auckland, for example, many returned men and women paraded and commemorated together.

---

within their old service unit. A renewal of the esprit de corps was most readily achieved within these reestablished fighting forms because participants had moved from sharing the generic experiences of war to those specific to their unit. Remembrance was enhanced by participants proceeding through the ritual with people they had actually served with and with whom they shared specific memories of the dead.

To recap, the ex-service ritual was initially stronger in the cities because of the anonymity between participants in terms of day-to-day relations which allowed a greater break from their present life to remember their wartime past. Once the break was made, their ability to recapture the past was enhanced by the greater number of participants who had served together and who shared specific memories. The pilgrimage for participants was intensified because their departure from the present world and submersion into the symbolic forms of their wartime past was so much more complete. Participants were able to get further away, and further in, before coming back. The ex-service ritual dominated the observance of Anzac Day in the cities.

The converse was true of the countryside observance. The services, as outlined above, were community ones with virtually everyone present. The lack of anonymity in small communities strengthened the public ritual to the detriment of the ex-service ritual. The countryside observance was comparable to the suburban ceremonies of the larger cities, where the break from routine for ex-service personnel was incomplete. Their war service did not provide the exclusive bond for participants at Anzac Day services as they were also neighbours, friends and usually members of a myriad of local organisations. These day-to-day relationships weakened the ex-service bond.

The ceremonies, furthermore, were less elaborate and fewer in number than in the cities. Smaller towns often did not have a Dawn Service (the “ex-servicemen’s service” because of its “stand-to” symbolism) but only a community service. The reunions and “booze-ups” of the cities were also generally not part of the observance of Anzac Day in the countryside. Waterson explained:

...in the country towns where the emphasis was on the family farm or small business and their social cement, the nuclear family, the afternoon following the Anzac march was usually a time amongst returned soldiers for family gatherings and nostalgic reminiscences about the past. But the realities’ of war were seldom, if ever, mentioned or discussed....the day thus took on a more Victorian [the Australian State] family emphasis. The Anzacs returning from the march joined women, children and other males to be fortified with tea, soft drinks and cakes, with suitable additional liquid refreshments for the adult males also provided. Basically, the day saw the family and friends gather, with virtually no talk about people’s personal experiences during the war but with some political discussion and the
usual swapping of intelligence about productivity, the price of butter fat and similar matters of immediate concern.82

This recollection illustrates that the public and ex-service rituals intersected more in country towns because it was a community occasion. Under these conditions, the ex-service ritual was weaker and the exclusive male culture of wartime not renewed to the same extent as in the cities. The pilgrimage for ex-servicemen was simply not as intense.

The ex-servicemen’s ritual was still, nonetheless, an important part of the countryside observance. The progression and symbolism of the ex-service ritual, though less elaborate than in the cities, remained similar. The parade and town service also encapsulated a structure and symbolism which prodded ex-servicemen to remember in a manner unique to their pilgrimage ritual. Above all, the ritual expressed their experience of war in contrast with the public’s perception of war. In country towns, as in the cities, this dichotomy fundamentally shaped the observance of Anzac Day.

In summary, the ex-servicemen's ritual on Anzac Day expressed their feelings about war and its victims. The ritual primarily communicated their desire to remember and this was realised through a pilgrimage which compelled participants to “revisit, retrace, and retaste moments from their past” with others in a renewal of their wartime culture.83 The collective strength of that culture had once enabled them to cope with the stress and pain of mass death and their own mortality. On Anzac Day it enabled them to remember those who died. The ritual also enabled ex-servicemen to reminisce about wartime experiences that the public, even families, could never understand nor perhaps should. It thus provided ex-servicemen with the opportunity of releasing potentially dangerous thoughts, thereby leaving them emotionally free to get on with their lives. For ex-servicemen and women, Anzac Day was truly “their day”.

On Anzac Day, therefore, civilians and ex-service personnel participated in two rituals, although they shared the desire to remember. A third group of people, however, also remembered on Anzac Day. A group comprising of both civilians and ex-service personnel, undoubtedly the largest number of New Zealanders who remembered on Anzac Day, but who did not participate in either ritual. They were, of course, the thousands of individuals who privately commemorated Anzac Day.

The interviews with First World War veterans, conducted by Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton in the late 1980s, provide clues as to why ex-servicemen (and not

83 Sackett, “Marching into the Past”, p.29.
just those of the First World War) did not attend Anzac Day ceremonies.84 A considerable number of the veterans who had never, or very infrequently, attended Anzac Day services indicated that they had not required ceremonies to remember. They personally remembered the war and those who did not return. Others felt uncomfortable about the public rhetoric of war and the hero-worship of service personnel or, conversely, the grand-standing of ex-servicemen: “Hate strutters. You see them, the poor old veterans head up and in step and string of gongs dangling, they feel they’re good. They’re only just ordinary, the same as anybody else. Just had a bit of different experience in life, that’s all”.85 For others, Anzac Day’s close association with the RSA and military life, especially the “boozing”, had put them off.86 Colin Gordon had not attended Anzac Day ceremonies, “because they’re part of the RSA business and I had nothing to do with them....I didn’t want any association with army at all. I simply dropped the army the day I came out. Finish! As if it hadn’t happened - to me”.87 In short, a desire to forget. The pilgrimage of the ex-servicemen’s ritual was simply too painful. The concerns of Francis Fougere, “I don’t want to have it brought back into my mind because it gives me bad feelings” undoubtedly echo those of many ex-servicemen and women, as well as relatives of the deceased, who did not attend public ceremonies.88

So far we have discovered not one but two rituals on Anzac Day. It will not have escaped notice that the main participants of both rituals were men. This reflected the patriarchal nature of both cultures of war. “Looking back”, Waterson recalls of Anzac Day in Matamata, “what was noticeable was the fact that women were more frequently spectators than participants and that, apart from the returned nurses, women who did participate were not prominent”.89 This observation was true of Anzac Day throughout New Zealand. The vast majority of speakers and dignitaries at services were male: civic and national leaders, politicians, judges, high-ranking bureaucrats, regular and ex-servicemen, prominent citizens, and the clergy. The ex-service ritual, meanwhile, was overwhelmingly a male domain which reflected the composition of military forces during the wars. What role, therefore, did women

84 The tapes and abstract books of the World War One Oral History Archive (WWIOHA) are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.


87 Colin MacFarlane Gordon in Boyack and Tolerton, In the Shadow of War, p.110.


89 Waterson, “Anzac Day in the Countryside”, p.147.
A relatively small number of women participated in Anzac Day ceremonies as ex-servicewomen, mainly ex-members of the Women’s War Service Auxiliary and returned nurses. The renewal of wartime friendships and the day’s events allowed ex-servicewomen to undergo a pilgrimage back in time similar to that of the men. The pilgrimage for women, however, was not as complete. The day’s symbolism encapsulated more the wartime experiences of the men. Ex-servicewomen were also excluded from some aspects of the male dominated ex-service ritual. They did not generally partake of the dawn tot of rum and while they sometimes marched in the ex-servicemen’s parade, it was also common for them to forgo it for a place of honour in front of the war memorial. And the ex-servicemen’s reunions on Anzac Day were, exactly that, exclusively for men! Ex-servicewomen, especially returned nurses, were held in high esteem by the public and ex-servicemen but numerically their presence was swamped by that of ex-servicemen.

The vast majority of women at Anzac Day ceremonies were relatives of those being remembered and those remembering. Widows and bereaved mothers were provided a place of honour at services. They wholeheartedly accepted the public ritual and mythology of Anzac Day as it eulogised their men as heroes and told them their grief was not in vain. These bereaved women truly kept alive the memory of the dead.

The behind-the-scenes contribution of women on Anzac Day was also immeasurable. In the days leading up to Anzac Day, women arranged wreaths and cut flowers for churches and halls, made thousands of posies, baked and prepared food, and undertook the mammoth task of organising and selling poppies on Poppy Day. On the day itself, they laid their posies on the gravestones of ex-service personnel and catered for Anzac Day breakfasts, lunches, afternoon teas and evening reunions. For members of RSA women’s branches and wives of ex-servicemen, Anzac Day was “the busiest day of the year”. One woman’s description of Anzac Day in 1958 concluded: “Thank goodness Anzac came but once a year”. Their work was unglamorous and largely unsung. It also fell into the category of what has traditionally been viewed as female work for most of this century. On Anzac Day, therefore, women participated as wives, mothers and “help-meets” to their menfolk. Even those women who participated as ex-servicewomen, particularly returned nurses, had fulfilled a traditional caring and nurturing role during their war service.

90 Ex-servicewomen did not parade in Auckland in 1955 nor in Matamata during the 1940s and 1950s. NZH, 26 April 1955, p.12 and Waterson, “Anzac Day in the Countryside”, p.146.

Thus Anzac Day expressed the relationship between gender within New Zealand.

While Anzac Day was dominated by male adults, children played an important part in the day's ethos. Lest the dead and their deeds be forgotten, it was vital that children attend ceremonies. Children were viewed as the means of keeping alive the memory of the dead and their ideals, and Anzac Day, the means to install the memory.

Anzac Day ceremonies were held in most schools during the 1940s and 1950s. In some suburbs and smaller towns, the school provided the venue for the community service. During this period, schools increasingly moved to hold their own Anzac Day services on the nearest schoolday to 25 April. Poppy Day came first, however, when children handed over their coins for a red paper poppy. Schools always keenly supported the RSA's Poppy Day appeals.

School Anzac Day ceremonies generally consisted of an address by a returned servicemen and another by the school principal. Waterson recalls: "[they] would talk about sacrifice, the qualities of Empire, the virtues of playing rugby and shooting Huns, the worth of the British monarchy and the unparalleled superiority of British culture".92 The high diction of the school services mirrored the public ritual and its mythology of war. Apart from addresses, school ceremonies usually included the following: laying a wreath on the memorial tablet, reading the Roll of Honour, the sounding of Last Post, a march past of pupils, saluting the flag and the observance of a minute's silence.

The most elaborate and impressive school services were held at the major boys' secondary schools with proud records of war service. Schools such as Boys' Grammar and King's College in Auckland; Scot's and Wellington Colleges in the Capital; Christ's and Boys' High in Christchurch; then further south to Timaru, Waitaki, Otago and Southland Boys' Highs to name just a few. These schools had done much to inculcate military virtues into their students prior to both World Wars. In the 1950s, Anzac Day services were viewed as providing a lesson in duty and self-sacrifice for another generation, although the emphasis was now on citizenship rather than militarism. In these schools, Anzac Day services continued to be held on the day itself. The services took place in chapels and halls built in memory of past staff and pupils while wreaths were laid on impressive memorials.93 Guests included prominent ex-servicemen and dignitaries. Reading the Roll of Honour took some time as it usually included several hundred names!94 In short, boys' secondary school services

---


94 The Roll of Honour for Otago Boys’ High School, for example, included over 450 names of staff and pupils who had died in the South African, First and Second World Wars. Otago Boys’ High School Magazine, 1954, pp.22-6.
provided some of the most poignant commemorations of Anzac Day. Many girls' secondary schools, however, also commemorated Anzac Day.95

For many pupils the Anzac Day service itself seemed an annual test of endurance. The following extract from an essay, written by a pupil at a boy's secondary school in 1958, provides just such an impression:

Oh! How much longer would he be? The speaker's voice droned on providing a background for my own thoughts. It was impossible to listen to the same speech by the same speaker, every year, and to display the same interest in it....For the first few minutes there was quietness, and then the restlessness of the school became quite apparent. Concentration was made even more difficult when the occasional body fell, fainting, to the ground. Somehow, this always made me think of the roll-call in a prisoner-of-war camp where everyone stood in line until such time as those in charge cared to dismiss them. This was the usual procedure, and I had gone through it once in every year of my life at the school.96

If pupils found Anzac Day addresses repetitious and boring, spare a thought for teachers and RSA members who had to think of something new to say each year.

The RSA viewed school ceremonies as essential for the continued remembrance of the dead. During the 1940s and 1950s, the RSA Dominion Council regularly called for local Associations to make their members available to schools as speakers "to inculcate into the children an appreciation of the meaning of Empire and the significance of Anzac Day".97 To further this cause, local Associations sometimes conducted essay competitions on "The Significance of Anzac Day" for secondary school pupils in their district.98 The RSA also provided speakers for school radio broadcasts on the subject. Finally, the Association constantly ensured that the Department of Education was doing everything possible to make children aware of the importance of Anzac Day.

The Department of Education did not require much pressure, however, as it was supportive of school services, radio broadcasts and filmstrips for the purpose of explaining the significance of Anzac Day. The School Journal, published by the Department for use in primary schools, included articles specific to Anzac Day in its April issues during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The articles usually provided a brief introduction about the day and a brief extract from a war novel recounting New Zealanders' service in the Second World War. The extracts read like a "boys' own"

---

95 In Dunedin, for example, Otago Girls' High School and Columbia Girls' College held services prior to Anzac Day 1954. ODT, 24 April 1954, p.1.


97 Minutes of the RSA Dominion Council Meeting 1949, Resolution 233, p.47 and Minutes of the RSA Dominion Council Meeting 1951, Resolution 95, p.35.

adventure. The image of war portrayed in these accounts was one of excitement, courage and heroism with no account of the boredom, degradation and death. The readers, virtually every Standard III-VI child in New Zealand, thereby received an image of war consistent with the public myth and largely devoid of reality. During the same period, however, the School Journal grew predominantly literary in content and practically devoid of the ideological overtones so characteristic of its previous forty years of publication. In 1954, moreover, the School Journal went from a monthly publication to just one a term (Autumn, Winter and Spring issues). With no April issue, so went the articles specific to Anzac Day. Children continued to be taught the meaning of Anzac Day, however, through lessons and school services.

Apart from school services, children also participated in public Anzac Day ceremonies as members of youth groups such as Scouts and Girl Guides, Boys' and Girls' Brigade, Air Training Corps, Sea and School Cadets. In many centres, youth groups brought up the rear of the ex-servicemen's parade. Cadets often provided the three gun salute while girls' organisations assisted with laying posies on ex-servicemen's graves. Children were sometimes an integral part of the public ritual. The flag ceremony, for example, performed at Auckland citizens' service. Apart from participating within school and youth groups, many children attended with other members of their family. Unlike in Australia, however, New Zealand children and other relatives rarely wore their deceased patriarch's medals. Waterson explains, "Indeed, there was a sense of tapu [his italics] about the appropriation of the individual's badges of honour even by members of his or her immediate family". In small towns, like Matamata, where the day had more of a family emphasis, children fulfilled this image. The presence of children was considered vital everywhere, lest the feats and sacrifice of New Zealand servicemen and women be forgotten in the future. Anzac Day was also viewed as providing children with a lesson in citizenship and the virtuous qualities of loyalty, duty, courage, and self-sacrifice.

This chapter, then, has examined the form of Anzac Day throughout New Zealand in 1955 and its meaning for children and adults, male and female, Maori and Pakeha, civilian and ex-service personnel. George Mosse once wrote:

Form is imposed upon and informs content. Myth and symbol become an explanation for social life...[but] "objective reality", as Marx would have
called it, provides the setting and defines the limitations within which myth and symbols can operate.\textsuperscript{103}

In this way as New Zealand society changed so did Anzac Day. The day in 1955, for example, had changed since 1946 and would continue to do so over the next thirty-five years. The remaining chapters of this thesis provide an historical examination of the observance of Anzac Day from 1946 to 1990 and endeavour to answer how and why the day changed over this period.

\textsuperscript{103} G.L. Mosse, \textit{The Nationalisation of the Masses}, New York, 1975, p.211.
CHAPTER TWO

FROM HOLY DAY TO HOLIDAY

1946-1958

The end of the Second World War was celebrated by New Zealanders with unprecedented scenes of public emotion. The VE and VJ Day celebrations enabled the public to release six years of pent up emotions. With this psychological release, New Zealanders set about enjoying the postwar years and a normalcy which had been absent from their lives not only during the recent war but the preceding depression as well. A sizeable minority, furthermore, had lived through two world wars and a depression. The overwhelming concerns for most New Zealanders were “normalcy, security, prosperity and comfort”, which quickly became translated into a practical desire for marriage, a family, and a home in the suburbs. This “idyll of suburban domesticity” which pervaded New Zealand society throughout the next two decades would later be criticised by the postwar generation as boring and lifeless. For people who had lived through more than their share of excitement, however, this was the perfect way to “redress the grievances of the past and ensure a perfect future”. In the context of these aspirations, which translated into an overwhelming desire to forget the past and enjoy the future, how did New Zealanders commemorate Anzac Day during the late 1940s? The day, after all, specifically set aside to remember the past.

With the death of so many New Zealanders fresh in the nation’s consciousness, the editor of the Listener acknowledged that, “It calls for some courage to celebrate Anzac Day in 1946”. New Zealanders did, however, commemorate the first Anzac Day of peacetime with the utmost enthusiasm and sincerity. In the main centres Anzac Day services attracted massive crowds. In Auckland, for example, 30,000

---

1 Almost 37% of New Zealanders were aged 40 years or over in 1945. This meant that over one third of New Zealanders would have been at least ten years of age or older during the First World War. New Zealand Census, 1945, Introductory Notes, p.7.


4 New Zealand Listener, 26 April 1946, p.5.
people assembled at the Cenotaph for the main citizens' service and 500 crosses were placed in the Field of Remembrance. Christchurch's citizens' service had to be held at Lancaster Park, instead of the traditional King Edward's Barracks venue, such was the public interest. Beyond the cities, meanwhile, in small towns which dot the New Zealand landscape virtually the whole community turned out for their services.

Anzac Day 1946 was a day of mourning throughout New Zealand. The mood of the nation was one of deep solemnness, in dramatic contrast with the excitement and jubilation of the Victory celebrations the previous year. This sombre mood became orthodox on Anzac Day during the late 1940s. The deaths of the Second World War had brought renewed significance to the day. Anzac Day was now as sacred as it had been during the 1920s. It was again a holy day.

In his study of Memorial Day in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, W. Lloyd Warner argued that the ritual "functions periodically to integrate the whole community". If Anzac Day ever functioned to integrate New Zealand society in the postwar period, it was during the late 1940s. There was widespread consensus that Anzac Day be observed as a holy day. It was also popularly viewed as New Zealand Day. The day's solemnity certainly expressed the nation's feelings about the war deaths.

During the late 1940s Anzac Day seemingly fulfilled the functions of civil religion as defined by Colless and Donovan:

[Civil religion] refers to the way a state or nation, in its laws and practices and official functions, uses forms of words and rites and ceremonies evoking emotions and expressing commitments very similar to those associated with religious attitudes and behaviour.

In fact, Anzac Day superseded the major Christian festivals during these years. The deaths of relatives and friends were closer and more personal than the death of Christ. The Christian festivals had also succumbed to the process of secularisation thereby reducing their sanctity. Anzac Day was free of the commercial exploitation associated with Christmas and Easter. For many New Zealanders Anzac Day was the holiest day of the year, whereas Good Friday and Sunday were desecrated as mere holidays.

In his examination of the civil religion thesis with regard to contemporary New Zealand, Pickering suggested the evidence points to "a civil religion existing at an

---

5 NZH, 26 April 1946, p.9
6 Press, 26 April 1946, p.6.
7 For the rural observance of Anzac Day in 1946 see Bruce Herald (Milton), 26 April 1946, p.1.
8 Warner, The Living and the Dead, p.248.
9 Colless and Donovan, Religion in New Zealand Society, p.11.
earlier period in New Zealand history, particularly from the end of the First World War to that of the Second World War say from 1919-1945”. The observance of Anzac Day during the 1940s would seem to provide further evidence for Pickering’s hypothesis and the need for a slight revision of his dates.

The proximity of the war deaths, however, meant that mourners relied heavily on the Christian elements of the day for reassurance. Church attendances were large and combined services had a heavy Protestant Christian influence on Anzac Day during the late 1940s. Anzac Day was widely viewed as the holiest day of the year but the Christian tradition was still very much a part of the day.

In the first years of peace Anzac Day thus helped grieving New Zealanders to cope with their losses by making them feel part of a nation. A nation united in its determination to pay homage to the dead. In so doing, as Anzac Day speakers pointed out, the living were keeping faith with the dead and their families. The day fulfilled a psychological need during the late 1940s as much as any other time in its past. The whole nation released its grief on this one day of the year. With this national mourning ritual completed, New Zealanders were able to get on with their lives.

Most New Zealanders did wish to forget the war, leaving it to be remembered on Anzac Day, so that they could get on with living. The desire to resume normal daily routines after a crisis is a common coping mechanism and reveals the resilience of the human spirit. The reality of postwar life, however, made this difficult for many New Zealanders. Apart from the obvious long-term consequences of the Second World War for individuals and families who had lost loved ones, there were constant daily reminders of its recent past well into the 1950s. Ronald Sefton, the protagonist in Gordon Slatter’s 1958 novel A Gun in My Hand, provides an index of these wartime reminders in postwar New Zealand:

Chaps at work in grey jerseys or Khaki drill shirts or wearing tankie berets. The roadman’s cottage at Arthur’s Pass with Casa Uomo Strada on the door. The Roll of Honour notices in the paper with men killed in battles you remember. And some people try to tell you the war ended years ago. Not for me it hasn’t.

It was returned servicemen like Sefton who had the greatest problems with the consequences of the Second World War. They comprised a sizeable minority of the population too, almost one in four adult males in 1951 had served overseas during the last war. (One in three adult males had served in any war.) Many would

---

undoubtedly reiterate the title of Dan Davin’s war novel that the struggle was indeed “for the rest of our lives”. For the approximately 130,000 New Zealand men and women who returned from overseas service,\textsuperscript{13} the Second World War had been the one great epic in their lives, perhaps even “adventure”, when they felt conscious of being alive and having a worthy role to play. Michael King believes that, “The nature of such men to the mundaneness and petty squabbling of civilian and domestic life was often accompanied by disenchantment and continuing emotional difficulties”.\textsuperscript{14} Jane Thomson, who has examined the rehabilitation of New Zealand servicemen immediately after the Second World War, believes the effects of demobilisation on individuals and New Zealand society are imponderable:

On demobilisation the ex-servicemen had to readjust to new objectives, values, companions and habits - a disruption. In war the serviceman was a unit in a huge, all important undertaking and everything he did was as part of a group. Loyalty to his comrades was the supreme virtue, but many other civilian values were reversed or modified, killing and violence was institutionalised. Sexual habits and standards were disturbed. Normally unacceptable forms of relaxation such as excessive drinking were permissible. By contrast civilian life seemed colourless, boring and petty.\textsuperscript{15}

How did ex-servicemen feel about returning to a small, remote and privileged country untouched by the physical ravages of war? After separation people viewed one another with a new perspective and did not always like what they saw. Neurotic symptoms were common, if not universal, in men with several years service.\textsuperscript{16} The insensitivity of civilians could make matters worse. In late 1945 and early 1946, local communities and RSAs throughout the country arranged “welcome home” receptions for their returned men. New Zealanders wanted to show their appreciation and the sincerity and warmth of their welcome could not be denied. For many returned men, however, they seemed damnably ignorant of what they had experienced.\textsuperscript{17} In fairness, however, the experience of soldiers and civilians was worlds apart.

During the late 1940s and 1950s numerous war novels and memoirs were written while war movies filled the cinemas but these were no substitute for the experience of war. Paul Fussell’s explanation of how the American public could not

\textsuperscript{13} This figure is for all branches of the New Zealand armed services. \textit{New Zealand Census}, 1951, Vol. VIII, p.174.

\textsuperscript{14} King, \textit{After The War}, p.7.


\textsuperscript{17} Thomson, “Rehabilitation of Servicemen”, pp.155-6.
come to grips with the experience of their Second World War veterans, in a chapter entitled “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books”, also explains the situation in New Zealand:

The real war was tragic and ironic, beyond the power of any literary or philosophic analysis to suggest, but in unbombed America especially, the meaning of war seemed inaccessible....What annoyed the troops and augmented their sadonic, contemptuous attitude toward those who viewed them from afar was in large part this public innocence about the bizarre damage suffered by the human body in modern war.18

And many New Zealand returned servicemen, such as Lieutenant J.M. Fraser, shared this view:

...when we returned to New Zealand we were dismayed and shamed by the petulant clamour of our own people over trivial frustration and hardships which were largely the result of imagination. We found an almost complete lack of understanding of the events of the last six years, an eager readiness to forget these years, an increasing desire to escape from the harsh realities of war....19

Slatter’s Ronald Sefton with his strong contempt for civilians provides a literary representation of what many returned servicemen must have felt on their return. In the novel, Sefton strikingly reveals his contempt prior to visiting Maureen, the onetime fiancee of his best friend, killed in action, who has since married:

She soon forgot Mick but I'm coming to put that right. She's in there, with her hubby as she would call him, enjoying this life and never giving a thought to the man who won it for her, who sleeps in peace in Italy in order that she might live in peace in this Christchurch street. He died in violence and a little more of it around here might shake them from their apathy and their unconcern.20

Sefton represents the returned serviceman permanently affected by his war service, who found it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to fit back into civilian life: “I never came right after the war. I should've. I had my chances but I threw them away....” 21

Within this context of “fitting in”, some returned men had problems to overcome in forming relationships, particularly with women. Jock Phillips argues that, “The transition from soldier to family man was certainly not easy for any one. It meant moving from the exclusive world and culture of men into the domestic world

---

19 Lieutenant Fraser’s Anzac Day address at the Dunedin Town Hall in 1946. ODT, 26 April 1946, p.5.
20 Slatter, A Gun in My Hand, p.104.
21 Ibid, p.130.
of women, and the two cultures had long been at odds.” 22 There could be no straddling the two cultures. A choice had to be made by returned men and the overwhelming majority chose marriage and family life. Servicemen returning from the Second World War were just as keen as their counterparts of the First World War to settle down into comfortable domestic life. 23 Like civilians, returned servicemen wished to put the war behind them and catch up on missed years which included establishing relationships and family life. Throughout the nation, ex-servicemen were getting married and demanding their house and section in the suburbs on which to raise their families. Thus most ex-servicemen eventually settled down as married men but “few could have avoided the conflict between their old loyalties to their soldier-mates and new ones to their wives and children”. 24

Some returned men undoubtedly never overcame that conflict between male and family culture with the result that they never married, their marriages were unhappy or ended in failure. 25 Those returned men, cynical of civilian life and who felt comfortable only with male company, directed their greatest hostility towards women. Females were seen as threatening the integrity of male culture and as objects outside it. The war literature continually reveals this view. In Dan Davin’s For the Rest of Our Lives nearly all the characters express their unhappiness at “settling down” with women on their return. 26 It is women towards whom Sefton also holds the greatest animosity. Sefton’s girlfriend abandoned him for his former flatmate who never went to war while his best friend’s fiancée married someone else after he was killed in action overseas. Women are not only portrayed as the greatest betrayers, lacking the loyalty which men showed to their wartime mates, but also as a threat for they break up the male community. But Sefton was determined to remain loyal to his mates. In his home he intended to hang in a place of honour: “Not a wedding group or a photo of curly kids but the boys of 9 Platoon in their battledress and muddy


23 By 1951, 76% of Second World War ex-servicemen were married compared with 74% for the total New Zealand male population aged twenty-five to forty years. (The comparison with this age group is more accurate than with the total marriageable male age group, males sixteen years and over, because 76% of ex-servicemen were within this age group.) New Zealand Census, 1951, Vol. II, p.12 and p.45 and Vol. III, p.174.


25 20% of Second World War ex-servicemen had never married by 1951 compared with 23% for the total male population aged twenty-five to forty years. Meanwhile, just over 1% of ex-servicemen were legally separated and the same percentage divorced in 1951 compared with just under 1% for both categories for the total male population aged twenty-five to forty years. New Zealand Census, 1951, Vol. II, p.12 and p.45 and Vol. III, p.174.

boots. The salt of the earth. The infantry." 27

Returned men who found rehabilitation difficult tended to withdraw from society. In doing so, they followed the classic New Zealand male social pattern of “man alone” which has inspired almost a separate genre of New Zealand literature. Slatter’s Sefton, an aimless returned soldier drifting round the country from job to job, is the archtypal “man alone” character. Such men often found refuge and strength by remaining loyal to wartime mates. This partly explains why so many returned servicemen joined the RSA immediately after the war and why RSA clubrooms went up round the country faster than war memorials. 28 By 1947, the 104 RSA branches throughout the country had a combined membership of over 136,000, the largest in its history, and an increase of 181% on its 1945 figure of slightly over 75,000. 29 Another measure of the RSA’s strength during this period was that its paper, RSA Review, had the third largest circulation in the country with a subscription of over 92,000 in 1947. 30 It was also a truly national paper as returned servicemen lived throughout the country. The RSA was a force in the land throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

The RSA and other ex-servicemen’s organisations, especially the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force Association (2NZEF Association), 31 worked vigilantly for their members’ benefit during the immediate postwar years. The organisations also provided a haven from civilian society - a male and, moreover, an ex-servicemen’s bastion. For exactly this reason, ex-servicemen’s organisations were sometimes criticised by those who found male culture offensive and threatening, especially the boozing. These organisation were vital, however, for those returned servicemen who required the mateship of wartime to survive the peace. Slatter’s Sefton, an “outsider” since returning from the war, reveals, at his battalion reunion, what mixing with other returned men could do for the spirit: “And for the first time in many years I feel deep inside me a tiny glow of belonging, a first faint stirring of security”. 32


28 Other incentives to join the RSA included assistance in obtaining welfare benefits, rehabilitation loans and places on training schemes, along with the desire to wear the RSA badge (the most important social status symbol of the immediate postwar period).


31 The Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force Association was established at the end of the war to serve the needs of Second World War returned servicemen at a time when the RSA was dominated by First World War veterans. Its relationship with the RSA was sometimes tense during the late 1940s although the two associations generally became closer during the 1950s as the RSA’s membership and executive increasingly reflected a shift in balance from First to Second World War ex-servicemen.

32 Slatter, A Gun in My Hand, p.146.
Indeed, ex-servicemen's organisations provided returned men with a sense of security, both materially and spiritually, when civilian life seemed initially so different in comparison to their wartime experiences. At the "club", returned men felt relaxed as they had common experiences that civilians could not understand. For a period, therefore, returned men shared a sub-culture in New Zealand based on their war experience.

Eventually, however, most returned men began to feel familiar and secure again within civilian life. They found employment, socialised, entered into relationships, then usually married and began families. With this, returned servicemen were successfully reintegrated into New Zealand society. Many, now, no longer required the material or emotional benefits of the RSA, nor did they have the time with new jobs, houses, and families. Thus many gradually relinquished their membership. From its 1947 peak of 136,000 the RSA's membership steadily fell to 90,000 by the early 1950s when it began to plateau.33 In the late 1940s then, the RSA and other ex-service organisations successfully nurtured the transition of the returned man from soldier to civilian.

In the postwar period, then, New Zealanders, both civilians and returned service personnel, attempted to regain normalcy in their lives after the recent turmoil. As outlined, however, this quest was not without its problems. Anzac Day too had its share of problems during the immediate postwar period. The main problem was finding the proper form of observance and sentiment to commemorate the deaths of the Second World War. How could these recent deaths be provided the separate recognition they were due on a day which began as a commemoration of the Anzacs' deeds at Gallipoli and of New Zealand's involvement in the First World War in general. This issue fuelled the major debate over the commemoration of Anzac Day during the late 1940s. It was, however, not the only problem for Anzac Day during these years. In fact, the first controversy encompassed the very first Anzac Day of peacetime and was ignited by sectarianism. It undoubtedly led some returned servicemen to question the values of civilian society. The very values wartime rhetoric had implored them to enlist to defend.

The debate in question centred on religious practices in connection with Anzac Day services. It began prior to Anzac Day 1946 and continued throughout that year within the ranks of ex-servicemen, the religious community and the general public. The main protagonists in the debate were the Protestant Churches on one side and the Roman Catholic Church on the other. The problem for Roman Catholics, and also Jews, was that the main Anzac Day citizens' services were predominantly religious in content, and more specifically, dominated by the Protestant Churches.

Protestant clergymen would recite sermons, scripture readings and pronounce benediction at Anzac Day services. This resulted in the self-exclusion of Catholics, unable to attend because of their Church’s strict prohibition with regard to attending ecumenical services. On Anzac Day, therefore, Protestant and Catholic ex-servicemen and women, along with their relations and members of the public, had traditionally divided to attend their own services. Protestants attended the main citizens’ service while Roman Catholics held their own Solemn Requiem Military Mass. This sectarian separation was made visible during the ex-servicemen’s parade. Roman Catholics, along with Jews, often marched but then farewelled other ex-servicemen to make their way to the Basilica or Synagogue. In some places Roman Catholics held their own ex-service parade as well. This physical separation undoubtedly reminded some ex-servicemen of religious practices during their war service. For others, however, it was a repulsive show of the sectarianism of civilian society in stark contrast to the comradeship and lack of concern with religious differences that had existed within the armed forces while overseas. It was this attitude which led many ex-servicemen to call for a non-denominational or secular service wherein men and women, irrespective of their faith, could come together to remember the dead.

The issue was first raised in January 1946 when three returned padres, as a delegation from the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of New Zealand, met with the RSA’s Dominion Executive Committee (DEC) to express the desire of Roman Catholic ex-service personnel to be able to participate in Anzac Day citizens’ services throughout the country. Fathers Forsmen, Ainsworth and Kingan explained that the non-participation of Roman Catholics was the result of most centres’ services being Protestant in character. The delegation requested that in the future the RSA arrange for Anzac Day services to be “civic” rather than “religious” in nature, thus enabling Roman Catholic ex-servicemen to participate. The delegation was assured by the DEC that the Association, as a non-denominational organisation, was anxious that all ex-servicemen be able to participate in services irrespective of denomination and that the matter would be given the utmost consideration.

At the next DEC meeting, a suggested universal non-denominational Order of Service was submitted and approved with the decision being made that it be discussed with representatives of all denominations before being circularised to sub-

34 In Christchurch, for example, the Roman Catholic parade left from Latimer Square and marched to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacraments for the Solemn Requiem Military Mass. Press, 26 April 1955, p.14.


36 Minutes of RSA Dominion Executive Committee (hereafter DEC) Special Meeting, 18 January 1946.
Associations. The DEC subsequently arranged a meeting in early May 1946 between two representatives of the Roman Catholic Church (Padres Kingan and Ainsworth) and two from the National Council of Churches of New Zealand (Padres G.A.D. Spence and M.L. Underhill). Three of the padres were old friends, having served together in the Middle East, and the meeting was marked by "straight speaking and great friendliness." The meeting ended, however, without an agreement on the Order of Service as the views of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches were irreconcilable and a solution seemed impossible.

Later in 1946, at the Annual General Meeting of the RSA Dominion Council (which decided national RSA standing policy for the following year), consideration was given to the form of Anzac Day services. The DEC submitted a remit requesting consideration of a universal Order of Service. Resolution 18 was subsequently passed allowing the DEC to compile and submit a universal non-denominational Order of Service and, if agreed upon by the majority of sub-Associations, to be known as "The NZRSA Anzac Day Service.

The discussion over a non-denominational Anzac Day service was not confined to within the ranks of the RSA as Churches and the general public entered the debate throughout the latter half of 1946. In late July, the Auckland Anglican Synod passed a resolution which expressed the view that Anzac Day, as a national day of sacred remembrance, could only be maintained by an observance of a specifically religious character. The traditional Auckland citizens' service, a secular service without sermons, Scripture readings or benediction, was criticised as "hardly a religious service." The Synod regarded attendance at services of the Holy Communion in parish churches following Dawn Services as the most fitting manner of observing the day. The Auckland Anglican Synod was possibly trying to boost church attendances by "latching on" to Anzac Day - the holiest day of the year. This would not be surprising. Ministers of all religions saw wartime sacrifices in Christian terms and made rousing calls for a Christian revival on Anzac Day during the 1940s. In any case, the Synod viewed with dismay the proposal of the RSA's Dominion Executive to recommend that religious elements be omitted at Anzac Day.

---

37 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 12 February 1946, p.9. The details of this suggested service are unknown as no documentation exists. The service was probably intended to be like Auckland's citizens' service with an absence of religious content such as prayers, Scripture readings and sermons.


39 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 21 May 1946, pp.6-7.


42 Waterson, "Anzac Day in the Countryside", p.149.
gatherings held under its auspices.

In response to the Synod’s statement, the President of Auckland RSA, A.P. Postwaite, strongly criticised the misleading inference that the RSA proposed to omit religious elements from Anzac Day services. The President argued that what had been proposed was the elimination of the sectarianism which existed in a number of places throughout the country. In reply to the Auckland Anglican Synod’s criticism of the Auckland citizens’ service, Postewaite stated: “I am literally staggered at the assertion that our 11 o’clock Anzac Day service is’ hardly a religious service’. On the contrary, I claim that the service has a very high spiritual and religious significance”. Postewaite further argued that Anzac Day was a day of remembrance and that remembrance was expressed in the heart and did not require the “coaching of the clergy”.43

In reply to Auckland RSA’s defence of the citizens’ service, Spence and Underhill defined the term “religious” on behalf of the National Council of Churches:

In the New Zealand sense of the word religious, we maintain that such a service is not religious. To the vast majority of New Zealanders the word religion means Christian, and to them, Christianity represents spoken prayers and the reading of the bible led by a Christian minister.44

At the centre of this debate, then, lay a semantic dispute over the definition of “religious”. It basically centred upon whether Anzac Day was part of a civic or a Christian tradition.

The debate was not confined to Auckland or the Anglicans either but was nationwide and involved most denominations. The Public Questions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand received a letter from the Wellington Presbytery stating its grave concern at the RSA’s proposal for Anzac Day services. The Wellington Presbytery felt that the expressed religious elements in Anzac Day services - prayers, Scripture readings and benediction - constituted a vital part of the service. The Public Questions Committee agreed to endorse this view and sent copies to all Presbyteries urging them to watch developments carefully and to take local action where advisable.45

In Dunedin, the Presbytery devoted much discussion to the matter. The Professor of Theology at Otago University, J.A. Allan, felt the omission of religious elements at Anzac Day services would add to the pain of the bereaved because they “would be asked to remember loved ones departed without at the same time being

---

43 *Evening Star* (Dunedin), 26 July 1946, p.9.
44 *ODT*, 30 July 1946, p.4.
offered the consolations of the Christian faith”.

From this point Allan proceeded to discuss the wider implications of secular services:

The seriousness of the issue becomes clear when it is realised that the logical implication of the Roman Catholic point of view is that there shall be no civic religious ceremonies in any connection and the State must be left to unqualified secularity....A very dangerous precedent would be established. This might prove to be only the thin edge of the wedge, and the wedge would prove a very wide one.

This statement not only warned of the possible consequences of the secularisation of Anzac Day for other commemorative days but attacked the Roman Catholic Church for supporting such services. It was no surprise, therefore, when the Grand Orange Lodge of New Zealand, the most traditionally anti-Catholic organisation in the country, criticised the Roman Catholic Church for its stance on Anzac Day.

With all this attention focused on the issue, the Dominion President of the RSA, B.J. Jacobs, released a press statement to dispel any misapprehension that it was the intention of the RSA to eliminate all religious elements from Anzac Day services. The statement pointed out that, the Association merely endeavoured to compile an order of service “which would enable its members of all denominations to participate without offending the religious conviction or consciences of any member”. The aim of this statement was to placate the constant criticism the RSA had received from the Protestant Churches and to reassure the public that the Association was deeply conscious of the significance of Christian doctrine to Anzac Day. It did not, however, halt the debate.

In late August, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Christchurch, Bishop Lyons, defended his Church’s decision to seek civic services. Lyons noted that during the Second World War, Catholic servicemen and any others, had the right under service regulations to fall out from any form of combined assembly or worship.

Why then, one might justly ask, cannot the various religious bodies hold their own religious ceremonies on Anzac Day in their own churches for their own people and servicemen according to the accepted custom of the forces, so that all without exception might later unite for a purely civic and patriotic assembly? At present Catholic servicemen find themselves debarred in conscience from being with their old comrades on the very day when they would make any sacrifice to be together to recall their service days.

Bishop Lyon’s recollection of religious practices in the armed services was

---

46 ODT, 7 August 1946, p.9.
48 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 20 August 1946, p.8.
49 ODT, 17 August 1946, p.8.
challenged by a combined response of the Protestant Churches of Christchurch and Canterbury, and signed by the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, the Moderator of the Presbytery of Christchurch, the President of the Canterbury and Westland Auxiliary of the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church, the Canterbury District Congregational Union and the Salvation Army:

Bishop Lyons is not correct in suggesting that it was the accepted custom in the services for the members of the different [Protestant] churches to content themselves with separate services as did the Roman Catholics.... For example, it was a frequent occurrence, after battle, for the great majority of a brigade or battalion to attend a service of remembrance and thanksgiving.... It should be noted that in these activities the rights of those who were unable to participate because of conviction of conscience were respected. But respect for their right did not involve the denial of liberty of fellowship in worship to those who desired it. This is precisely the principle on which Anzac Day services have been arranged.50

The statements of Bishop Lyon and the Protestant Churches reveal the strength of both sides' convictions in the debate over non-denominational Anzac Day services. There was little possibility of a breakthrough as neither side would step down from their original position.

The RSA as a non-denominational organisation had hoped for a compromise but the theological climate was simply not conducive to this result. A secular service, such as Auckland's citizens' service, would have provided a satisfactory answer for the RSA. The Association, however, could not have arbitrarily promoted such a service without the support of the Protestant Churches as throughout the debate they had threatened to withdraw from the Anzac Day citizens' services and hold their own services in competition with the RSA.51 With the overwhelming majority of New Zealand's church-going population belonging to Protestant Churches this was indeed a serious threat.

The RSA had therefore worked tirelessly towards a solution, fomenting a heated sectarian debate in the process. On Anzac Day 1947, however, many Roman Catholics and Jews continued to be absent from citizens' services throughout the country.

This lengthy and sometimes fiery debate was an unfortunate development coming at a time when Anzac Day was deeply significant for New Zealanders. If the debate was unfortunate it was also necessary. Since the very first Anzac Day in 1916, Roman Catholics and Jews had been excluded from citizens' services in many

50 ODT, 20 August 1946, p.6.
51 The Southland Presbytery passed a resolution stating that if the RSA adopted a proposal to eliminate religious aspects from Anzac Day services "this church will feel compelled to conduct its own services of remembrance in co-operation with other churches in each given area". ODT, 7 August 1946, p.6.
cities and towns because of their Protestant content. By 1946, however, many felt change was necessary to allow the whole community, irrespective of faith, to assemble together to pay homage to the dead. The nation’s Protestants, Catholics and Jews had after all fought and died together and so the desire to remember together seemed justifiable. The uncompromising positions of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, however, clearly made a solution unobtainable. In fact, a solution was not achieved until the mid 1960s. Above all, the debate reveals the theological climate of the immediate postwar period and that the historical sectarianism between Protestant and Catholic was still very much a part of that climate.

As a footnote to this issue, the RSA’s failure to secure an agreement from the Churches over the form of Anzac Day services ended any hope of having a universal order of service. The ceremonial form of Anzac Day services, if not the sentiment, thereby continued to vary from place to place.

The sectarian debate over the universal denominational service was not, however, the only controversy surrounding Anzac Day in 1946. In fact, Anzac Day per se, its legislative position, name and the day itself was in question. The main issue here for many ex-servicemen and women was whether Anzac Day was the most appropriate day to remember New Zealand’s war dead, specifically, whether the day could fully acknowledge those New Zealanders who had served and died in the Second World War. The issue emerged within the ranks of ex-servicemen and women after the first Anzac Day of peacetime and became an enduring debate throughout the late 1940s.

In early July 1946, representatives from the Dunedin branches of the RSA, AIF Club, 2NZEF Association, South African War Veterans’ Association and the War Amputees’ Association met to discuss the desirability of implementing changes to Anzac Day so that it provided greater acknowledgement of those New Zealanders who had served and died in the Second World War. The meeting concluded with unanimous acceptance of the proposal that Anzac Day be replaced by some form of national day or days and a further meeting was arranged to discuss this proposal.52

In response to this initial meeting and its radical proposal, Dunedin RSA’s Executive discussed the observance of Anzac Day and passed the following statement as a guide to its delegation at future discussions on the matter of Anzac Day: “That this executive resolves that a national day of remembrance commemorating all wars be held on April 25 each year in such a form as to retain the present spirit of Anzac Day observances”.53 Dunedin RSA favoured the status quo.

52 ODT, 24 July 1946, p.4.
At the second meeting of the Dunedin ex-servicemen's organisations, the following decisions were tabled. First, "That as Anzac Day has become an established institution of the Dominion, it be retained as a National Day of Remembrance and Commemoration". In effect, a reaffirmation of the traditional spirit of Anzac Day and an extension of that sentiment to New Zealanders who had served and died in all wars. The second decision, however, proposed radical changes to the observance of Anzac Day. The whole day should not be regarded as a holy day they believed, services should be confined to the morning while the afternoon and evening should be used for educational purposes of a national character. This decision effectively requested the liberalisation of Anzac Day to a half-day observance. In doing so, ex-servicemen were questioning the appropriateness of observing Anzac Day as a holy day. This decision reflects the two cultures of war. Ex-servicemen commemorated the day through a celebration of wartime mateship in contrast with the public's solemn and mournful observance. At an earlier meeting, the organisations had been unanimous that the observance should not be attended with too much gloom. The meeting adopted both decisions and circulated them to branches throughout Otago for further discussion.

At the final meeting of Dunedin and Otago ex-servicemen's organisations in November 1946 a vote was held on the motions of the previous meeting. The majority of those present at the meeting actually supported the motions, including the one calling for a half-day observance, by 24 votes to 16. The voting strength of the country sub-Associations throughout Otago, however, meant a decision to support the status quo. The result of the vote was that Otago delegates to the 1947 annual meeting of the RSA Dominion Council would support the present observance of Anzac Day.

This debate is important as it reveals the issues concerning ex-servicemen with regard to the future observance of Anzac Day. In particular, the feeling that Anzac Day should pay homage to those who not only served and died at Gallipoli and the First World War but all wars in which New Zealanders had participated, including the South African War but particularly the Second World War. The search for an appropriate form of observance became a major concern for the RSA throughout the late 1940s.

In late 1945, the RSA Dominion Executive had established a Victory Celebrations' Sub-Committee to oversee victory celebrations planned for 1946. The celebrations were to be held throughout New Zealand simultaneously with celebrations in London on 8 June 1946. In the end, the New Zealand celebrations

---

54 *Evening Star*, 2 October 1946, p.4.

55 *ODT*, 10 July 1946, p.4.
were rather a low-key affair and by no means matched the popularity of the spontaneous VE and VJ celebrations of the previous year. In the victory celebrations, however, the RSA feared a possible rival with Anzac Day as New Zealand’s national day of commemoration. The Victory Celebrations’ Sub-Committee in its final report therefore advocated the following policy, later carried as Resolution 93 (b) and (c) at the 1946 Annual General Meeting of the RSA Dominion Council:

(b) That the day of celebration should not be the forerunner of a permanent National Holiday.

(c) That Anzac Day be retained to be observed and respected for all time as a National Day of Commemoration for all those who served and those who have died in war and that men and women of the 1939-45 World War be made to feel that Anzac Day is also their day of Remembrance and be urged to co-operate in making that Day worthy of the sacrifices made by those who fell; also that the Anzac Day Act 1920-1 be amended accordingly. 56

In practice, New Zealanders already viewed the commemoration of Anzac Day in terms of clause (c), realising the day had a wider significance which included paying respect to those who had served and died in the recent war. The RSA wanted, however, legislative acknowledgement of this extension. Before this was achieved, further debate took place on whether Anzac Day alone adequately honoured the service and sacrifice of New Zealanders in the Second World War.

In early September 1947, the DEC considered a resolution from its Emergency Committee calling for the adoption of a National Day of Commemoration “to commemorate the part taken by the New Zealand Forces in World War II and in memory of those who, during that war, gave their lives for the Empire”. 57 The motivation behind this resolution was that returned men of the Second World War viewed Anzac Day as primarily for First World War veterans. 58 After a full discussion, the DEC agreed to ask the Australian Federal Executive of the Returned Services’ League (RSL) if it had discussed the question of a “National Commemoration Day” to cover all wars. 59 The DEC also resolved to circularise sub-Associations for their opinions as to changing the name “Anzac Day” to “National Commemoration Day” for the following reasons. First, “Anzac Day not only commemorates the part taken by the New Zealand Forces in the First World War but it also commemorates the

56 Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, 1946, p.20.
59 This trans-Tasman communication on the matter of Anzac Day, among other issues, was common during the immediate postwar period as the RSA and RSL faced similar problems.
entry of New Zealand into the realm of nations”. Second, the proposed “National Commemoration Day” was to represent all wars. This would obviate not only the need to set aside another day but also the need for specific battle anniversaries (such as an El Alamein Day). Finally, the change would reflect the membership of the RSA, that is, ex-servicemen from three different wars commemorated on one day. The DEC resolved that if the proposal received approval representations would be made to the Government to amend Anzac Day legislation accordingly.

Did these proposals threaten Anzac Day? In practice, they did not endanger the spirit of Anzac Day. Since the very first commemoration of Anzac Day in 1916 veterans of the South African War, even the New Zealand Wars, had been invited to services and reunions. During and immediately after the Second World War, furthermore, ex-servicemen of that war had taken their place at Anzac Day services alongside their older counterparts and the public had viewed this as only appropriate. Thus Anzac Day had always been viewed by the majority of New Zealanders as their “National Commemoration Day”. This did not, however, prevent ex-servicemen and women from debating the most appropriate form of observance and name for the day. At the very least, the legislation governing Anzac Day required amending to officially acknowledge the service and sacrifice of New Zealanders in the Second World War.

The whole matter was brought to a conclusion with the return of replies from sub-Associations on the question of changing the name “Anzac Day” to “National Commemoration Day”. The sub-Associations were overwhelmingly in favour of the status quo by fifty-four votes to four. In the majority of replies, moreover, it was noted that RSA members who had served in the Second World War were definitely against the proposal. As a result of this vote, the 1948 RSA Dominion Council meeting passed Resolution 122:

That the name ‘Anzac Day’ and the date ‘25th April’ in each year be retained for the Day to commemorate the part taken by New Zealand Servicemen and Servicewomen in all wars and in memory of those who gave their lives for New Zealand and the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The RSA thereby formally acknowledged Anzac Day as New Zealand’s “National Commemoration Day” for all the nation’s war dead.

In due course, the RSA asked the Government to amend the Anzac Day Act in accordance with Resolution 122. On the morning of 22 September 1949,

---

61 ODT, 26 April 1916, p.2 and p.4.
62 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 8 June 1948, p.3.
63 Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, 1948, p.42.
representatives of the Department of Internal Affairs visited RSA Dominion Headquarters with a copy of the new Anzac Day Bill which was favourably received. In the afternoon, the Bill was tabled in the House of Representatives. The Anzac Day Bill passed through both the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council with little debate. On 11 October 1949 the Anzac Day Act received the assent of the Governor-General, Sir George Freyberg. At the DEC meeting on 8 November 1949 the passage of the Act was “Noted With Satisfaction”.

The passage of the Anzac Day legislation reveals the close relationship between the Government and the RSA during the immediate postwar period. When the RSA approached the Government on matters important to ex-servicemen and women, it was listened to and involved in formulating relevant legislation. It was common sense for the Government to work with the RSA as the main representative of the concerns and demands of ex-service personnel. It also made political sense as ex-service personnel and their relatives comprised a large proportion of the voting population. The RSA was certainly the most substantial pressure group on Government policy during the 1940s and 1950s.

The 1949 Anzac Day Act was passed primarily to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of New Zealanders in the South African, First and Second World Wars. However, it also further protected the day’s significance by prohibiting the transference of the public holiday to any other day in lieu of 25 April. In short, the Act prevented the “Mondayisation” of Anzac Day which had been the fate of a number of other public holidays in the past. Dominion Day, King’s Birthday and Labour Day had all been “Mondayised” by the late 1940s.

In 1948, the same fate had threatened Anzac Day as it fell on a Sunday. As a precaution the 1947 RSA Dominion Council passed Resolution 134: “That the Government be asked that in those years when Anzac Day falls on a Sunday, the next day or any other day be not declared a Public Holiday in lieu thereof.” The RSA approached the Minister of Labour, A. McLagan, who brought to the Association’s attention an agreement signed in 1944 between itself and the

---

64 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 27 September 1949, p.19.
66 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 8 November 1949, p.13.
67 Almost 210,000 ex-servicemen and women were living in New Zealand in 1951 or nearly 20% of the electorate of 1,081,898 voters; New Zealand Census, 1951, Vol. VIII, p.174 and New Zealand Yearbook, 1990, p.68. Jane Thomson believes the RSA “was the most powerful pressure group in the country” during the 1940s and 1950s. Thomson, “Rehabilitation of Servicemen”, p.158.
Federation of Labour over the observance of Anzac Day. The Minister believed this agreement fulfilled the purpose of the Resolution. In short, the agreement prevented workers from taking a holiday on the Monday or any other day when Anzac Day fell on a Sunday or a Saturday. It also prevented those workers who had to work on Anzac Day from obtaining a holiday in lieu as well as weekend pay rates. The Minister assured the RSA that the terms of the 1944 Agreement had been embodied in practically all industrial awards.\(^{69}\)

Despite the Minister's assurance, RSA Dominion Headquarters received many reports from sub-Associations prior to Anzac Day 1948 indicating that coal miners, butchers, bakers, grocers and dairy factory employees were planning to observe the holiday on Monday 26 April. The RSA again approached the Minister of Labour over the matter with specific reference to the coal miners. The Minister was initially surprised but after further enquiries realised that the Coal Miners' Award had yet to come before the Arbitration Court. The Minister again assured the RSA that he would do his best to ensure all awards were amended in accordance with the 1944 agreement.\(^{70}\)

In the meantime considerable publicity had come to focus on the proposed closing of butchers' and grocers' shops on 26 April. In a last ditch effort, the RSA Dominion President released a press statement pleading with employers and employees to waive award provisions and observe Anzac Day on Sunday 25 April.\(^{71}\)

In the end, the commemoration of Anzac Day 1948 was noted for its deep significance and solemnness, widely attributed to the Sunday observance. There were, however, reports of coal miners, butchers, bakers, grocers and dairy factory employees throughout the country observing a holiday on Monday 26 April and receiving, in some instances, treble rates of pay.\(^{72}\) According to the Member for Hurunui, W.H. Gillespie, the awards of over twenty unions still provided for the "Mondayisation" of Anzac Day if it fell on a Sunday, and ten of these also "Mondayised" the day if it fell on a Saturday.\(^{73}\)

The Government eventually took legislative action to ensure the holiday was universally observed on 25 April. This decision was part of a broader initiative to formalise the observance of public holidays. The Public Holidays Amendment Act was primarily introduced in 1948 to enable the universal transference of public holidays.

---

\(^{69}\) Minutes of DEC Meeting, 16 March 1948, pp.1-2.

\(^{70}\) RSA Dominion Annual Report, 1948, p.29.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.

\(^{72}\) Minutes of DEC Meeting, 27 April 1948, pp.4-5.

\(^{73}\) NZPD, 1948, Vol. 284, p.3731.
holidays (such as Christmas and Boxing Day, New Year’s Day and 2 January as well as provincial Anniversary Days), when they fell on a Saturday and, in some cases, a Sunday, to the following Monday and Tuesday. (In 1948, Christmas and New Year’s Day fell on a Saturday, hence the legislation.) Anzac Day was, however, specifically protected from being “Mondayised” by Section Five of the Act. This Section ensured that employees who had to work on Anzac Day would either receive penal rates and no holiday or a transferred holiday and ordinary rates of pay but not both (as had occurred in connection with Anzac Day 1948). With reference to this Act, the 1949 RSA Dominion Annual Report noted that, “This satisfactorily finalises the Association’s endeavours to ensure that Anzac Day, the twenty-fifth day of April in each year is observed in accordance with the provisions of the Anzac Day Act 1920/1”. Section Five of the Public Holidays Amendment Act, 1948 was repealed a year later with the passage of the new Anzac Day Act, which embodied this section verbatim.

The Anzac Day Act 1949 therefore extended legislative recognition to virtually every ex-serviceman and woman as well as further safeguarding the observance of Anzac Day on 25 April. In practice, however, the new Act did very little, if anything, to alter the manner in which Anzac Day was observed throughout New Zealand during the 1950s. It was during this decade that Anzac Day went from being the most significant and sombre day of the year - a holy day - to that of being just another holiday and, for many, the most boring day of the year.

The general consensus among historians is that the 1950s were “dull, grey, conformist years in New Zealand”. In the words of Colin James, New Zealand was “a place of no choice and none needed. Small, rich and complete. Bland beyond boredom. The most comfortable place in the world to grow up in.” The 1950s were thus dull, perhaps even boring. A consequence undoubtedly of a generation who had been through a depression and a world war, perhaps even two world wars, desiring to forget their suffering and enjoy the comforts brought about by peace and prosperity. By the end of the 1950s, even Anzac Day was increasingly commemorated with little emotion and much apathy.

Anzac Day 1951, however, still resembled the solemn observances of the 1940s, not least because New Zealand soldiers were again in the midst of an overseas war. This time they fought under the flag of the United Nations Commonwealth Forces in

---


75 RSA Dominion Annual Report, 1949, p.2.


Korea. The Korean War was not lost on Anzac Day speakers and many warned of the dire consequences for the future. The President of the RSA, Sir Howard Kippenberger, spoke of “the clouds on the horizon” in his Anzac Day message to the Australian RSL. The Otago Daily Times’ editorial encapsulated the mood of Anzac Day 1951: “...the thoughts of all were secondly preoccupied with the future and fear. And as Anzac Day returned, the nations are once again at war - and fearful that another world war will come”. The editorial ended: “Not fear but a sword unsheathed is the answer to this crisis, the best hope of peace”. The final message reveals the unpopularity of pacifism during the late 1940s and 1950s. In fact, the Korean War seemed to vindicate the Government’s policy of war preparedness, supported fanatically by the RSA. The Minister of Defence, T.L. Macdonald, in his address at Dunedin’s Anzac Day citizens’ service, criticised the pacifism and apathy of the 1930s and argued that, “No other policy than that of preparedness could be safely followed”. Such comments were frequently heard at Anzac Day services during the 1950s and “became more strident as the British Empire declined and the Cold War permeated almost all aspects of New Zealand public life”. Anzac Day was as intensely politicised during this decade as in the past, although ex-servicemen continued to deplore the crass political exploitation of the day.

With New Zealand and Australian forces serving together in Korea many speakers and newspaper editors made the obvious comparison with the original Anzacs of Gallipoli: “Like their grandfathers, fathers, and brothers, the men in Korea have gone out to fight for the right as they see it. They are the heirs to Gallipoli and Libya, to the history that has made New Zealand a nation”. In fact, New Zealand and Australian forces in Korea proved the validity of this comparison on Anzac Day. On 24 and 25 April, the 27th Commonwealth Brigade, comprising of Australian and New Zealand forces, prevented a Chinese breakthrough. This news made New Zealand papers on the 27 and 28 April and was reported under headlines such as “Anzac Traditions Grimly Upheld By Men in Korea” and “Anzac’s Heroic Stand

78 ODT, 26 April 1951, p.6.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Waterson, “Anzac Day in the Countryside”, p.147.
82 Former New Zealand Ambassador to the United States Sir Carl Berendsen’s Anzac Day address at the Dunedin Town Hall in 1956 is a prime example of the Cold War rhetoric heard at Anzac Day services during the 1950s. ODT, 26 April 1956, p.5. See also the letters to the editor by “Anzac” and “War Widow 39-45” criticising Berendsen’s address for its political rhetoric. ODT, 26 April, p.4 and 30 April 1956, p.4 respectively.
83 Press, 24 April 1951, p.6.
Halts Chinese Breakthrough”. According to one report, Australian and New Zealand soldiers had spent days polishing their equipment for an Anzac Day parade, but instead “marked Anzac Day with the bloodiest fight of the campaign, halting the Chinese offensive in their sector”. With such reports, the Anzac myth of Australian and New Zealand soldiers possessing almost superhuman fighting qualities, was once again invoked.

The Korean War did not, however, prevent criticism of Anzac Day. In early 1952, a resolution was proposed by the Master Builders’ Federation calling for the abolition of some public holidays, including Anzac Day. Auckland RSA quickly came to the defence of Anzac Day and rejected the resolution: “This suggestion is laughable. We ought to ignore it, but it could be the start of something”.

On Anzac Day 1952, the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, the Rt. Rev. A.K. Warren, addressed the future of Anzac Day:

There have been those who have regretted that fewer and fewer assemble on Anzac Day to pay their tribute to the fallen, but I think we indulge in sheer romanticism if we do not face facts. As year succeeds year, there will be fewer and fewer who will be able to remember....But is this day of tribute to pass into oblivion with the passage of years? God Forbid. For the nation that neglects its past will have no future....I believe if we allow the observance of Anzac Day to wane, we shall do so to the peril of the soul of our nation, for it enshrines the spirit of giving.

The criticism and concern together reveal the onset of public apathy towards the observance of Anzac Day by the early 1950s.

Across the Tasman, meanwhile, Anzac Day 1952 was an eventful one in Sydney with reports of drunkenness, brawls and casualties. These incidents were reported in New Zealand newspapers. A considerable section of the New Zealand public undoubtedly viewed Anzac Day in terms of “old digs” getting drunk in RSA clubrooms. Many New Zealanders felt this was a part of Anzac Day and one they would not deny ex-servicemen. Others frowned upon the practice, such as this writer to Truth in 1953:

I have always regarded Anzac Day as one of respect for those who gave their lives in the service of their country. But I can definitely state that in future years, I for one, and I don’t know how many with similar views, will not be attending parades on this day. Each year it has lost some of its meaning until today it is nothing but a general “booze up” by ex-

84 ODT, 27 and 28 April 1951, p.5 and p.9 respectively.
85 Ibid, 27 April 1951, p.5.
86 ODT, 5 March 1952, p.9.
87 Press, 26 April 1954, p.16.
88 The headline read “MARRED BY BRAWLS. ANZAC DAY IN SYDNEY”. ODT, 29 April 1952, p.7.
servicemen and others. Please don’t think I am a teetotaller, as I will drink with any man, but surely on a day such as this, a man can go without a pint.

[signed] Pride Before Plonk

Still others felt it was unfair that ex-servicemen could spend Anzac Day drinking in their clubrooms while the rest of the population had to suffer the closure of hotels. These critics cited the double standard and hypocrisy of the RSA on Anzac Day.

When Anzac Day fell on a Saturday, not only closing pubs on their busiest day but also cancelling sport, creating in effect a “double Sunday” weekend, there was considerable criticism. Anzac Day 1953 fell on a Saturday, provoking public agitation for the liberalisation of Anzac Day. The subsequent suggestions for change included a half-day observation and the “Sundayisation” of Anzac Day, thereby preventing another “double Sunday” weekend in the future. The public criticism was not widespread and had died out by the following weekend.

In hindsight, however, the agitation in 1953 is significant. It marks the first public call for the liberalisation of Anzac Day since the end of the Second World War. The fact that the day fell on a Saturday, interrupting New Zealand’s “sacred” day of sport and leisure, undoubtedly precipitated the agitation but the time lapse since the end of the war also explains the call for change.

The public agitation in 1953 sparked discussion over the most appropriate form of observance within the ranks of the RSA, specifically with regard to the liberalisation of Anzac Day. In the September 1953 edition of RSA Review the following letter, under the headline “Is Anzac Day A Day Of Gloom?”, was published:

Why should Anzac Day be such a day of gloom? If there must be a special holiday, then let’s be democratic about it; have Anzac services in the morning for those interested, and let the rest of the day be normal. I cannot see the older people have any right to thrust their sad memories on to a generation too young and far removed to understand what it’s all about.

The editor invited readers to reply to the critic and in the next edition some fifteen letters were published in response. All the letters conveyed the feeling that the day was not one of gloom although nine writers suggested the possibility of some liberalisation, particularly with regard to the afternoon of Anzac Day.

In the same issue, there appeared a report of Wanganui RSA’s quarterly meeting.

---

89 New Zealand Truth, 1 July 1953, p.19.
90 See “Letters to the Editor”, NZH, 28 and 29 April 1953, p.8 and p.9 respectively.
which discussed the dwindling public interest in observing Anzac Day. The meeting subsequently passed a motion requesting the DEC to obtain from all sub-Associations an expression of opinion regarding “alternative means of observing a national act of commemoration”. The DEC responded by resolving, “That no action be taken other than to suggest to Wanganui RSA that, if it thought fit, an appropriate remit be submitted to the next meeting of the Dominion Council”. No remit was submitted to the 1954 RSA Dominion Council meeting.

At that conference, however, delegates were reminded of recent developments effecting Anzac Day in the opening address given by Sir Harold Barrowclough, Chief Justice of New Zealand. Sir Harold addressed the matter of diminishing attendances of ex-servicemen and challenged the RSA with the consequences of this trend: “If Anzac Day is not honoured by us, by whom can it be expected to be honoured?” By the mid 1950s, therefore, the apparent dwindling interest in Anzac Day began to raise concern within the RSA.

An example of falling attendances during the mid 1950s was the presence of only twenty ex-servicemen at an Anzac Day service held in Green Island in 1954, a borough on the southern outskirts of Dunedin, from an estimated 400 ex-servicemen living in the area. In 1956, however, there was a complete turnabout in attendance figures at the Green Island Anzac Day service. Instead of the usual handful of ex-servicemen and residents there were more than 350 in attendance. The increased popularity was attributed to the new style of Anzac Day observance implemented by the Borough Council. Protestants and Catholics had held their own religious services before coming together for a non-denominational civic service conducted by a former army chaplain. The attendance undoubtedly pleased Green Island’s civic authorities and its ex-servicemen.

The Green Island “experiment” was particularly relevant to events in Sydney on Anzac Day 1956. In short, the New South Wales Congress of the RSL had decided in August 1955 that Sydney’s main Anzac Day service should be non-denominational. The decision drew criticism from the Protestant Churches who had traditionally conducted Anzac Day services in Hyde Park. A fortnight before Anzac Day 1956, the Air Force Association announced that following the parade of ex-

---

93 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 3 November 1953, pp.7-9.
94 Ibid.
95 RSA Review, Vol. XXX, no.9 (July 1954), p.3.
96 ODT, 26 April 1954, p.5.
97 Ibid, 26 April 1956, p.5.
98 For a far more indepth discussion of Sydney’s Anzac Day in 1956 and its wider significance see K.S. Inglis, “Anzac and Christian - Two Traditions or One?”, St. Mark’s Review, Vol. 42 (November 1965), pp.6-12.
servicemen through the streets of Sydney it would hold an alternative service conducted by clergy as in past years. On Anzac Day, therefore, when between 35,000 and 40,000 ex-servicemen assembled to march everyone wondered where they were going to end: at the RSL's civic service at Hyde Park or the Air Force Association's religious service at the Domain. There were reports of "old digs" arguing over which service they should attend during the parade. At the intersection of the routes to the two separate services, spectators formed themselves into barracking factions, edging ex-servicemen to go their way. There was pandemonium at this intersection as the marchers split. In the end, greater numbers of marchers and spectators attended the RSL's civic ceremony than the religious one but the damage had already been done. Ex-servicemen had been split and Anzac Day surrounded in controversy. As a footnote to this event, the New South Wales Congress of the RSL abandoned its new civic service and on Anzac Day 1957 the service was once again conducted by a Protestant minister. Again Catholics, if they did what their Church instructed, did not attend. In comparison to Sydney's Anzac Day in 1956, the non-denominational civic service in Green Island that year provided a successful example of this new form of observance.

Anzac Day 1956 was also different in New Zealand cities because of the absence of service units at parades and services. With the introduction of the Compulsory Military Training Act 1949, Anzac Day parades had become a compulsory, and therefore paid, exercise for most territorial units. In the larger cities the participation of these units alongside ex-servicemen boosted the size of the parades and provided a visible military presence. Prior to Anzac Day 1956, however, the headquarters of the three armed services issued instructions that territorials could parade on Anzac Day if invited to do so but that such parades would have to be carried out voluntarily and not on a paid basis as in the past. It was felt that ceremonial parades were not an efficient use of training time. In some centres, service units continued to parade on a voluntary basis but in others, such as Christchurch, no units paraded in 1956.99 This decision provoked the ire of a number of RSA branches and the Dominion President held discussions with the Minister of Defence to reverse the decision but to no avail.100 In the end, the RSA accepted voluntary parades but requested that official encouragement be given to regular forces and territorial units to parade on Anzac Day. The Minister agreed.

The sacred character of Anzac Day was also threatened during the late 1950s. Prior to Anzac Day 1957, Dunedin RSA was approached by the manager of a local


cinema, owned by Amalgamated Theatres Ltd., with a proposal to screen films on
Anzac night. The cinema manager was prepared to give the RSA 20% of the door
takings and the opportunity to vet the films as an incentive to agree with the
proposal. The RSA's endorsement was presumably important in gaining the City
Council's permission for this special screening. The Dunedin RSA declined the offer
because it conflicted with RSA policy. The DEC was informed of the proposal as
Dunedin RSA believed Amalgamated Theatres Ltd. had circularised all branch
managers to approach sub-Associations in their areas. Here was a commercial
attempt, then, to liberalise Anzac Day, or at least the evening of Anzac Day, and
provide the public with some form of organised entertainment. The proposal by the
cinema company reveals that it felt there was a section of the population who would
attend screenings on Anzac Day, if provided the opportunity, despite the socially
perceived sacredness of the day.

It was the prevention of just this kind of reduction of Anzac Day which had
been the rationale behind the passage of Resolution 35 at the 1956 RSA Dominion
Council meeting. The Resolution read: “That this Dominion Council strongly
deprecates any movement for the lessening of the significance of Anzac Day and
calls on all ex-servicemen to support the observance of Anzac Day in its present
form”. This Resolution was ratified yearly up until the mid 1960s. Such a
resolution had so far not been required since the end of the Second World War. By
the late 1950s, therefore, the RSA was becoming apprehensive over the future
observance of Anzac Day. During the next few years the RSA would initially
attempt to build a wall around Anzac Day to protect it against public apathy and calls
for its liberalisation. In the end, however, that wall would be dismantled from within
by the RSA itself, to enable Anzac Day to express the sentiments of the majority of
New Zealanders.

In 1958, however, Anzac Day services still attracted large attendances and in
some places, such as Auckland, the numbers were increasing each year. The
development was underpinned by a growing interest of Second World War ex-
servicemen and their families in attending Anzac Day services. This conclusion is
supported by the fact the Dawn Service, a service which had always held more
symbolic appeal for returned men, was becoming more popular. This meant services
later in the day began to dwindle in many places. The observance of Anzac Day in
Christchurch provides an example of this development throughout the 1950s.

101 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 2 April 1957, pp.13-4
102 Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, 1956, Resolution 35.
103 In 1952 3,000 Aucklanders attended both the Dawn Service and citizens’ service. By 1957, the numbers
had increased to 6,000 at both services. NZH, 26 April 1952, p.10 and 26 April 1957, p.10.
1952 some 4,000 people attended the city’s citizens’ service but by 1958 this number had been halved to 2,000. The following year the afternoon service was transferred to mid-morning. In contrast, the Dawn Service grew from a parade of 500 ex-servicemen in 1951 to 1,000 ex-servicemen and 1,500 members of the public in 1958. This trend was repeated throughout the country although rural towns tended to retain their afternoon services and resisted the popularity of the Dawn Service.

The general attitude of a growing proportion of the population by the late 1950s, however, was one of uninterest and apathy towards the commemoration of Anzac Day and the nation’s war dead in general. The fate of Remembrance Day during the same period confirms the latter point. In 1946 the Government introduced Remembrance Day which was commemorated on the Sunday prior to 11 November, Armistice Day. In short, Remembrance Day “Sundayised” Armistice Day. New Zealanders were requested to commemorate Remembrance Day with traditional services at local war memorials and two minutes of silence at eleven o’clock when citizens and vehicles were to halt in the streets. On the whole, New Zealand’s first Remembrance Day was observed in this manner. During the next few years, however, the public gradually lost interest in commemorating the day with attendances at services shrinking to very small numbers. The RSA continually tried to revive interest in its commemoration throughout the 1950s. In 1955 and 1956, for example, the RSA’s Dominion Executive approached the Government over the possibility of reverting back to an observance on 11 November, but without success. By the late 1950s the day was barely observed apart from the flying of flags on government buildings, perhaps a brief mention at church services, and very small attendances at the few commemorative services now held during the morning.

The decline of Remembrance Day was perhaps a result of its “Sundayisation” because the day lost the significance associated with the eleventh hour of 11 November. The fate of Remembrance Day undoubtedly provided a warning to the RSA with regard to the possible dire consequences should Anzac Day be “Sundayised” in the future. The more likely explanation for the decline of Remembrance Day, however, is that its predecessor, Armistice Day, had never possessed the same significance for New Zealanders as Anzac Day. After the Second

---

104 For attendance figures see Press, 26 April 1951, p.8; 26 April 1952, p.10; 26 April 1958, p.14; and 27 April 1959, p.10.

105 The introduction of Remembrance Day in New Zealand followed action initiated by the British Government.


107 ODT, 11 November 1946, p.6.

World War, furthermore, most New Zealanders increasingly did not have the spiritual energy or desire to remember the nation's war dead on two separate occasions. In which case Remembrance Day was always going to lose out to Anzac Day.

A large majority of the population also no longer viewed Anzac Day as a holy day but as just another holiday and one, moreover, to be suffered because of the lack of public entertainment. This was particularly true for the younger generation who had no memory of the Second World War and the dead who were remembered on Anzac Day. The following extract was written by a sixth form school pupil in 1958:

I am not sure how I should regard Anzac Day. They tell us it should not be regarded merely as a holiday, but that it is meant for a Holy Day. It is quite impossible for me to think of it as such. I doubt whether there are many youngsters of my own age who do not look forward to Anzac Day as a welcome day-off from school.109

The undercurrents of change therefore existed by the late 1950s. In 1959 these undercurrents would surface. From this year onwards came mounting agitation for the liberalisation of Anzac Day. After much debate over the desirability of change and the most appropriate form, legislation was eventually passed which finalised the transformation of Anzac Day from a holy day to a holiday with pubs open, horse-racing, sport and other entertainment in the afternoon and evening.

CHAPTER THREE

TIME FOR A CHANGE

1959-1967

The year 1959 was a watershed for the observance of Anzac Day. Why this year? Anzac Day fell on a Saturday thus creating a “Sunday weekend” and depriving a nation of its day of “rugby, racing and beer” at the end of a decade when all three had been paramount. In response to the “loss” of this Saturday there was unprecedented public criticism of Anzac Day and calls for its liberalisation. This forced the RSA to seriously consider the nature of Anzac Day and the possibility of change. This discussion was the initial step towards the eventual liberalisation of Anzac Day in the mid 1960s.

The questioning of Anzac Day in 1959 began as early as February when the editorial of the Listener addressed “The Future of Anzac Day”:

Because Anzac Day falls this year on a Saturday, the question of observance seems likely to become controversial....When the event occurs on a Saturday, so that in effect the nation has a Sunday weekend, it becomes pertinent to ask if the present observance is the best way of keeping alive the true spirit of the day....It is beyond the strength of ordinary men and women to retain for a full day the solemnity of the Dawn Parade....Veterans who renew old comradeships after marching together are able to give their day its true character; but the rest of the people are outside this experience and are left with a grey afternoon. It is hoped that April 25 will remain for many years a national day of special significance. Yet laws and prohibitions will not save it unless those who value it most can unbend from a too austere and unimaginative concept of human needs. 

This editorial prophetically warned of the dire consequences if Anzac Day did not reflect the sentiments of the majority of New Zealanders.

In the weeks leading up to Anzac Day there was considerable public discussion over the proper form of commemoration. The Auckland branch of the Labourers’ Union requested the liberalisation of Anzac Day afternoon to allow the playing of sport, the running of race-meetings, and the opening of hotels and other places of

2 New Zealand Listener, 20 February 1959, p.10.
amusement. In response to this call, the President of the Otago Trades Council estimated that Auckland’s attitude would be endorsed by 75% of Dunedin workers, and that the general feeling among Otago trade unions was that New Zealand should follow New South Wales’ example of a half-day observance.

When Dunedin people were questioned about their attitudes towards the liberalisation of the day the majority expressed the view that there would be no disrespect in holding sport after the morning observance. The Otago Daily Times stated: “Many felt that the true spirit of Anzac was not a day of gloom but of liberty...and pointed out that most service organisations held reunions after the Anzac Day services and parades which could not be called solemn”. This concentration upon the perceived double standard of RSA policy and the actual behaviour of ex-servicemen on Anzac Day became the focus of much of the public criticism of Anzac Day in 1959 and during the next few years. For example, “Sportsman” wrote to the editor of the Otago Daily Times:

…it is a well-known fact that many R.S.A. members observe the balance of the day after the parades as a social occasion to be celebrated in typical ‘kiwi’ fashion. At the same time, the rest of us are accused of desecrating a sacred day if we wish to play a game of sport.

A growing number of ex-servicemen recognised this apparent hypocrisy and its potential to damage Anzac Day. A Second World War ex-serviceman wrote to the editor of the New Zealand Herald: “If ex-servicemen wish to have the respect and support of the civilian populace, and especially of tomorrow’s servicemen they will have to demonstrate that their example is one that can be followed with honour”.

In the end, and despite the controversy, Anzac Day was commemorated in 1959 as in other years with good attendances at most services throughout the country. Sports grounds and racecourses lay empty while the doors of pubs and theatres remained closed. The day was truly like a Sunday which undoubtedly left many sportsmen quietly muttering their discontent at a Saturday “missed”. With the day passed the public criticism quickly faded away. The RSA, however, continued to analyse the debate and questioned its meaning for the future observance of Anzac Day.

In the May issue of RSA Review the editor asked ex-servicemen for their

3 Press, 27 April 1959, p.7.
4 ODT, 22 April 1959, p.5.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid, 24 April 1959, p.4.
7 NZH, 28 April 1959, p.9.
opinions on how Anzac Day should be observed. The response covered the whole spectrum from calls for the status quo to those who wanted the “Sundayisation” of Anzac Day or the introduction of a half-day observance. There were also letters criticising the RSA for holding entertainment, such as smoke concerts, when the rest of the public was unable to attend many of the entertainments of their choice. More letters were received and published in the next issue, such was the degree of interest.9

The publicity surrounding Anzac Day in 1959 made it an important issue at the RSA’s Dominion Council Meeting for that year. The whole question of the observance of Anzac Day was fully discussed at committee stage. No concrete proposals with regard to changing Anzac Day were made, however, and the committee recommended that standing policy upholding the status quo be reaffirmed. In open Council, the question of Anzac Day was debated for about twenty minutes. Two delegates spoke in favour of some form of change. One, from Hutt Valley RSA, said his Association had moved for a half-day observance while an Auckland delegate desired an Anzac Sunday with church services in the morning and the afternoon free for sports. In response, a member of the committee responsible for discussing Anzac Day felt these comments were unfortunate:

...because it indicates that there is a division of opinion in the R.S.A. on this matter...While there may be division of opinion, if we are going to have a policy and if it is going to carry force and impress the Government, we must be together now and not divided.

When the motion reaffirming standing policy was put to the floor, however, only one of the 230 delegates voted against it.10

This attitude was also confirmed at a meeting convened by Auckland RSA to discuss the future form of Anzac Day in November 1959. The meeting was attended by representatives of thirty-six ex-servicemen’s organisations. The views expressed differed considerably but the overwhelming majority deplored any suggestion that hotels open and sports be played in the afternoon, as was the practice in New South Wales.11 Thus despite the controversy and criticism surrounding Anzac Day 1959 ex-servicemen’s and women’s organisations were still clearly in favour of maintaining the status quo. The trickle of calls for change heard in 1959, however, became a torrent during the next few years.

The commemoration of Anzac Day certainly underwent considerable change

---

8 RSA Review, Vol. XXXVI, no.7 (May 1959), p.3.
9 Ibid, Vol. XXXVI, no.8 (June 1959), p.15 and no.9 (July 1959), p.7 respectively.
during the early 1960s which increasingly pressured the RSA to accept the need for liberalisation. The general trend was for afternoon services to be transferred to mid-morning, particularly in the larger centres. This change was implemented for Wellington’s citizens’ service in 1958; Christchurch followed suit the following year; and Auckland reverted back to an eleven o’clock service in 1961 (Auckland had changed its main citizens’ service from eleven to three o’clock in 1955). Dunedin held onto its afternoon service until 1966. Rural towns tended to retain their afternoon services longer than the cities. In Milton on Anzac Day 1964, for example, over 300 people attended the town’s main service in the afternoon. Small communities too, eventually followed the pattern of morning services. By the end of the decade, Milton’s formal observance was over by midday.

This development was partly the result of the continued growth in popularity of the Dawn Service which subsequently meant that parades and services later in the day attracted less interest. During the 1960s the Dawn Service eventually eclipsed the citizens’ service as the most important and poignant commemoration of Anzac Day. The shift in popularity from the citizens’ service to the Dawn Service reflected the fact that Anzac Day was increasingly fulfilling a function for ex-servicemen and women more than the public. During the immediate postwar period Anzac Day had provided an important occasion for the public as well as ex-service personnel to mourn family and friends who had not returned. The citizens’ service in particular had allowed the community to come together with grieving parents, wives, relatives and friends to pay their respects to loved ones. By the 1960s the passage of time since the First but also the Second World War meant that fewer New Zealanders required Anzac Day as a day of mourning and subsequently attendances dropped at citizens’ services. The number of Second World War ex-servicemen, along with their own families, attending Anzac Day services, however, was on the increase. The passage of time had also enabled veterans to put aside the bad memories to reminisce over the good ones. They attended ceremonies to revive their wartime community. They also favoured the Dawn Service over the citizens’ service because of its deep military symbolism, particularly its symbolic reminder of the dawn stand-to for returned men with combat experience. By the 1960s, therefore, the formal

---

12 For more details of the transference of the citizens’ services from the afternoon to the morning in the main centres see RSA Review, Vol. XXXV, no. 8 (June 1958), p.2 for Wellington; Press, 27 April 1959, p.10 for Christchurch; and RSA Review, Vol. XXXVII, no.8 (June 1960), p.15 for Auckland.

13 Bruce Herald, 27 April 1964, p.3.

14 Ibid, 29 April 1969, p.3.

15 For a contemporary explanation of the popularity of the Dawn Service for ex-servicemen see article “Changing Pattern of Anzac Day” in RSA Review, Vol. XXXII, no.7 (May 1956), p.2
Dawn Services continued to grow in popularity throughout the 1960s. Lower Hutt War Memorial, Anzac Day 1970

(New Zealand Weekly News)

Afternoon services and parades subsequently attracted smaller attendances throughout the 1960s. New Plymouth's ex-servicemen's parade, Anzac Day 1970

(New Zealand Weekly News)
observance of Anzac Day was over by the afternoon in many places throughout the country.

The encroachment of popular leisure activities and the redefinition of Sunday during the postwar period accelerated the decline of afternoon services. The 1921-2 and 1949 Anzac Day Acts stated that 25 April be observed “in all respects as if Anzac Day were a Sunday” and the manner in which Sunday was observed undoubtedly affected the observance of Anzac Day. During this period Sunday underwent considerable change. Fewer people attended church and so the day became less sacred. In addition, New Zealanders also had an ever growing choice of leisure activities and increasingly pursued them on Sunday. By the early 1960s, along with traditional Sunday leisure pursuits of pottering around the house and garden or going for “Sunday drives” and picnics, New Zealanders could increasingly go to the pictures and occasionally even watch sport (although Saturday was still the traditional day for these activities). Just as leisure activities changed the mood of Sunday they came to effect what had long been viewed as the most sacred day of the year - Anzac Day.

Over the years the Churches had rejected the comparison between Anzac Day and Sunday, arguing that the association desecrated the latter’s observance. They had particularly disliked the insinuation that Anzac Day was more sacred than Sunday. This attitude ignited controversy in Balclutha, a rural town in South Otago, prior to Anzac Day 1964. ‘The controversy erupted when the Balclutha Ministers’ Association, representing the Protestant Churches in the area, released a statement explaining why their Association would not be officially participating in Anzac Day services:

We do not subscribe to the Sunday standard of this day, in spite of Government legislation. Official Returned Services Association policy is to adhere to the section of the Act, which says that Anzac Day is to be observed in all respects as a Sunday. Yet several R.S.A. branches hold organised sporting events on a Sunday, something which they resent being done on Anzac Day. Thus Sunday is relegated to second place in the eyes of the people, something we disagree strongly with on principle. Anzac Day has come to be regarded as the national Sunday, many people giving the impression that by attending an Anzac Day service they have fulfilled their duty to God. We feel that by taking part officially we are encouraging people in this belief.16

The statement further emphasised that it was not against Anzac Day as a day of remembrance but that Balclutha’s Anzac Day service “is not a church service, but an RSA service, and we do not feel that our place is on the platform”. The ministers’ actions in Balclutha were rather extreme but the sentiments were implicitly supported

16 ODT, 23 April 1964, p.1.
by clergymen throughout the country. The Anglican Dean of Auckland, the Very Reverend G. R. Monteith, commenting on Auckland's Anzac Day observance that same year when sport and entertainment were held in the afternoon, said, "I am all in favour of the day in its changed form and have never favoured trying to make the day more sacred than a Sunday".\(^\text{17}\)

The Churches had always felt threatened by Anzac Day because of its mix of civic and Christian liturgy; as well as the fact that it and not Good Friday, Christmas or Sunday, was widely viewed as the nation's most sacred day. The Churches became even more anxious to disassociate Anzac Day from Sunday, however, when the former came under criticism for its solemnness and calls were made for its liberalisation during the early 1960s. They feared some of the criticism would land at their doorsteps. The Churches already had their own battle to save Sunday from the ever-increasing threat of secularisation. The Churches were, therefore, at the forefront of calls for the liberalisation of Anzac Day during the early 1960s.\(^\text{18}\)

The same leisure pursuits which made Sunday more secular also affected Anzac Day. Since the mid 1950s the motion picture industry had been pressing for film screenings on Anzac Day.\(^\text{19}\) After Anzac Day 1961 Kerridge-Odeon Theatres Ltd. approached Auckland RSA to gauge its views towards public film screenings on Anzac Day. The Association requested a directive from the DEC to guide sub-Associations on the matter. The DEC's guideline stated that "the decision as to whether or not entertainment which is open to the public shall be held or given on Anzac Day is solely for the Council of the area in which the entertainment is sought to be held".\(^\text{20}\) The guideline further stipulated that Associations should do nothing to influence the decision of the Council other than to request that the entertainment not be permitted within the period of any commemorative service or parade. Finally, it recommended that Associations should not seek to make it a condition of the permit that proceeds of the entertainment be given to the RSA. The conditions were also relevant to sporting events and all other forms of entertainment on Anzac Day. Over the next few years the DEC would continually refer Associations back to this guideline as they grappled with the encroachment of leisure activities on Anzac Day.

During the early 1960s local authorities increasingly granted permission to

\(^{17}\) *NZH*, 27 April 1964, p.12.

\(^{18}\) The Public and Social Affairs Committee of the Anglican Church, for example, made the following suggestions to the RSA in October 1964: "The afternoon and evening of Anzac Day, except when it falls on a Sunday, should be as an ordinary holiday". Most importantly that, "All references to Sunday should be removed from the Anzac Day Act". RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box: Anzac Day 1963-7.

\(^{19}\) For discussion of the motion picture industry's approach to have screenings on Anzac Day 1957 see this thesis, pp.71-2.

cinemas for screenings on Anzac Day. The licence usually carried the proviso that theatres not open until services and parades had concluded. By mid decade cinemas opened in most cities and towns on Anzac Day.

The opening of cinemas was not, however, the only new development for Anzac Day as local authorities increasingly granted permission for sporting events to take place in the afternoon as well. By the mid 1960s, New Zealanders could go and watch sporting fixtures on Anzac Day afternoon in many places. The games were usually arranged specially for the day, with a preference for “friendly” matches rather than competition games, and these often attracted considerable interest. In Christchurch on Anzac Day 1964, for example, a “friendly game” of rugby between the Cantabrians and Canterbury XV (virtually the trial game for the provincial side for the upcoming representative season) attracted a crowd of 5,000 at Lancaster Park. This figure was comparable with the attendance figures at both the dawn and mid-morning services put together. The encroachment of sport and other leisure activities into Anzac Day afternoon and evening revealed that many New Zealanders no longer required, or wanted, a full day of remembrance.

Across the Tasman, ex-servicemen and women in New South Wales had always believed that half a day of solemn remembrance was sufficient. After a long and hotly contested debate in 1960 Victorian ex-servicemen agreed with their neighbours in New South Wales and South Australia. The issue of a half-day observance was also raised in New Zealand during 1960. At the annual meeting of the RSA Dominion Council, Hutt Valley RSA submitted a remit calling for a half-day observance: “That the solemn observance of Anzac Day be confined to the forenoon”. The remit was rejected. Its presentation was significant, nonetheless, as the first remit to officially call for this form of liberalisation.

In 1961 five remits were presented at the RSA Dominion Council Meeting either requesting change or a referendum amongst sub-Associations. A two-hour debate was triggered off when the report of the sub-committee charged with discussing the Anzac Day remits recommended the remit calling for a referendum be deleted. The debate provides an insight into the diverse attitudes within the RSA with regard to Anzac Day during the early 1960s. The RSA Dominion Vice-President, Hamilton Mitchell (later President), stated:

Anzac Day was never intended to be a holiday in the generally accepted sense of the term. I agree that if it is treated as just another holiday it should be abolished. However, the time is not yet ripe to abolish Anzac Day. Why can’t we carry on [the] Anzac Day observance and treat the

21 Press, 27 April 1964, p.3 and p.13 for reports of services and the game respectively.

22 RSA Dominion Annual Report, 1961, p.3.

23 Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, 1960, Remit No. 31.
day as a Sunday? People would then do as they would on a Sunday. We don’t need another day in the year when the pubs are open and we have racing facilities.24

A delegate from Dunedin felt “Gallipoli is as dead as Waterloo for many people. We should strive to impress on people that their freedom didn’t come easy, that it cost men’s lives. We should think of Anzac Day as New Zealand Day”. A Whakatane delegate changed tack when he questioned the hypocrisy of certain RSA members: “We don’t observe Anzac Day solemnly. We can’t keep it restricted while we enjoy ourselves. If we don’t make a change the public will”. An East Coast delegate agreed: “We have caused most of the criticism that has been levelled at Anzac Day by the public (Applause)”. Then S.T. Russell (Wellington member of the DEC) boldly stated: “We are deluding ourselves if we carry on as present. The time has come for us to express an opinion and if we don’t, opportunity will be taken from us”. Russell moved that a committee be established to examine whether change was desirable but this motion was defeated. The remits calling for change or a referendum were also rejected by the Dominion Council. The Dominion President, K.W. Fraser, responded, “You have been wise in what you have decided”.25 The Dominion Council had once again rejected change but the remits and lengthy debate revealed that Anzac Day was increasingly becoming a concern to RSA members throughout the country.

In March 1962, the DEC decided to dispatch to sub-Associations a questionnaire in order to obtain details of attendances at Anzac Day services.26 It was hoped this information would provide some understanding of public attitudes towards Anzac Day so as to be more informed when the issue was discussed at the forthcoming Dominion Council Meeting.

Prior to the meeting, Hutt Valley RSA held a referendum amongst its own 4,000 members on the subject of Anzac Day so that its delegates would be armed with facts when once again it submitted a remit calling for the following liberalisation: “That Anzac Day be observed in a manner that is best described as a SUNDAYIZED morning and a SATURDAYIZED afternoon”.27

Why was Hutt Valley RSA always leading the call for the liberalisation of Anzac Day during this period? The growth of the Hutt Valley was a result of the State-housing programmes which began in the late 1930s and continued during the 1940s

26 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 3 April 1962, p.12.
27 For Hutt Valley RSA’s referendum see RSA Review, Vol. XL, no. 9 (July 1962), p.3.
and 1950s. State houses were primarily for young families. Subsequently, the Hutt Valley had a relatively young population and a higher proportion of young Second World War ex-servicemen compared with other urban areas. This demographic factor may explain the liberalism of Hutt Valley RSA during this period. The explanation is supported by the fact that the RSA in Onehunga, another developing suburb in South Auckland, also submitted an Anzac Day remit in 1962 almost identical to the Hutt Valley remit.

At the RSA’s Dominion Council Meeting, the General Affairs Committee discussed the Hutt Valley and Onehunga remits in closed session. It recommended that the remits be deleted. The delegates accepted this recommendation without debate. The remits’ deletion without discussion in full Council brought criticism from the editor of the *Evening Post*, who strongly criticised the attempt by the RSA to “smother open discussion” of Anzac Day. Both the Dominion President and the Chairman of the General Affairs Committee responded to the editorial, criticising it for being incorrect and misleading.

In 1963, Hutt Valley RSA once again submitted to the Dominion Council a remit calling for the consideration of a half-day observance. The Council also accepted, again without debate, the recommendation of the General Affairs Committee that the remit be deleted. The general feeling of the Committee was that the only things not at present available on Anzac Day and which would result from the implementation of the remit would be the opening of pubs and the running of horse races. It was felt the majority of RSA members would not welcome these additions. The decision of the Dominion Council was in line with the Dominion President’s address at the opening of the conference:

> At this meeting Anzac Day will be a subject of importance. Whatever you may think I am satisfied that there is still a great body of public opinion which does not favour any change at present....Personally I would oppose any change until the bulk of those who served on Gallipoli have died and certainly not before the fiftieth anniversary. Change must come, the

---

28 The Hutt Valley region had 3.8 Second World War ex-servicemen for every 1 First World War ex-serviceman living in the area in 1961 compared with 3.1 to 1 in Wellington; 2.95 to 1 in Christchurch; and 2.7 to 1 in both Auckland and Dunedin. *New Zealand Census*, 1961, Vol.10, Table 18.


31 For the Editor’s comments see *Evening Post (EP)*, 16 June 1962 and for the RSA President’s reply *EP*, 19 June 1962, p.3.

32 The remit read: “That it be the recommendation to the RSA Dominion Council that it continues to study the question of observing Anzac Day in a form which would allow the morning to be conducted as a Sunday, and the afternoon as a normal Saturday”. Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, 1963, Remit No. 4/2.

The 1963 RSA Dominion Council Meeting therefore ended, as in the previous three years, with a remit calling for the consideration of changing the observance of Anzac Day being defeated.

The movement for change, however, steadily gained momentum. In mid 1963, Wellington RSA conducted a referendum amongst its members on the issue of how Anzac Day should be observed. Nearly 6,000 voting cards were distributed and 2,948 were returned, with the result that almost two-thirds, some 1,924 members, indicated a desire for change, compared to 1,009 who favoured the present form of observance. A further breakdown of the poll revealed that, of those who favoured some form of change, the overwhelming majority desired a half-day observance with services in the morning but the afternoon free (1,416 votes); followed by those who wanted Anzac Day to be observed on the nearest Sunday to 25 April (345); while a Dawn Service followed by work as usual in the afternoon was not heavily supported (98); and finally the least popular option was, not surprisingly, the abolition of Anzac Day altogether (20). There were 15 informal votes. As a result of the referendum Wellington RSA intended to present to the 1964 RSA Dominion Council Meeting a remit calling for a half-day observance.

The Wellington RSA notified the DEC of the result of its referendum and recommended that all sub-Associations carry out their own referendum to arrive at a national view. Earlier in the year, Levin RSA had also conducted a poll amongst various clubs and organisations in the area and forwarded the results to the DEC for discussion. The matter of supporting such referenda was discussed at both the October and November monthly meetings of the DEC. It was eventually decided to call upon sub-Associations who had not already conducted a referendum to do so, thus allowing their delegates to come to the next Dominion Council meeting fully informed of their own membership's views. RSA Dominion Headquarters also supplied referendum cards on request to sub-Associations thereby facilitating the collation of local results on a national basis. The referendum reveals the DEC’s

---

36 Ibid.
37 The Levin RSA received only twenty-two replies from the seventy-five organisations circularised with the result that 45% of the replies favoured the present form of observance compared with 51% favouring some form of change. A breakdown of the latter revealed 30% favoured a Sunday observance followed by 21% in favour of a half-day observance. For the results see Minutes of DEC Meeting, 7 May 1963, p.5.
acknowledgement of the need to obtain a comprehensive understanding of its members' attitudes to the observance of Anzac Day. The result of the referendum would also, however, finally force a conclusion to the matter.

The response to the referendum was emphatic. By late February 1964, over eighty Associations were taking action in the referendum. This number represented 78,500 members or 84% of the RSA's financial membership in 1963. The response to the referendum, however, was not all favourable. The Maori ex-servicemen's organisation, Hokowhitu-a-tu Association, reaffirmed its decision that there should be no change in the form of observance and, by implication, no referendum. Dunedin RSA, meanwhile, believed the decision to hold the referendum was a breach of Anzac Day standing policy which stated "that Associations should support the observance of Anzac Day in its present form". It also feared that the referendum would have the result of "forcing the hands of Associations throughout New Zealand".

In due course, the results of the referendum were tallied and in the final analysis only 54% of the RSA's 93,000 financial members returned a vote. The results revealed that approximately half desired a change of some form and, of those, the majority (approximately 19,000 votes) favoured a half-day observance. The referendum therefore indicated that a substantial number of ex-servicemen acknowledged change as inevitable, if not necessary and beneficial, although many were still ambivalent about the form of that change.

A debate followed, however, over the true significance of the referendum. A submission from the Chairman of the General Affairs Committee outlined the various views with regards the results:

Other than the extreme right, who do not want a change, regardless of opinion, and the extreme left, who believe the partial referendum sufficient to require a half-day change, all others agree that the vote as taken was not conclusive enough for several reasons. Two differently worded papers were sent out, giving a completely different result, as one gave the "no change" people an alternative option, and the other did not, a very important difference. A great number of those who voted for no change felt disfranchised if a change were made, as they had no say in which of the several alternatives that were offered, should apply. Others felt that as only 82 Associations held the referendum the other 13 could have materially affected the result, judging by the figures as presented to the committee [sic].

---

39 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 3 March 1964, pp.2-3.
40 For the views of Hokowhitu-a-tu Association and Dunedin RSA see Ibid.
41 No accurate record of the referendum's results exists and neither were exact figures reported in RSA Review. The figures shown here were gleaned from reports and papers dating from the period and found in RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box: Anzac Day 1963-7.
The Chairman agreed that “There are few now who do not accept the fact that a change is inevitable, but there are still many more who are divided on the form of that change”. He suggested a formal vote conducted by RSA Dominion Headquarters over its entire membership was required to gain widespread acceptance and warned of the dire consequences if this was not undertaken:

...feelings of injustice and minority rulings if every endeavour is not made to arrive at a majority decision in this matter upon which there are such strong feelings. A wrong decision could split our organisation asunder and I am vitally concerned to see that [such] a thing does not happen....

The stage was therefore set for a lively debate over the future observance of Anzac Day at the 1964 RSA Dominion Council Meeting.

Meanwhile Anzac Day 1964 fell on a Saturday bringing renewed criticism and highlighting the whole debate over the closed day observance. In the weeks leading up to Anzac Day the common criticism was again that the RSA was hypocritical with regards its observance of Anzac Day. It was alleged that ex-servicemen used Anzac Day as an excuse for a “drunken spree” and that the RSA disregarded the law when it came to the sale of liquor on Anzac Day. Whether as a conscious attempt to drum up criticism of the closed observance or not, the allegations played upon the widely held perception of Anzac Day as the one day of the year when “old digs” got sloshed in RSA clubrooms. In defence, the RSA Dominion President, Hamilton Mitchell, released a press statement denouncing the allegations as untrue and:

...a slur upon the men and women who did their duty to maintain and preserve the freedom all now enjoy. There are almost 200,000 ex-service personnel in New Zealand. Of that number, of course some get drunk, not only on Anzac Day, but on other days of the year. I have been in many parts of New Zealand on Anzac Day, and not once have I seen the law being flouted.

Sub-Associations also defended their organisation and members from the criticism. Hutt Valley RSA took the drastic action of abandoning the traditional rum ration, served to veterans in their coffee after the Dawn Parade, to dispel the criticism. The President of Hutt Valley RSA stated, “You might say we will serve a solemn coffee”. This action was not accepted by all members of the Association and the immediate past president swore to do everything in his power to retain the tot of rum. He argued that ex-servicemen were hardly going to get drunk on ten bottles of rum served between seven and eight hundred ex-servicemen and that the rum:

43 ODT, 16 April 1964, p.1.
44 Ibid.
45 For Levin RSA’s defence against criticism see Press, 21 April 1964, p.5.
46 ODT, 15 and 16 April 1964, p.1.
...only expresses a symbolic significance, and my feelings are that to deprive old digs of something that is simple yet contributes much to engender comradeship and the revival of old memories in traditional time-honoured style, is not in line with precepts of the R.S.A. movement.

The criticism of ex-servicemen’s drinking habits was not, however, the only problem, as the questions of sport and entertainment had to be addressed.

In contrast with 1959, the last time when Anzac Day fell on a Saturday and most codes transferred games to the Sunday, requests were being made to local Councils for permission to play sport in the afternoon of Anzac Day. Many City and Borough Councils throughout the country granted permission (in accordance with the wishes of the RSA) as long as games did not take place during Anzac Day services. This wish did not pose a problem in many places as services were increasingly confined to forenoon by the mid 1960s. In Dunedin, however, the RSA protested over the City Council granting permission to the Otago Football Association (soccer) and the Otago Hockey Association to play competition games during the afternoon as they would clash with the citizens’ service. The protest initially appeared unfounded as games were scheduled to begin at the conclusion of the service in line with the City Council’s and Dunedin RSA’s conditions for the playing of sport on Anzac Day afternoon in Dunedin. The problem came about, however, as a result of confusion over the exact time the service was expected to conclude. The RSA argued that formal proceedings would not culminate until after the starting time granted to sporting fixtures. In the end, players along with considerable numbers of spectators, did not forget the occasion as they stood in silence as a mark of respect prior to the opening whistle.47

The matter of what form the observance of Anzac Day should take was ironically addressed during the very service at the centre of the controversy in Dunedin. The guest speaker, Sir Guy Powles, the Ombudsman, suggested that New Zealanders “remove the Sunday concept” from Anzac Day and change the mood of the day from one of “mourning” to one reminiscent of American Thanksgiving and Memorial Days. Sir Guy observed that, “grief, even deep and sincere, was a personal thing and could not in this day touch more than a steadily dwindling number of people. Grief on a national scale could not be felt for long”. He concluded, “We are not good at national functions or celebrations - and, lets face it, we are not so very good at Anzac Day”.48 Strong words indeed but undoubtedly not lost on an audience in the midst of questioning the proper form of commemorating Anzac Day.

47 For the controversy over the playing of sport on Anzac Day afternoon in Dunedin see ODT, 17 April, p.17; 18 April, p.1; 24 April 1964, p.1 and for the attendance at the games, Ibid, 27 April 1964, p.1.

48 ODT, 27 April 1964, p.5.
The pattern of observance in Dunedin was repeated throughout the country. In some of the smaller country towns sport and entertainment were not held as they continued their time-honoured form of sacred observance - revealing the conservatism of rural New Zealand. In most cities and towns, however, sport and entertainment took over in the afternoon and night. In Auckland, for example, most services were conducted in the morning to allow sporting fixtures to be held in the afternoon. The latter drew average sized crowds. Later in the evening cinemas, restaurants, coffee bars, dances and nightclubs were packed. “The original shape of Anzac Day was rarely seen”, noted the New Zealand Herald.49

And what did Aucklanders think of this development? The Mayor of Auckland, D.M. Robinson, felt “it is a good time to allow sport in a limited way in the afternoon provided the morning is kept sacred to the memory of Anzac and all that that means. By making these changes we are only following a lead given by the public over the years”. The greatest endorsement of the new form of observance came from Cyril Bassett, Gallipoli veteran and Victoria Cross recipient, who told a reporter:

I voted in the RSA referendum to continue the observance of the day as it has been in the past. On second thoughts I do not see anything against the way the day was observed on Saturday, as long as we have the dawn parade and civic ceremony at 11 am. It seems to be what the majority want.

These sentiments were echoed by other civic leaders and RSA spokesmen who were undoubtedly pleased with the large attendances at services in the morning.50 Some 8,500 attended Auckland’s Dawn Service compared with 8,000 the previous year; 6,500 in 1959 (when Anzac Day last fell on a Saturday); and 4,000 on a Saturday in 1953. The large attendances dispelled fears that changes in the observance of the day, such as sport and entertainment in the afternoon and evening, would cause its demise. In fact, Anzac Day 1964 provided a timely and positive insight into the public’s likely reception to a liberalised observance in the future.

With the day having fallen on a Saturday and the referendum having just been completed Anzac Day inevitably dominated the 1964 RSA Dominion Council Meeting. During the course of the conference, the President of the South Australia State branch of the RSL addressed the full Council and the General Affairs Committee on the half-day observance of Anzac Day in South Australia.51 Four

---

49 NZH, 27 April 1964, p.12.

50 For the comments of the Mayor, Bassett and others on Auckland’s Anzac Day in 1964 see NZH, 27 April 1964, p.12.

51 For address by T.L. Eastick, President South Australian State Branch of RSL, see Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, 1964, pp.2-3.
remits calling for change or consideration of change were also presented but were later withdrawn with the introduction and passage of Resolution 4/12. The first part of this Resolution reaffirmed standing policy, thus allowing Anzac Day 1965, the fiftieth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, to be observed in the traditional manner. The second part, however, opened the way for change:

**Having examined the results of the referendum taken by 82 Associations which indicate that some change in the present form of observance is desired by a large section of the membership;**

The Dominion Council instructs the D.E.C. to present to the next Dominion Council a recommendation as to the future form of observance of Anzac Day after taking cognisance of the opinion expressed in the referenda and after ascertaining the views of the sectors of the community as reflected by national organisations.52

The Resolution was passed with near unanimous support (only two votes were recorded against it). This Resolution signalled an important turning point, for with delegates now fully supportive of change, it was a only a matter of time before the DEC came up with an acceptable recommendation and petitioned the Government to change the relative legislation. The liberalisation of Anzac Day was more or less a fait accompli. By 1964, therefore, the RSA had decided that change was necessary and underpinned by a deep-seated change in the public’s attitude towards the observance of Anzac Day.

The DEC had one year to produce a recommendation on the future observance of Anzac Day. It already had the results of the referendum conducted by eighty-two Associations. In October 1964, a questionnaire was designed to invite comment on the desirability of liberalising Anzac Day and dispatched to forty-seven national organisations representing ex-service personnel, workers, employers, farmers, women, Maori, community service and religious groups, and political parties. In short, the aim of the questionnaire was to obtain views on Anzac Day from organisations which represented a wide cross-section of New Zealand society. By April 1965, thirty organisations had returned the questionnaire although the poll was rather inconclusive, with eleven organisations unwilling or unable to comment, eight against and eleven in favour of change.53 Those organisations which favoured change were fairly evenly divided between an Anzac Sunday and a half-day observance, although most organisations against change preferred, in the second instance (if there was to be a change), the half-day observance. The large number of organisations preferring to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the RSA reveals how this organisation

52 Minutes of RSA Dominion Council Meeting, Resolution 4/12.

53 For a summary of the replies to the questionnaire see Minutes of DEC Meeting, 6 April 1965 (Appendix) and for the various replies themselves RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box: Anzac Day 1963-7.
was widely viewed as the "Keeper" of Anzac Day. In short, the poll failed to provide the RSA with conclusive evidence of the opinions of the general public. The DEC had little more than the results of its own referendum, therefore, upon which to base its recommendation.

In April 1965, the DEC discussed the matter of presenting a recommendation on Anzac Day to the forthcoming RSA Dominion Council Meeting in June. During the discussion, the sub-committee dealing with the matter reported that the poll of national organisations had not been of any great assistance and that further consultation was not justified. The sub-committee also acknowledged that the RSA referendum had not provided an unanimous result and that it had also been defective, in the sense that those who were opposed to change were not provided the opportunity to state their choice if there was to be a change. The results did reveal, however, that a majority of members who expressed an opinion were in favour of some form of change. In the final analysis, the sub-committee concluded that change was inevitable, and considered the most suitable form to be that of the half-day observance. In reaching this decision, the sub-committee added that while carrying out a comparative study of the observance of Anzac Day in the States of Australia it had discovered that the half-day form would be uniformly observed throughout Australia by 1966. The meeting concluded with the DEC approving the sub-committee's recommendations and instructing it to prepare a final draft for the next DEC meeting in May. At that meeting, the sub-committee's final draft was accepted as the DEC's recommendation to be presented to the 1965 Dominion Council Meeting in accordance with Resolution 4/12.

The practice across the Tasman, therefore, had some influence upon the final decision just as it had influenced the debate. The half-day form was to be observed throughout Australia on Anzac Day 1966. It reveals that New Zealand followed closely the observance of Anzac Day in Australia. New Zealand ex-servicemen had certainly been provided the opportunity to experience and hear about the Australian observance over the years. Since 1947, delegations of RSA members from throughout New Zealand had travelled annually to Australia to participate in Anzac Day services in the main cities and towns. On returning, the delegates would report back to their own RSAs on their firsthand experiences of the Australian observance. Meanwhile, RSL delegations simultaneously participated in New Zealand Anzac Day ceremonies and described their home observance at RSA gatherings held in their

54 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 6 April 1965, p.10.
honour. This trans-Tasman relationship, appropriate for Anzac Day, thus provided an opportunity for continual comparison with regard to the observance of the day in both countries.

It was ironic that while the DEC was busy considering its recommendation to change Anzac Day, the fiftieth anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli was commemorated throughout the country. The solemnness of the occasion was intensified not only because of the special anniversary but with the day falling on a Sunday. In addition, many undoubtedly felt this might be the last Anzac Day commemorated under the old legislation and speakers made reference to this matter at services during the day.

The most important event commemorating the day, however, took place not in New Zealand but approximately 18,000 kilometres away at Gallipoli itself. A large contingent of Gallipoli veterans and relations from Australasia, including seventy-seven New Zealanders (sixty of whom were Gallipoli veterans), made a pilgrimage to the scene of the campaign as a special feature of the fiftieth anniversary commemoration. At dawn, seventy-one original Anzacs (including twenty New Zealand “first-dayers”) re-enacted their landing at Anzac Cove fifty years ago to the day. On the beach Anzac and Turkish veterans greeted one another and swapped national momentoes and gifts. After the greetings and addresses several Anzacs began to dig in the sand with their hands as if searching for bullets, one reporter noted, and some even kissed the beach which held so many memories. From Anzac Cove, the Anzac delegation, along with thirty Turkish veterans, went by ship to Gallipoli where services were held and wreaths laid at Anzac and Turkish monuments. The ceremonies in Turkey were widely reported back home and the media focused considerable attention on the anniversary in general. The New Zealand public also showed a genuine interest in this special Anzac Day.

Anzac Day 1965 also revealed the recent success of attempts by Roman Catholics and Protestants to bridge their sectarian differences as both joined together to remember the dead. This major breakthrough came in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) which, along with other important developments for the Roman Catholic Church, had placed great emphasis upon ecumenical unity with other faiths. In New Zealand the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches began to

---

56 The six-man RSL delegation to Milton in 1966 was welcomed by eighty local ex-servicemen. The main topic of conversation was the observance of Anzac Day in Australia and how it compared with New Zealand’s observance. Bruce Herald, 16 May 1966, p.3.

57 See C.R. McLean’s address at Dunedin’s Anzac Day citizens’ service, ODT, 26 April 1965, p.1.

58 For details of the New Zealand contingent see Minutes of DEC Meeting, 6 April 1965, (Appendix).

discuss means of cooperation, including the possibility of ecumenical services. The ramifications for the future observance of Anzac Day were obvious. It was only a matter of time before Roman Catholics eventually joined Protestants in combined non-denominational religious Anzac Day services. The fiftieth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign was fittingly the year when the first truly ecumenical Anzac Day services were observed in many places throughout New Zealand. In Christchurch, for example, 3,000 people gathered outside Christchurch’s Anglican Cathedral for that city’s first completely interdenominational Anzac Day service.60 Dunedin’s main citizens’ service was also interdenominational.61 The citizens’ service in Auckland, however, remained secular. The omission of religious elements in Auckland had enabled Roman Catholics and Protestants to attend the service together since the 1930s. It now meant, ironically, continued separate church services for those requiring the consolation of Christian liturgy. On the whole, however, the continued development of closer relations between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches enabled New Zealanders of all faiths to remember together. These services thus finally resolved a dilemma which had plagued Anzac Day, and in the process caused considerable controversy and bitterness, since its inaugural commemoration in 1916.

In June 1965, delegates came to the RSA Dominion Council Meeting with high expectations that the issue of Anzac Day’s liberalisation would also be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The DEC presented its recommendation for a half-day observance which, after one minor amendment,62 was carried as Resolution 4/12 with only a few “noes” recorded against it out of the 250 delegates present. Resolution 4/12 read:

THAT this Dominion Council, recognising that some change in the observance of Anzac Day is desirable having due regard to the changes which have taken place in conditions during the fifty years that have elapsed since the Gallipoli Landings and the birth of Anzac, requests the Government to amend the Anzac Day Act 1949 so as to provide for the future observance of Anzac Day in the manner detailed hereunder:

That the 25th day of April in each year being Anzac Day shall remain as a national day of commemoration and thanksgiving to be observed in accordance with the following recommendations:

---

60 Press, 26 April 1965, p.1
61 ODT, 26 April 1965, p.5.
62 The DEC’s original recommendation had specifically mentioned horse-racing but this was amended when it was pointed out that horse-racing was already implicitly covered in Section 2, sub-section (ii), part (a): “The holding of public meetings and gatherings for the purpose of conducting entertainments, sports, pastimes, and recreations”. RSA Review, Vol. XLIII, no.9 (July 1965), p.2.
1. That Anzac Day shall always be observed on the 25th day of April in each year and not be transferred to a Monday (as is the case with Public Holidays pursuant to the Public Holidays Act 1955).

Note: This recommendation will not affect the present situation under industrial awards, etc., governing payment of wages.

2. When Anzac Day falls on other than a Sunday then -

(i) Up to the hour of 1p.m. Anzac Day shall be observed as a closed day to enable commemorative services to be held during the morning.

(ii) After the hour of 1p.m., the special significance of Anzac Day shall be observed in the manner prescribed in the Act to enable:

(a) The holding of public meetings and gatherings for the purpose of conducting entertainments, sports, pastimes, and recreations.

(b) The supply and consumption of alcoholic liquor.

3. That in order to preserve the special significance of Anzac Day and to ensure that the activities permitted are not commercialized or otherwise converted to the pecuniary gain of individuals, an Anzac Day Trust or Trusts be established for such charitable purposes as will render the greatest benefit to the community as a whole.

4. The D.E.C. be instructed to settle the details of any such Trust or Trusts with the Government.

Notes: It is envisaged -

(1) That any district may hold its commemorative service on Anzac Day at any such time as will suit the convenience of the district.

(2) That the commemorative services will be organised in the various districts by due co-operation between the local authority and local churches with the R.S.A.

(3) That when Anzac Day falls on a Sunday the provisions set out will not apply and the timing of the commemorative services will be arranged in full co-operation with the local churches.

The passage of Resolution 4/12 was the culmination of many years of debate within the RSA over the future of Anzac Day. It now seemed only a matter of time before the Government acted upon the RSA’s recommendation for a half-day observance.

On 16 July 1965, the Dominion President wrote to the Minister of Internal Affairs, D.C. Seath, officially informing the Government of the RSA’s desire to have the legislation governing Anzac Day changed in accordance with Resolution 4/12.

In presenting the submission the President further outlined the principles underlying the Resolution. First, that Anzac Day is not a public holiday but a special day only to be observed on 25 April. Second, that no individual should make a profit from the day and that if any profit is to be made it should be for the benefit of the community as a whole. Third, that the proposed Anzac Day Trusts are not exclusively for the benefit of ex-service personnel but for “the greatest benefit to the community as a whole”. Finally, ex-servicemen do not wish to restrict the afternoon activities other than to prevent individuals from making profits from the day and thus a license fee would be an easy and effective way of eliminating the profit element. In October, the Minister informed the RSA that the Government could not properly consider the RSA’s proposals in time for any alteration to the existing law during the present Parliamentary Session.

Anzac Day 1966 was, therefore, observed in the traditional manner. In Dunedin, however, people observed the day as if the necessary legislation had been passed with an organised “Cavalcade of Sport” in the afternoon which was advertised as “A NEW LOOK TO ANZAC DAY”. The sporting spectacular, organised by the Combined Anzac Day Observance Committee comprised of representatives of the RSA, Rotary, Jaycees and the Otago Youth Council, had a programme which included athletics, cycling, indoor and outdoor soccer, wrestling, inter-school gymnastics, men’s and women’s basketball, volleyball, women’s hockey, a “Sassenachs vs. Cantabrians” rugby match, police dogs, 200 marching girls, and finally mass pipe and brass band displays. And the “Cavalcade of Sport” was well patronised by Dunedinites with 6,000 in attendance. In the evening, furthermore, hundreds of teenagers attended a dance in the Town Hall while the cinemas were reported as busy. The next day, the Otago Daily Times’ frontpage headline read, “New Anzac Day Popular In City”. The accompanying report stated, “The observance of Anzac Day in Dunedin yesterday had its first big change in 50 years....It became more like a Saturday than a Sunday”. The President of Dunedin RSA, P.E. Hazeldine, described the day as an “unqualified success” and added, “I hope it will provide the pattern for future Anzac Day observances, not only in Dunedin but in other New Zealand centres as well”. The Dunedin RSA’s Secretary, C.H. Wilson, felt “As an experiment the programme was highly successful”. The President of the Dunedin Gallipoli Veterans’ Association was more circumspect,

64 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 3 August 1965, (Appendix).
65 Ibid, 5 October 1965 (Appendix).
66 ODT, 23 April 1966, p.32.
67 For the report of Dunedin’s “new look” Anzac Day see ODT, 26 April 1966, p.1.
“Some of the older veterans like the old style but for my part I think it’s all right. I think we have to move with the times”. As for the services, an estimated 2,000 people attended the Dawn Service, which made it the largest for many years, but the attendance at the main citizens’ service, held at mid-morning for the first time rather than in the afternoon, was “disappointing” according to Hazeldine. The difference in attendance figures at the two services, now an established pattern in the larger centres throughout New Zealand, and the success of the new style afternoon, certainly endorsed the RSA’s half-day decision and provided a positive indication of its likely success in the future.

On 14 July 1966, a DEC deputation met with the Minister of Internal Affairs and fully discussed the RSA’s Anzac Day Resolution. The Minister made certain proposals making the Resolution more acceptable to Government. The main change was the omission of the provision that all profits made by activities or businesses operating in the afternoon go to charitable Anzac Day Trusts set up by the RSA, although Trusts would be allowed for the purpose of receiving voluntary donations.68 A fortnight later, on 28 July, the Minister presented the Anzac Day Bill to Parliament.69 At its August meeting, the DEC gave its blessing to the Bill when it resolved that it “reflects a realistic approach to the commemoration of Anzac Day and therefore accepts the Bill as meeting in spirit the desire of the Association that Anzac Day will not be commercialised”.70 The omission of the provision for compulsory trusts from the Bill, however, brought objections from Dunedin and Invercargill RSAs. In response, efforts were made by the RSA to have the Bill referred to a Parliamentary Select Committee but without success.71

The Bill was tabled in the House for its Second Reading on 30 September when it was debated with much emotion.72 Two Members strongly voiced their opposition to changing the present legislation. Sir Basil Arthur (Member for Timaru) said that if “the Bill becomes law, then, as the sun rises over this country next Anzac Day, I hope we will all feel suitably ashamed that we thought one day a year for national commemoration was too much, and we saw fit to set aside only half a day”. Sir Eruera Tirikatene (Member for Southern Maori), and a First World War veteran, after speaking on the role of Maori soldiers at Gallipoli, stated his opposition, “I regret that in my time in this House I have to listen to a proposal for the breaking of this day of

---

69 NZPD, 28 July 1966, pp.1588-90.
71 Ibid, p.11.
72 For the debate accompany the Second Reading see NZPD , Vol. 349, 30 September 1966, pp.2978-96.
commemoration”. Sir Basil and Sir Eruera, along with the Member for Miramar, requested without success that the Bill go to a select committee to allow the public to voice their opinions. Seven other Members spoke in favour of the Bill although most acknowledged with regret the fact that it was now required. A most poignant moment during the debate occurred when Sir Walter Nash reflected upon the impressiveness of the Dawn Service and particularly the moment when Binyon's lines are recited. With these lines in mind, Sir Walter pertinently raised the point that “in the future we shall not be able to refer to the 'going down of the sun' because we end our services at midday, and we use the rest of the day for anything we like”. The Bill was eventually read for a second time without division. The Bill's passage was now assured, apart from the mere formality of a Third Reading which took place on 12 October. The Governor-General's assent was received on 14 October 1966. The greatest change to Anzac Day since its inception was now sanctioned by statutory law.

With the passage of the new Anzac Day Act the RSA's Dominion Executive embarked on informing its own members and the public of the new form of observance for Anzac Day 1967. In particular, the Dominion President addressed a letter to all national sporting bodies urging them to support the Anzac Day Trusts and preserve “the spiritual significance of the celebration of the day”.73

In March 1967, in response to representations from Auckland RSA, the DEC approached the Minister of Finance, R.D. Muldoon, with regard to the RSA's desire to see the introduction of legislation declaring voluntary donations to Anzac Day Trusts tax deductible. The Minister replied that the Government could not single out the Anzac Day Trusts for special treatment.74

On the eve of Anzac Day 1967, newspaper editorials addressed the changes to the day and why they had been enacted. Most articles emphasised that the new legislation would result in a “Change in form, but not in significance”.75 The day itself was widely reported by the media and RSA officials as a success, with increased attendances at commemorative ceremonies in many centres. It was activities in the afternoon, however, which attracted the largest crowds of the day.76 In some centres, such as Dunedin, public exhibitions were organised with entertainment, including

73 For the President's letter see Minutes of DEC Meeting, 7 March 1967, (Appendix) and for the other information see RSA Dominion Annual Report, 1967, Chapter Five, p.11.

74 RSA Dominion Annual Report, 1967, Chapter Five, p.11.


76 For the reports of the commemorative ceremonies and afternoon activities in the main centres see ODT, 26 April 1967, p.5; Press, 26 April 1967, p.1; Dominion, 26 April 1967, p.1; and NZH, 26 April 1967, p.1 and p.3.
sporting events, bands, and military paraphernalia. The exhibitions attracted thousands with proceeds mainly going to the newly established Anzac Day Trusts and other charities. More than 12,000 people attended the Anzac Day gala charity race meeting at Addington in Christchurch.\textsuperscript{77} In fact horse-racing, previously prohibited under the old Anzac Day legislation, was particularly popular with many meetings drawing record crowds. The Dunedin Jockey Club’s meeting, for example, was claimed the most successful for years.\textsuperscript{78} Sporting fixtures in general, most specially organised for the afternoon, attracted record crowds. In Auckland, a crowd of 12,000 watched senior club rugby at Eden Park, while a specially arranged "Maoris vs Pakehas" rugby league match attracted 10,000 spectators. The city’s golf courses were also reported as busy. On the harbour, meanwhile, over one hundred boats competed in a sailing regatta.\textsuperscript{79}

Picture theatres and hotels were also well patronised throughout the country with one report from Auckland of nearly “one hundred thirsty people” waiting outside an inner city hotel for its doors to open at one o’clock.\textsuperscript{80} The majority of New Zealanders, however, undoubtedly continued to observe the day as they had done for years by working on the house or pottering in the garden, going for a long drive or walk, and generally enjoying a quiet “day off”. What is certain, Anzac Day could no longer be claimed, as it had been for many years, as “the most boring day of the year”. This title was perhaps now more appropriate for Good Friday and Sunday.

With the new liberalised observance, Anzac Day was also arguably no longer the most sacred day of the year. The Saturday standard for the observance of the afternoon meant the day was more relaxed than Sunday and many Christian days but was it less sacred? It is impossible to compare sacred days in terms of their sacredness. What is clear, however, is that the ongoing secularisation of New Zealand society which redefined Sunday also changed Anzac Day during the postwar period. From a time when Anzac Day was viewed as a holy day, half the day was now legislated as a holiday.

Throughout the country, however, RSA officials and ex-service personnel spoke of the new form of observance as a great success and felt that any apprehension over whether the changes would lessen the significance of the day had been dispelled. At RSA Dominion Headquarters, reports of Anzac Day services and activities were collected from virtually every newspaper in the country in order to

\textsuperscript{77} Press, 26 April 1967, p.1.

\textsuperscript{78} 6,000 people attended the Dunedin meeting at Wingatui while both meetings in Auckland province drew record crowds. ODT, 26 April 1967, p.5 and NZH, 26 April 1967, p.1.

\textsuperscript{79} NZH, 26 April 1967, p.1.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
"Well, look at it this way, Sport—you're paying homage to the memory of all those good horses who were sacrificed in war so that we might be free to bet!"

Fig. 5  “Anzac Day 1967” by Sid Scales  (Otago Daily Times)

...they only fade away

Fig. 6  “Anzac Day 1968” by Sid Scales  (Otago Daily Times)
gauge the response of the public to the new observance. In short, the liberalisation of Anzac Day was well received, which reveals its introduction was appropriate by the mid 1960s.

The Anzac Day Trusts, twenty-six in total, also benefited from the afternoon activities with many of the events being organised in conjunction with the Trusts while other organisations gave donations. With the Trusts operating on a voluntary basis and donations not tax deductible, however, the future was uncertain. This fact was realised by the RSA and so Resolution 4/12 was carried at the 1967 Dominion Council Meeting. This requested again the introduction of Anzac Day Trusts on a compulsory basis, a compulsory payment of reasonable proportions of profits to the Trusts, and finally that all voluntary contributions to Trusts be fully deductible for tax purposes. The Minister of Internal Affairs was informed of Resolution 4/12 in early August and a meeting between himself and RSA executive officials was held in late September. On 2 October the Minister advised the DEC that the Government was not able to support the establishment of compulsory Trusts. The DEC agreed that no further action would be taken and it resolved to recommend to Dominion Council that the reference to compulsory Trusts in Resolution 4/12 be deleted. During late 1967 and early 1968, however, the DEC continued to make representations to Government in an effort to secure tax exemptions for voluntary contributions to the Trusts, but these efforts were also to no avail. The failure to gain these concessions meant the Trusts did not realise the original hopes of the RSA. Wellington had no Anzac Day Trust in 1968, for example, because sporting and other organisations were unsupportive due to their donations being taxed. By the end of the decade few Trusts were working effectively and fewer still survived into the 1970s.

The success of the new form of Anzac Day observance in 1967, however, revealed a social climate in favour of the change. It signalled the return of a consensus between the RSA and public over the proper form of commemorating Anzac Day. An episode in Wellington on Anzac Day that same year, however, threatened to shatter this tenuous consensus. The issue was no longer the manner of observing Anzac Day but its meaning.

Prior to the citizens' service at Wellington's Cenotaph, RSA officials prevented a group of university students and junior lecturers from laying a wreath with the inscription "To the dead and dying on all sides in Vietnam. Must their blood pay the

81 For the newspaper clippings of Anzac Day observances throughout New Zealand collected by the staff at RSA Dominion Headquarters see RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box: Anzac Day 1963-7.
82 For Resolution 4/12 and a report of the dealings with the Government over the issue of Anzac Day Trusts see RSA Annual Report, 1968, Chapter Five, p.3.
price of our mistakes?” 84 The group instead laid their wreath after the service but it was immediately removed by an RSA official. The police intervened with a warning that a further attempt to lay the wreath would be a breach of the peace. Two wreath-layers persisted and were arrested for disorderly behaviour and resisting the police. They were subsequently fined $40 each but appealed their conviction. The appeal was heard by the Chief Justice, Sir Richard Wild, himself a regular speaker at Anzac Day services.85 The charge of resisting the police was dismissed but that of disorderly behaviour upheld because, said the Judge, they had presented “a point of view, however sincerely held, which they knew would be annoying to some and offensive to many”.86 By this ruling, any wreath-laying which differed from the conventional style could be deemed disorderly and thereby a criminal offence, no matter how respectful its intentions. During the next few years of the Vietnam War, similar demonstrations on Anzac Day would challenge the definition of an appropriate tribute. Once again controversy was to encompass Anzac Day as it was used by a younger generation with a new agenda.


85 The previous year at Wellington’s Anzac Day citizens’ service, Sir Richard had commended the New Zealand troops in Vietnam for upholding the “great tradition of Gallipoli”. EP, 26 April 1966, p.16.

86 Dominion, 2 September 1967, p.6.
The changing fate of Anzac Day since the Second World War reflects changes in social attitudes. A national commemorative day, such as Anzac Day, must express the mood of the nation for it to survive and so is forever changing. During the late 1940s, Anzac Day was a holy day as it had been during the 1920s. By the 1950s, for many people it had become just a holiday. The anti-war protests at Anzac Day services during the late 1960s and early 1970s clearly highlight this thesis. The day reflected the shattered domestic consensus over the use of war as a means of foreign policy. During this period, the social and political concerns of a younger generation produced a new reading of Anzac Day and one not always appreciated by an older generation, particularly ex-service personnel.

The new sentiments of anti-Vietnam War protesters were most dramatically expressed on Anzac Day through wreaths. In their study of War Memorials, McLean and Phillips examined the wreath as an expressive form:

Wreaths have always been, in a sense, instant and personal War Memorials. While stone monuments have tried to speak for all time, wreaths last barely a week. They are temporary memorials, expressive of the feelings and concerns of a particular time. They easily become propaganda devices used by minority groups, or groups previously excluded from War Memorial rituals, to make their views known.¹

This was precisely the scenario during the Vietnam War.

On Anzac Day 1968 two youths placed a wreath in memory of “the Dead and Dying in Vietnam” at Christchurch’s mid-morning service. The wreath was virtually identical to that prohibited at Wellington’s service the previous year.² The response of authorities in Christchurch was also similar. After complaints, supposedly from RSA officials, police requested the youths to remove the wreath. When they refused to do so a policeman removed it. Thirty minutes later the wreath was returned to the Memorial but without the card. Senior-Sergeant E.S. Tuck later explained: “The police could not see anything wrong with the wreath, although the words might be

² This thesis, pp.98-9.
The President of Christchurch RSA, J. Green, certainly found the wreath offensive:

It was an affront to all who cherished Anzac Day to have that day used for anything other than the remembering of New Zealanders who had lost their lives in world wars. It is a pity that those concerned could not have more respect for the thousands of New Zealand war dead instead of using the day for an underhand method of furthering their anti-Vietnam propaganda.

The wreath-laying incident provoked considerable controversy in Christchurch, evident by the large number of letters to the editor of the Christchurch Press.

Most letters expressed the belief that the wreath had been a sincere attempt to pay respect to New Zealand servicemen, among others, who had died in the Vietnam War. They consequently viewed the actions of the RSA and police as unfortunate. A letter by one of the “group of youths” who laid the controversial wreath claimed, “We were not primarily after any publicity but wanted to place this wreath as a symbol of our feelings towards Vietnam and war in general”. Another letter by “Ex-serviceman” explained that as a contributor to the wreath he was “shocked at the magnitude and bigotry of the RSA’s reaction to the relatively innocuous card accompanying it”, and concluded, “The RSA’s canonisation of those dupes who killed and were killed in the name of humanity is a major factor in our age’s acceptance of war as inevitable”.

With reference to both these letters the editor addressed the wreath-laying incident:

If the wreath “To the Dead and Dying in Vietnam” was a sincere expression of gratitude to the servicemen - and others - who have died in the Vietnam war it was certainly not out of place among the tributes....but there is at least some evidence, in two letters we print this morning, of mixed motives - evidence that some of them were not concerned to honour the dead....Those who see no honour in dying for their country in Vietnam or anywhere else should not obtrude their views on their fellow-citizens at this time of proud but sad memories.

These points went to the heart of the matter. First, was the wreath “To the Dead and Dying in Vietnam” in memory of New Zealand ex-servicemen, Vietnamese civilians, the Viet Cong, or none of them? Was it simply an anti-war message? Second, who could be legitimately commemorated on Anzac Day? The Anzac Day Act stated that the day commemorated “New Zealand servicemen and servicewomen” and was “in memory of those who at any time have given their lives

---

4 Ibid.
6 Ibid, p.10.
for New Zealand and the British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations”.

The RSA followed this statutory definition as a guideline for wreaths. In the formal sense, therefore, the wreath in question could only commemorate New Zealand servicemen in Vietnam for it to be an “acceptable” tribute. The use of the words “Dead and Dying” by the organisers of the wreath, however, made the inscription so ambiguous that one could claim the wreath did commemorate New Zealand servicemen but, on the other hand, also their enemy the Viet Cong. Many people seemed to view the wreath as one in memory of the innocent Vietnamese civilians on both sides of the fighting and found this acceptable. If the letters to the Christchurch Press are authentic, however, it would seem the editor was justified in claiming that the wreath-bearers “were not concerned to honour the dead” so much as to state their opposition to the Vietnam War. During the next few years similar wreaths would repeatedly renew the debate over whom and what Anzac Day should commemorate. Whatever the official line, the anti-Vietnam War wreaths certainly broadened the meaning of Anzac Day forever.

In Auckland, meanwhile, the Cenotaph and War Memorial Museum were sprayed with graffiti early on the morning of Anzac Day. It is unclear whether this act of vandalism had anti-Vietnam War overtones. It highlights, nonetheless, the growing use of Anzac Day and war memorials as a mode of protest by the late 1960s.

Anzac Day services overseas were also marred by protest in 1968. The traditional wreath-laying ceremony at Whitehall, London was marred by a scuffle between anti-Vietnam War protesters and ex-servicemen. The protesters and ex-servicemen were mainly London-based Australians and New Zealanders. When a wreath was laid on behalf of the protesters they raised several banners. One read “Vietnam Explodes Anzac Myth”. In response, angry ex-servicemen ripped the banners from the demonstrators and trampled on them. The scuffle ended with the intervention of police and the arrest of nine protesters. The incident was widely reported in New Zealand newspapers. Anzac Day services in Australia were also targeted by anti-Vietnam War groups. In hindsight, the protests on Anzac Day 1968 in New Zealand and overseas were a mere taste of what was to come over the next few years.

In 1969, however, no anti-Vietnam War protests occurred on Anzac Day or, more correctly, none that attracted the attention of the media. The day was not free of controversy, however, as the Soviet, Polish and Czechoslovakian diplomatic
legations declined Wellington RSA’s traditional invitation to attend the citizens’ service. The legations cited prior engagements as the reason but a cooling in diplomatic relations, after New Zealand’s criticism of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, also undoubtedly influenced the decision. In Dunedin, however, the First-Secretary of the Soviet legation accepted the invitation of Dunedin RSA to march with ex-servicemen, and later, sat with the official party at the Town Hall service.

The Governor-General Sir Arthur Porritt’s address at Auckland’s citizens’ service also created some controversy when he questioned whether Anzac Day needed to remain a public holiday: “The value of Anzac Day was as a personal remembrance and intimate recollection that could perhaps best be nurtured alone or with friends in a religious service”. Sir Arthur’s address drew a sharp response from RSA Dominion President, Sir Hamilton Mitchell, who vehemently denounced the idea that any change was required at present. The RSA certainly did not want another public debate over the merits of the observance so soon after the half-day liberalisation of Anzac Day in 1967. In the next few years, however, more New Zealanders began to question the worth of Anzac Day as anti-Vietnam War campaigners used the day to express their view.

In mid April 1970, the Progressive Youth Movement (PYM) announced that it would march along Auckland’s Queen Street and lay a wreath at the Cenotaph on Anzac Day in memory of “the dead and dying in Vietnam”. The radical action-oriented PYM had independent branches in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and all pursued tactics of direct confrontation with the State. Auckland PYM’s announcement raised the ire of many ex-servicemen but perhaps none so much as Government Whip, A.E. Allen, Member for Franklin. Allen publicly suggested that the RSA should prevent the PYM from marching along Queen Street on Anzac Day:

If I was not in politics I would contact some of the RSA and say ‘have you any young chaps who would like to stand across the road when the P.Y.M. come along’. As far as I am concerned I would stop them. If we put 300 to 400 young chaps from footpath to footpath across Queen Street on Anzac Day, the Progressive Youth Movement would not have a show. And if some of the boys wanted to get playful, the P.Y.M. would

14 Rebels in Retrospect, a 74-minute video documentary produced by Russell Campbell for Vanguard Films. The documentary records the reminiscences of members of the Progressive Youth Movement and assesses the impact of the movement in a broad historical context.
get what has been coming to them for months.\textsuperscript{15}

The PYM’s plans and Allen’s vigilante response provoked considerable controversy and condemnation. The current affairs television programme, \textit{Gallery}, invited both Allen and the PYM to debate the issue. Both sides accepted. The young and outspoken radical, Tim Shadbolt, described this television debate in \textit{Bullshit and Jellybeans}: “Allan [sic] was ready to face a young long-haired bearded weirdo and instead found himself face to face with young housewife Anna Lee”.\textsuperscript{16} This tactic typified the PYM’s attempts to publicly ridicule the Establishment.

In response to the publicity, Sir Hamilton Mitchell released a press statement condemning Allen’s suggestion but also outlining the RSA’s wreath-laying policy to the PYM:

Provided a wreath is laid with due respect at a time which does not cause inconvenience to others or to an organised parade or service and such a wreath is in commemoration of those to whom the memorial is dedicated, then not only can there be no objection made but rather gratitude for the recognition of the sacrifice made to preserve our free way of life.

If the PYM acts within that formula (and I would remind them that our memorials are dedicated to New Zealanders) then their act of recognition will be welcome.\textsuperscript{17}

Auckland RSA’s President, R.B. Reed, also released a statement stressing that no RSA member would take any provocative action if members of the PYM tried to lay a wreath at Auckland’s Anzac Day services. Reed added, “Anzac Day services commemorated the New Zealand dead in the Boer War and First and Second World Wars. Any planned commemoration of New Zealand dead in the war in Vietnam had nothing to do with Anzac services”.\textsuperscript{18} This statement contradicted legislation which held that Anzac Day was also “in memory of those who at any time have given their lives for New Zealand and the British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations”,\textsuperscript{19} thereby including New Zealanders who had died in the Asian conflicts since the Second World War: Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam.

Most complaints against the PYM and other anti-Vietnam War organisations laying wreaths in 1970, and subsequent years, were on the grounds that they did not specifically commemorate New Zealand dead. The controversy surrounding the Vietnam War and its effect on Anzac Day undoubtedly made some people, like Reed,

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{ODT}, 21 April 1970, p.1.
\textsuperscript{17} Minutes of DEC Meeting, 5 May 1970, (Appendix).
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{NZH}, 24 April 1970, p.3.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{New Zealand Statutes}, 1966, No.44, s. 2.
feel that the only way of preventing controversy lay in excluding everything concerning Vietnam from Anzac Day services. This view does not seem to have been widespread though, as evidenced by the RSA Dominion President’s statement concerning wreaths. In fact, ironically, Reed’s own Association invited Vietnam veterans to participate in Auckland’s Anzac Day ex-servicemen’s parade that year! 20

The PYM also released a press statement explaining that it would not lay its wreath at the Dawn Service, as originally planned, but at the citizens’ service: “We feel that the dawn service is a solemn occasion and we would not wish to see it marred by incidents created by people following the lead given by Mr Allen (MP for Franklin)”.21 The PYM’s portrayal of itself as an organisation willing to “compromise” was aimed to capitalise on the public criticism of Allen as a vigilante. The PYM shrugged off suggestions that its wreath-bearers would be arrested, insisting its wreath would be laid. On the eve of Anzac Day, a confrontation between ex-servicemen and PYM members still seemed a possibility.

At the mid-morning service, former Commander of 28th (Maori) Battalion, Lt. Col. C.M. Bennett, spoke of the “rebellion of the young” which he viewed as a “healthy sign” because they were taking the time to think about the issues. Bennett said demonstrations were “pernicious, however, when they become unruly and threaten the freedom and security of the ordinary man in the street”.22 During the service between 200 and 300 PYM marchers arrived at the Cenotaph. Police told marchers to wait at the rear of the assembled crowd, which they did without protest. At the conclusion of the formal service, the PYM’s wreath “In memory of the dead and dying in Vietnam” was laid without incident by an ex-serviceman together with Tim Shadbolt, whose father had died while serving in the RAF.23 Later that day, however, the wreath was anonymously removed from the Cenotaph. The much-publicised and predicted confrontation thus never eventuated in Auckland. In Christchurch, however, the storm broke.

During Christchurch’s wreath-laying ceremony, two PYM members laid flowers and a placard which read, “To the victims of Fascism in Vietnam”, at the base of the War Memorial.24 As the two descended the steps of the Memorial, the Mayor of Christchurch and Second World War ex-serviceman, A.R. (Ron) Guthrey, promptly removed the placard and placed it face down on the grass away from the Memorial.

20 NZH, 24 April 1970, sec. 4, p.11.
21 Ibid, p.3.
22 Ibid, 27 April 1970, p.3.
23 Shadbolt, Bullshit and Jellybeans, p.132.
24 The following account is based on reports in the Press, 27 April 1970, p.1 and ODT, 27 April 1970, p.5.
The Mayor of Christchurch, A.R. Guthrey, removes a placard depicting the My Lai massacre and a bunch of flowers placed on the War Memorial by members of the Progressive Youth Movement, Anzac Day 1970

(New Zealand Weekly News)
For his actions, Guthrey received applause amidst calls of “Good on you!” and “Long-haired gits!” from the crowd of approximately 200 people. In defence of his actions, Guthrey later claimed, “Dumb, long-haired louts who have nothing to contribute to our society - who damn everything we have ever fought for - must not be allowed to insult our war dead”. The Mayor’s removal of the placard did not end the PYM’s attempts to lay their Anzac Day tribute. After the official ceremony and the departure of most of the crowd for the citizens’ service at King Edward’s Barracks, PYM members again placed their placard on the Memorial. This time two ex-servicemen removed the placard but as they turned, to come down the Memorial’s steps, PYM members blocked their path. A scuffle subsequently took place until Senior-Sergeant E.S. Tuck and a constable quickly separated the two sides and confiscated the placard thus ending the fracas.

In contrast with Christchurch, Otago University students peacefully laid one of the largest wreaths at Dunedin’s Dawn Service in memory of “all the dead and dying in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam”. In fact, the student group had sought and received permission from Dunedin RSA to lay the wreath. The students’ wreath and manner was obviously less provocative than Christchurch PYM’s crude placard, but Dunedin RSA’s tolerance was also important in avoiding any confrontation.

In the days following Anzac Day, Guthrey’s actions came under public scrutiny and while supported by significant numbers, particularly ex-servicemen and their families, were generally criticised as heavy-handed. Tim Shadbolt cites Anzac Day 1970 as the PYM’s first real victory: “For the first time ever the PYM had really gained nationwide public support and the politicians and city fathers came out looking rather sick”. The backlash against the intolerant and seemingly undemocratic reactions of Allen in Auckland and Guthrey in Christchurch played into the hands of the PYM and the anti-Vietnam War movement in general. The public did not generally agree with the latter’s tactics or message but came to view the conservative response as the greater evil. Some even came to believe, furthermore, that the Vietnam War did have a place at Anzac Day services. The editor of the *Dominion*, for example, wrote that the Vietnam War;

has an undeniable place in War Memorial services, and the inscriptions to wreaths laid by young people, which all centred on this conflict, were not

25 *Press*, 27 April 1970, p.1
26 *ODT*, 24 April 1970, p.3.
27 The *Press* received 52 letters on 28 and 29 April 1970 concerning the PYM’s Anzac Day tribute and the Mayor’s reaction. 31 letters recorded views primarily against the actions of the Mayor compared with 19 against those of the PYM. Two letters were ambivalent. *Press*, 28 April 1970, p.12 and 29 April 1970, p.14 and p.20.
28 Shadbolt, *Bullshit and Jellybeans*, p.133.
Fig. 8

Senior-Sergeant E.S. Tuck requests Progressive Youth Movement members to move away after they tried to replace their My Lai placard on the Christchurch War Memorial, Anzac Day 1970

(New Zealand Weekly News)
objectionable... The War Memorials were constructed for servicemen, but it is not inappropriate or disrespectful that they should come to be regarded as Memorials to all who suffer by acts of war. They must be living emblems; and they were on Saturday when people concerned about a present day conflict came to them...  

The anti-Vietnam War protests at Anzac Day services predictably grabbed national headlines but the majority of New Zealanders observed the day in the usual manner. Anzac Day 1970 fell on a Saturday and a full afternoon of sport took place throughout the country. In Dunedin, for example, competitive rugby, soccer, hockey, netball, basketball and swimming was held, while the trotting at Forbury Park attracted a crowd of nearly 10,000 people. Dunedin’s “Cavalcade of Sport”, organised by the Combined Anzac Day Observance Committee annually since 1965, began at six o’clock when afternoon sport had concluded. In 1970, however, the Cavalcade attracted a disappointingly small attendance of only 300. With the afternoon of Anzac Day now observed like a Saturday, organised exhibitions were no longer needed and nor could they compete with competitive sport and other popular forms of entertainment.

In 1971 the debate over anti-Vietnam War wreaths being laid at Anzac Day services began in Christchurch, as it had ended the previous year, with controversy. The Canterbury University Students’ Association (CUSA) fired the initial volley when its President, D.F. Caygill, announced that a wreath would be laid at the citizens’ service with the inscription: “The University of Canterbury Students’ Association regrets the long history of human suffering caused by war as an instrument of national policy, and expresses its great concern at the continuance of the war in Indo-China”. In response to the CUSA’s plans retired Brigadier, J.T. Burrows, vehemently condemned the proposed wording in an address to a gathering of Christchurch RSA’s Tin Hat Club on 20 April 1971. Burrows suggested the inscription be changed to something like:

The University of Canterbury Students Association offers this wreath in grateful memory of those men and women who lost their lives in the service of New Zealand and whose sacrifices made it possible for us to enjoy, unfettered, the privileges of a university education in a free country.

In reply to Burrows’ suggestion, Caygill announced that the CUSA had no desire to offend ex-servicemen but reiterated it had no plans to change the wording of its

30 *ODT*, 27 April 1970, p.16.
The President of Christchurch RSA, J. Green, also requested the CUSA to omit mention of the war in Indo-China but without success. Despite this failure, Green publicly stated that no RSA member would remove the wreath from the War Memorial during the citizens’ service although plans had been made to cope with any disturbances. A large contingent of police was expected to be present at the ceremony.

The student wreath controversy attracted considerable media attention both locally, making front page headlines in the *Christchurch Press* for four consecutive days, and nationally, with newspaper and television coverage. By Friday 23 April, tension was high in Christchurch with the prospect of trouble at Sunday’s service.

Late on Friday afternoon, however, the CUSA Executive held a special meeting to discuss the matter and eventually decided to drop the inscription from its wreath. Caygill explained that the decision had been made when “it became clear that people opposing the wording were planning to disrupt the ceremony....We also learnt of the possibility of other groups attending the ceremony with the intention of shocking and disrupting it”. With this announcement, it seemed Christchurch’s Anzac Day service would be saved from a repeat of the previous year’s fracas. The PYM, however, had other ideas.

During the wreath-laying ceremony, a PYM member mounted the steps of the War Memorial and laid a picture of the My Lai massacre on which had again been written, “To the victims of fascism in Vietnam”. In a repeat of his actions the previous year, Mayor Guthrey quickly removed the placard and placed it face down at the base of the Memorial. Two other PYM members then remounted the steps, picked up the picture and returned it to where it had originally been placed. At this stage, the unfolding events must have seemed like a case of deja vu for those who had been present a year earlier. This time the response came from five RSA members who had previously planned to remove any wreath which did not specifically pay tribute to New Zealand war dead. The ex-servicemen grabbed the picture and threw it into the crowd of PYM supporters who stood under a large banner with the message “35 N.Z. SOLDIERS KILLED IN VIETNAM FOR NOTHING”. The picture was then tossed to and fro between PYM and RSA members before landing at the

---

35 Gallery even brought Caygill and Air Commodore F. Gill, M.P. face-to-face for a debate on the issue.
36 *Press*, 24 April 1971, p.1
37 The following description is based on the report in the *Press*, 26 April 1971, p.1.
Fig. 9

An ex-serviceman attempts to prevent a member of the Progressive Youth Movement from placing a picture of the My Lai massacre at Christchurch’s citizens’ service, Anzac Day 1971

(Christchurch Press)
feet of three regular soldiers who immediately stood on it. This ended the PYM’s attempts to lay the picture. The squabbling over the picture took place, incidentally, in front of the Governor-General, Sir Arthur Porritt, who, only minutes earlier, had ironically appealed “to the older generation and the non-remembering youth for mutual help and understanding, tolerance and trust to attain a universal state of living in peace with one’s fellows”.

The confiscation of the picture by the soldiers did not end the PYM’s contribution to the wreath-laying ceremony. While the public laid their wreaths, thirty-five PYM members wearing white masks walked on to the lawn in front of the War Memorial and each planted a crudely constructed wooden cross. A symbolic reference to the thirty-five New Zealanders killed in Vietnam. On the way back to their positions they removed their masks. This form of staged protest, what Anne Taylor has termed “symbolic demonstration”, was frequently and effectively used by the PYM as a means of attracting public and media attention.

At the conclusion of the ceremony RSA members smashed the crosses. A former member of the Maori Battalion returned several broken crosses to some of the PYM members with the suggestion “Here, use them for firewood”. In response, they shouted back “sacrilege” and “it is our friends who died in Vietnam”. At this point, a regular soldier grabbed one PYM member and shouted, “Were you there? Keep your mouth shut”. A scuffle broke out between regular soldiers and the PYM before police quickly intervened and instructed everyone to disperse. The PYM moved off as a group singing “We Shall Overcome”. With their departure, Christchurch’s Anzac Day fracas, for the second year running, came to an end.

The PYM’s demonstration in Christchurch naturally dominated media coverage of Anzac Day although anti-Vietnam demonstrations were held in all the main centres and in a number of smaller ones as well. After Auckland’s official service, 150 singing and chanting PYM supporters held their own wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph. The group applauded when its wreath, made of coloured paper representing the North Vietnamese flag, was read aloud: “To the people of Indo-China defeating fascist aggression by the United states, Australia and New Zealand. To those who died fighting fascism in World War II”. The wreath was then laid to a chorus of “We Shall Not Be Moved”. Earlier police had told the group they would

---

38 “Symbolic demonstration was one of the more imaginative forms of protest used by the anti-war movement, whereas the street marches were dependent on a large show of numbers to carry weight, symbolic demonstration relied on its novelty and dramatic value to capture attention for the anti-war cause...Thus Anzac Days became particular occasions for symbolic protest [sic].” Anne C. Taylor, “The Vietnam Protest Movement in New Zealand”, MA thesis, University of Otago, 1990, p.17.

39 For more pictures of the demonstration see Press, 26 April 1971, p.1; also Canta (Canterbury University Students’ Association), Vol. 41, no.3 (30 April 1971), passim; and Locke, Peace People, pp.254-5.
be permitted to place their wreath without interference. Several onlookers became involved in a heated and bitter argument with PYM members but there were no serious incidents.\textsuperscript{40}

In Wellington, meanwhile, five unofficial wreaths were laid at the Cenotaph by the Wellington’s secondary schools anti-Vietnam War group, the Wellington Committee on Vietnam, the League of Women Against War, and the Victoria and New Zealand University Student’s Associations (NZUSA). After consultation between representatives of the NZUSA and RSA, police temporarily removed the inscription card from the NZUSA’s wreath until after the service.\textsuperscript{41} Wellington’s PYM, meanwhile, built a temporary cenotaph in Pigeon Park and held their own Anzac Day service at the same time as the official service.\textsuperscript{42}

The most symbolic demonstration against the Vietnam War in Wellington, however, was the sight of some fifty ex-servicemen, including at least two former Colonels, who marched to the Cenotaph in double file before laying their wreath “In memory of all New Zealanders who have been sacrificed in an unjust war in Vietnam”.\textsuperscript{43} This demonstration undoubtedly added credibility to the message of other anti-Vietnam War wreaths. The ex-servicemen could not be dismissed as ungrateful of the sacrifice made on their behalf as were younger protesters. It reveals, more importantly, that opposition to the Vietnam War now included groups who had previously remained silent or even supportive of the war.

In Dunedin, Otago University students also laid an anti-Vietnam War wreath at the main service, again with the permission of the Dunedin RSA. With reference to events in Christchurch, the editor of the \textit{Otago Daily Times} congratulated Dunedin on its success in preventing Anzac Day from becoming a “battleground for ideological and political disagreement...[revealing] that there is room for all shades of opinion reasonably to participate in acts of remembrance and commemoration”.\textsuperscript{44} The relative calm accompanying the laying of anti-Vietnam War wreaths in Dunedin, Wellington and Auckland compared with the fracas in Christchurch, further illustrates that controversy depended as much on the reaction of ex-servicemen, the RSA and civic authorities as it did on the political views of groups laying the divergent wreaths.

Anti-Vietnam War protests on Anzac Day 1971 were also not confined to the

\textsuperscript{40} NZH, 26 April 1971, p.3.
\textsuperscript{41} Dominion, 26 April 1971, p.2.
\textsuperscript{42} ODT, 26 April 1971, p.3.
\textsuperscript{43} Locke, \textit{Peace People}, p.255.
\textsuperscript{44} ODT, 27 April 1971, p.4.
main centres. In Nelson, the Nelson Action Committee for International Affairs laid a wreath at the War Memorial, two hours prior to the citizens’ service, in memory of “all those who had died as a result of war and particularly for the dead and dying of the present conflict in Indo-China”.\textsuperscript{45} In the small South Otago township of Balclutha, ex-servicemen arrived at the Dawn Service to find a roughly constructed wooden cross, carrying a long notice deploring war, hanging from the War Memorial.\textsuperscript{46} Such anti-Vietnam War protests were rare in the countryside where Anzac Day continued to be a tranquil occasion. The large city protests received so much media attention, however, that few New Zealanders were unaware of them.

Anzac Day 1971, then, attracted anti-Vietnam War demonstrations on a larger and far more intense scale than in previous years. In fact, the anti-Vietnam War protest movement in New Zealand reached its peak in late April 1971. Five days after Anzac Day, on 30 April, a nationwide anti-war mobilisation was held which attracted some of the largest crowds of demonstrators in New Zealand’s history. Some 10,000-15,000 people marched in Auckland, 4,500 in Wellington, 6,000 in Christchurch, 1,500 in Dunedin, and 2,000 in Palmerston North.\textsuperscript{47} The mobilisation, like Anzac Day, was part of a trans-Tasman affair as it coincided with the much larger Vietnam Moratorium Campaign demonstrations held throughout Australia. On a national scale, therefore, Anzac Day 1971 was the busiest for anti-war demonstrations but for Christchurch the previous two years of controversy came to a dramatic climax, a year later, on Anzac Day 1972.

The controversy began when Christchurch RSA again opposed Lincoln College and CUSA laying wreaths with the respective messages “To all those who died for the cause of freedom” and “To the innocent victims of war and aggression”.\textsuperscript{48} The controversy intensified with a report in the \textit{Christchurch Press} on 19 April revealing RSA plans for Anzac Day. The newspaper article disclosed that the RSA’s Secretary had written to the newly-elected Mayor, N.G. Pickering, in early April, suggesting the word “citizens” be deleted from Christchurch’s main Anzac Day service so that only official wreaths could be laid. The letter had gone on to suggest that all wreaths be inspected before the service by himself as Mayor, an RSA representative and the Dean of Christchurch. In short, the RSA was proposing the screening of wreaths.

Pickering had promptly replied that he could not agree to the deletion of the

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{ODT}, 27 April 1971, p.1.
word “citizens” from the service. At that stage, he had intended giving a copy of the letter to the Christchurch Press when the RSA notified him that his views were now acceptable. In the following weeks, however, Pickering discovered an Anzac Day public notice placed by the RSA which failed to mention that it was a “citizens’ service” and, moreover, that only invited organisations would be permitted to lay wreaths. In addition, Dean Underhill had unintentionally told the Mayor of the RSA’s proposal to arrange a bodyguard of ex-servicemen to prevent unwanted wreaths from being laid. On making enquiries, however, Pickering had again been assured by the RSA that anyone would be able to lay a wreath at the traditional citizens’ service.49

The Mayor told the Christchurch Press that the only area not agreed upon concerned the inspection of wreaths. Pickering proposed that the Dean inspect the wreaths’ inscriptions on the War Memorial after the service and remove any cards, but not wreaths, he considered offensive. The advantage of this suggestion, he said, was that anyone would be able to place their wreaths during the service, thereby avoiding a potential area of conflict. Finally, Pickering stated his opposition to placards and protests during Anzac Day services although he equally condemned the suggestion of a bodyguard. In any case, Pickering argued, one would no longer be required with the RSA’s assurances that the proposed restrictions on wreaths had been dropped.50

On the 20 April, the Mayor, the Dean and six representatives of Christchurch RSA met to discuss the matter of inspecting wreaths but no final agreement was reached although they still hoped to announce a joint statement on 24 April. The Commander of Christchurch Police, Chief Superintendent G. Tait, meanwhile publicly announced that the police would be at the Anzac Day ceremonies “in full force”. The police and Christchurch RSA, whom the police traditionally dealt with as the organiser of the service, had been in constant contact concerning the arrangements. Tait stated:

Personally I would prefer that the wreaths be screened before they are placed on the War Memorial....I believe that the R.S.A. men will behave properly and contain themselves. A cordon of responsible men, standing shoulder to shoulder, is hardly a bodyguard.51

The Chief Superintendent’s remarks indicated that the RSA still planned to restrict wreaths via a cordon of RSA members. Throughout the whole debacle, Christchurch RSA publicly stated one thing while privately planning to do the opposite.

50 Ibid.
The controversy intensified on 24 April, when Pickering publicly announced his decision not to attend the citizens’ service, after being informed that the RSA would go ahead with its proposal to restrict the ceremony to official wreaths and enforced by a cordon of returned servicemen around the Christchurch War Memorial. Pickering felt the RSA’s restrictions would result “in genuine mourners being denied the right to pay the tribute to the fallen and, as a result, the service is not a citizens’ service” and, as Mayor, he could not condone this with his presence. Pickering instead planned to lay a “citizens’ wreath” at the Bridge of Remembrance.

In response to the Mayor’s decision, Christchurch RSA’s President stated, “If he [the Mayor] had gone along with us we could have set a pattern for future Anzac Days at which there would be no trouble”. The President was adamant the service would still go ahead: “This is a bit of a bombshell and we are disappointed, but our members are emphatic that they want a stand and are not prepared to have just any wreath dedicated”. The RSA had thereby maintained control of the ceremony at the expense of the Mayor’s absence. The real cost, however, was that controversy had again enveloped the observance of Anzac Day in Christchurch. On the eve of Anzac Day, Christchurch citizens solemnly contemplated what might happen if students or anti-war protesters attempted to lay a wreath at the mid-morning service.

The Dawn Service in Christchurch attracted the attention of anti-war groups, including PYM members, who held a torch light procession to Cathedral Square although they stood silently throughout the service. At the traditional breakfast for ex-servicemen and women after the service, the Mayor’s introduction provoked some muttering and even “boos”. At ten o’clock, Pickering laid a wreath at the Bridge of Remembrance in front of a crowd of 120 people. An executive member of the Canterbury Trades Council also laid a wreath in memory of “all those workers and unionists who made the Supreme Sacrifice in all wars not of their making”. Members of the CUSA then laid their wreath with the inscription, “To the innocent victims of war and aggression”, which the RSA had found unacceptable. The students, realising their wreath would not gain approval at the eleven o’clock service, obviously took this opportunity in order to avoid a confrontation with the RSA.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Bridge of Remembrance service, some 150 “students and young people”, including members of the PYM and the Organisation to Halt Military Service (OHMS), joined the 600 strong traditional ex-servicemen’s

---

53 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
parade from King Edward’s Barracks to Christchurch Cathedral. Some wore black armbands with the inscription “Vietnam” and four carried wreaths. Upon arrival at Cathedral Square, some 200 ex-servicemen did not enter the Cathedral for the Anzac Day service but formed a cordon around the War Memorial. The half-hour Cathedral service proceeded without incident while outside a wooden cross thrown from the crowd landed upright in the lawn before the Memorial. An ex-servicemen left the cordon, pulled up the wooden cross, and smashed it. This response brought about applause and booing from the crowd of ex-servicemen and protesters.

The gathering again went silent when officiating clergy and those who had attended the service emerged from the Cathedral. Many of the ex-servicemen and women who had attended the service assembled around the Memorial to form a second cordon. Official wreath-bearers lined up in four ranks before the Memorial. Five wreaths had been laid in silence when two young men carrying wreaths rushed from a group standing under a large banner with the message, “DEAD - A MILLION INNOCENT VIETNAMESE”. The two men burst through the cordon of ex-servicemen and attempted to join the ranks of the official wreath-laying party but were instead wrestled to the ground by seven ex-servicemen. One of the young men with “Afro-cut black hair and beard”, and carrying a wreath with the words “TO THE FORGOTTEN DEAD”, was placed in a hammerlock by an ex-serviceman but wrestled himself free. He was then taken in a headlock and tackled around the legs by another two ex-servicemen. After some wrestling about, the young man was eventually dragged across the lawn by ex-servicemen and bundled upright back into the crowd. The other wreath-bearer, a “young, fair-haired man, in a yellow shirt”, was also flung across the grass by ex-servicemen and accidently knocked down an elderly women in the process. The young man “struggled mightily” with four ex-servicemen before he, too, was bundled back outside the cordon. The whole incident took less than a minute and was over before any of the seventy-strong police contingent could take action. The police, however, did have to calm the two youths ejected, one heated ex-serviceman and sections of the 2,500 crowd who were now clapping and booing.

Minutes later, an ex-serviceman swiftly crossed the lawn from the cordon and tore the inscription card from a wreath held by a youth standing with the official wreath-laying party. This episode also provoked a mixture of applause and booing.

56 The following account of the mid-morning service is drawn from reports in the Press, 26 April 1972, p.1 and p.3; also Canta, Vol. 42, no.7 (28 April 1972), pp.8-10.

57 For excellent pictures which show the full extent of the fracas see Press, 26 April 1972, pp.1-2; Canta, Vol. 42, no.7 (28 April 1972), pp.8-10 and Maclean and Phillips, The Pride and the Sorrow, p.161. Unfortunately the original prints and negatives of the photos which appeared in the Press have since been destroyed.
although not all ex-servicemen agreed with this action. The youth had attended the Cathedral service and, as part of the official wreath-laying party, his card had gained approval from Christchurch RSA’s Executive. The remainder of the official ceremony passed in silence and without further incident.

After the ceremony, however, the PYM’s traditional “tribute”, a picture of the My Lai massacre, was removed from the Memorial and torn up by two ex-servicemen. Meanwhile, a wreath in memory of “the innocent dead in the Vietnam War” was laid along with dozens of crosses. A young uniformed soldier angrily responded by smashing the crosses with his boots, provoking several men to leap onto the Memorial to defend their contributions and “fists flew for a few seconds”. The intervention of police prevented the situation from getting further out of control although heated debate continued for some time between demonstrators and uniformed soldiers. Young people and ex-servicemen also argued for an hour after the ceremony had concluded. In the end, the crowd dispersed, “their going hastened by the young man in the yellow shirt handing out a pamphlet headed ‘The Battle for the Cenotaph’”!

The Christchurch melee again attracted considerable media attention and public controversy nationwide. In general, editorial and public opinion criticised protesters for using Anzac Day to further their message and for disrupting the service, although ex-servicemen were also censured for their vigilante tactics and reaction. The whole question of the future observance of Anzac Day once again came under scrutiny.

The significance of events in Christchurch, the first time New Zealanders had actually fought one another round a War Memorial on Anzac Day, was certainly not forgotten by those concerned. The Christchurch City Council formed a sub-committee to hold discussions with Christchurch RSA about the future observance of Anzac Day. The most important outcome, however, was the Consultation on the observance of Anzac Day, organised by the Church and Society Commission of the National Council of Churches and held in Wellington on 8 July 1972.

The Preface to the Commission’s report explained why it held a Consultation on Anzac Day:

Some disquieting features emerged in the observance of Anzac Day in 1970 and 1971....the idea germinated in the Commission to organise a consultation to bring together groups in which opinion was sharply

---


60 For the views of prominent people on the future observance of Anzac Day see ODT, 27 April 1972, p.5 and 28 April 1972, p.5.
divided, and find out whether it would be possible to observe the day in a manner which could be meaningful to both the old and the young.\textsuperscript{61}

The Commission had waited until Anzac Day 1972 to observe whether the conflict of views had been resolved. The incidents in Christchurch convinced the Commission that it was time to convene a consultation between all groups involved.

The participants of the Consultation fully represented the wide range of viewpoints on Anzac Day. The protagonists of Christchurch were present: Mayor Pickering, Christchurch RSA President J. Green, CUSA President Jim Crichton, and Christchurch PYM leader Murray Horton. Ex-service personnel were represented by various members of the RSA, including Dominion President Sir Hamilton Mitchell and the Dominion General Secretary, while students and youth were represented by NZUSA President David Cuthbert, and a member of the Auckland Youth Group. The four main denominations all had representatives. Local Government was represented by the President of the Municipal Association and Central Government by D.J. Riddiford, MP on behalf of the Minister of Defence, and two members of the Department of Internal Affairs. The Minister and Permanent Secretary of Internal Affairs were also present at the opening session. Other participants included the President of the New Zealand Peace Council, the secretaries of the Post-Primary Teachers’ Association and the Church and Society Commission, and a war widow. The meeting was chaired by the Ombudsman, Sir Guy Powles.\textsuperscript{62}

The Consultation began with the presentation of a background paper, written by MA (Hons) graduate Rosslyn Noonan, detailing the history of Anzac Day with special focus on the current controversy. Noonan referred to the controversy as “a conflict of interpretation”.\textsuperscript{63} The Cold War had created divisions within New Zealand society over the issue of the most appropriate foreign policy for the country. The RSA firmly advocated increased expenditure on the armed services and a policy of “forward defence” aimed at halting “communist aggression”, while a younger generation questioned the validity of war as a means of foreign policy, especially with regard to the capacity of nuclear weapons to totally annihilate life on the planet. The Vietnam War had aggravated these divisions by focusing attention on the conflicting attitudes and forcing a new examination of some basic assumptions about New Zealand’s foreign policy.

This reexamination, Noonan argued, led many to question the meaning of Anzac Day and involved two basic points. First, could Anzac Day ceremonies be justifiably


\textsuperscript{62} Church and Society Commission, \textit{Consultation on Anzac Day}, p.5.

\textsuperscript{63} The following is a summary of Noonan’s background paper. \textit{Ibid}, pp.8-17.
interpreted as glorifying military exploits and, second, was Anzac Day used to
propagate a particular attitude to war. By 1970, according to Noonan, New
Zealanders opposed to the Vietnam War found it difficult to participate in Anzac Day
ceremonies because of their strong identification with the RSA (which actively
favoured New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam). A random sample of newspaper
reports for the last five years revealed that official speakers at Anzac Day services in
the main centres tended to support the military involvement in Vietnam. Noonan
noted that only a small number of those opposed to the Vietnam War used Anzac
Day to express their views. By participating they were acknowledging the
significance of the day to commemorate war dead although whether they were
always commemorating New Zealand war dead, as specified by the Anzac Day Act,
was questionable.

In conclusion, Noonan stated there had been a polarisation of opinion over
Anzac Day during the last few years. The traditional view, enshrined in the Act,
aimed at remembrance. The modern view was concerned with the contemporary
situation and sought to draw attention to the problem of war and acceptable
alternatives to war as an instrument of foreign policy. These approaches were not
necessarily exclusive or antagonistic, Noonan stressed, and that "a greater danger to
Anzac Day may be the apathy of those New Zealanders not committed either way,
who just don't care".64 This background paper reveals Noonan's full grasp of the
problem, thereby providing the Consultation with the benefits of a clear
understanding of the "conflict of interpretation" and its effect on Anzac Day.

The open session of the Consultation allowed participants to discuss the
background paper and voice their opinions on Anzac Day from the outset. One
participant (the published report maintained anonymity in terms of views expressed)
felt the conflict stemmed from different experiences and views of war between the
generations. The younger generation's knowledge of war centred upon Vietnam
which had divided the nation, whereas the World Wars had largely been unifying
experiences. In addition, the basic thinking of most ex-servicemen and their
organisations hinged on the belief that peace could only be maintained if the nation
was militarily prepared but most young people did not accept this view.65

Another participant expressed the opinion that the reaction of the younger
generation towards Anzac Day was a reaction against statements during services
which associated the RSA with a pro-Vietnam War stance. In response, RSA
representatives said that they would not know what an invited speaker was going to
say. They further stated:

64 Church and Society Commission, Consultation on Anzac Day, p.17.

65 Ibid, p.22.
Everyone was welcome to take part in an Anzac Day service so long as they did it with dignity: tension arose when Anzac Day, which is a day of commemoration for some, was used by others for protest. The memorials erected in New Zealand were memorials to New Zealanders only. When this was not realised and the memorial was misused, there was also tension....

The observation was made that the conflict over Anzac Day reflected far wider divisions within society than mere differences over foreign policy. The older generation believed in a set of values which were unchanging in contrast with the present generation who had different problems and questioned the idea of an absolute set of values. The Anzac Day protests were certainly a part of the New Zealand experience of the counter-culture revolution sweeping the globe during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Finally, a participant said that if Anzac Day remained purely a commemoration of the First and Second World Wars it would gradually lose its significance and fade away. To continue as a memorial day people must consider whether it should develop into something meaningful to the present generation in a way which goes beyond what is contemplated in the Anzac Day Act.

In the plenary session, participants unanimously agreed that commemoration was the constant factor in the observance of Anzac Day. A commemoration not of war but of New Zealand's war dead. The commemoration did not glorify war. It was explained, however, that this impression was not always clear because of the image many young people had of the RSA as a supporter of forward defence, and because of its close association with Anzac Day ceremonies. The fact that Government often announced its defence policy at RSA meetings, RSA personalities drew the ballot for military service, and speeches at Anzac Day and other RSA gatherings often extolled the Government's defence policy and its present involvement in the Vietnam War were all cited as evidence. This association was felt to be the main factor behind tension at Anzac Day services during the past few years and that the removal of such an impression would be beneficial to the observance of the day.

One speaker made the suggestion that the citizens' service should be a community service, that is, a local authority responsibility. This suggestion reflected the belief that the protests were partly a reaction against the RSA. A student representative explained that young people conceded the Dawn Service was an ex-

66 Church and Society Commission, Consultation on Anzac Day, p.23.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
servicemen's service, and respected it as such, but the citizens' service was for the community. RSA representatives stated they were quite happy to hand over the responsibility of organising this service to local authorities. It was felt a citizens' or community service must by definition involve the community which included different groups even if their views were in conflict. This responsibility lay with the local authority to actively convene different sections of the community to discuss how to organise the service. The involvement of younger people in discussion and planning would also lead to them participating in ways more acceptable to older generations. This suggestion correctly conveyed the belief that young people were protesting at Anzac Day services not only because of their political views but because of their exclusion from services by the "powers" that controlled them. It was felt the citizens' service could also broaden its basis to consider issues of concern to other groups: "That might not be acceptable to some ex-servicemen - but then the day was not their preserve". It was pointed out, furthermore, that commemoration was different from just remembering. One could, for example, commemorate Anzac Day by opposing wars: "We should strive for a broad type of activity in which we tolerate different forms of commemoration".

In summary, the Consultation generally agreed that the observance of Anzac Day was primarily a day of commemoration. The Dawn Service primarily served ex-service personnel but the citizens' service should be, just that, for all sections of the community. The Consultation believed it was the responsibility of the local authority to bring various groups in the community together to organise the service, so that it was inclusive rather than divisive. In order to avoid Anzac Day glorifying war, all agreed care should be taken to avoid expressing political views during services. Finally, participants felt consideration should be given to widening the scope of Anzac Day legislation to prevent the observance from losing significance among young people or fading away altogether. Towards this end, the Consultation's concluding statement read:

The variable factors in the observance of Anzac Day would therefore consist in broadening the scope of the observance, and in allowing flexibility to each community to make the observance more meaningful to the younger generation, whose experiences were so different from those of their elders. The governing factors would be tolerance and co-operation.

The Consultation provided an excellent forum in which to rationally discuss and hopefully find a satisfactory solution to the "conflict of interpretation" plaguing

---

70 Church and Society Commission, Consultation on Anzac Day, p.25.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid, p.27.
Anzac Day. The proceedings of the Consultation were published and undoubtedly read by many individuals and groups involved in organising Anzac Day services. For the historian, the *Consultation on Observance of Anzac Day* is an important document because it reveals the motives of protagonists involved in the Anzac Day wreath-laying incidents during the Vietnam War. The real test of the Consultation's success, however, obviously centred upon Anzac Day 1973 and particularly its observance in Christchurch.

By early 1973, the Christchurch RSA and City Council had agreed to a new format whereupon the RSA would hold its own service preceded by a citizens' service. On the day, the AIF Association's Dawn Service attracted the largest attendance of the day, thereby making it Christchurch's main Anzac Day service in 1973. The increased popularity of Christchurch's Dawn Service, while a nationwide trend, was undoubtedly assisted by the incidents at the mid-morning services during the preceding three years. In 1973, however, the two services went ahead without incident and both Mayor Pickering and Christchurch RSA President, J. Green, described the new format as "a great success".

The end of protests at Anzac Day services throughout New Zealand, and particularly Christchurch, undoubtedly owed something to the Consultation and subsequent changes but perhaps more to the fact that New Zealand no longer had a military presence in Vietnam. The last remaining service personnel had been withdrawn in late 1972. Without a raison d'être organisations that had previously been involved in Anzac Day protests, such as the PYM, soon disintegrated. The most turbulent era for Anzac Day since the Second World War had come to an end.

The repercussions, however, continued for Anzac Day. Three RSA branches submitted remits to the 1973 RSA Dominion Council meeting, calling for the abolition of the public holiday and the commemoration of Anzac Day on the nearest Sunday. Sir Hamilton Mitchell addressed these remits in his opening address: "The remits on Anzac Day indicate that some Associations have been influenced by the unhappy but really isolated incidents of 1971 and 1972 but has not 1973 brought that Day back to its true significance". The President concluded that "no further change is presently desirable or necessary" and the delegates agreed as the three remits were rejected.

The Vietnam War wreath-laying era also had long term consequences for the

---

observance of Anzac Day. Maclean and Phillips argue that, “Such incidents created an awareness that War Memorials were public property, rather than exclusive shrines of the RSA. In hindsight, the Vietnam wreath-laying controversy marked the end of the RSA’s dominance of Anzac Day.”77 The observation is essentially correct if the latter sentence is qualified. The RSA continued to dominate Anzac Day although certainly its absolute control over who could be commemorated was forever broken. In short, the anti-Vietnam War wreaths set a precedent for the future observance of Anzac Day.

In later years, further wreath-laying incidents showed that the public’s perception of Anzac Day can, and does, change. In particular, that war has other victims besides soldiers. In 1978, for example, members of the Women’s Action Group, symbolically dressed in mourning attire, laid a wreath at Auckland’s citizens’ service in memory of “all the forgotten women. All those who died in battle, those raped and mutilated, our sisters who have had their lives destroyed by the wars of this century”.78 A small crowd soon gathered around the wreath to read the inscription. At this stage, a policeman moved to the front of the crowd and tore the card from the wreath, apparently acting on a complaint from an anonymous female bystander. The policeman involved thus took it upon himself to judge what was an appropriate dedication. Auckland RSA President, J. Gardiner, certainly could find nothing offensive in the wreath’s inscription when asked by a reporter.

The following year, however, Wellington RSA prevented two women from laying their wreath in memory of “our sisters, dead and raped” at the citizens’ service because it had “political overtones”. The women instead laid the wreath on the steps of Parliament “where all preparations for war are made”, they said. Elsewhere in Wellington, Brooklyn’s War Memorial was sprayed with purple graffiti, including the message “Women Against Male Wars”.79

Feminist groups continued to attend Anzac Day ceremonies throughout the early 1980s. In 1983, fifteen women were arrested at Auckland’s Cenotaph for disorderly behaviour after shouting anti-rape protest slogans at ex-servicemen marching to the Dawn Service.80 The Auckland protest coincided with much larger protests in Australian cities. For example, 150 women were arrested in Sydney alone.81 Similar protests occurred in Auckland and Australia the following Anzac

---

78 NZH, 26 April 1978, p.3.
80 NZH, 26 April 1983, p.5.
81 ODT, 26 April 1983, p.5.
A member of the Women’s Action Group laying a wreath with the inscription “We remember all the forgotten women. All those who died in battle, those raped and mutilated, our sisters who have had their lives destroyed by the wars of this century”.

Auckland Cenotaph, Anzac Day 1978

(New Zealand Herald)
Day as well. Many feminist groups viewed the day as a glorification of war and masculinity at the expense of women’s suffering.

Other radical minority groups also utilised Anzac Day as a forum to publicise their grievances throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1979, ten Maori demonstrators held aloft placards and banners throughout Auckland’s Dawn Service in memory of Maori war dead. The banners read “For our tupunas who died in capitalist wars” and “The capitalist system killed our people in foreign wars and still rips us off today”. During benediction some of the group shouted, “The dead had died in vain”. After the service, some enraged ex-servicemen headed towards the group who were still holding their banners aloft and giving the black power salute. When the two groups met some jostling took place and one ex-servicemen hit a protester’s placard with his umbrella. The situation was not allowed to get out of hand as a group of police, who had watched the protest group throughout the service, and a Maori ex-servicemen intervened and calmed everyone down. Maori again protested at Auckland citizens’ service in 1981. The Anzac Day protests by Maori challenged the day’s mythology that in war Pakeha and Maori had put aside their grievances and become “one people”.

In 1981, a wreath was also laid at Wellington’s Cenotaph by members of the gay community in memory of “all gays who died through acts of aggression”. In the following years, Wellington’s gay community continued to lay wreaths at Anzac Day services with the permission of Wellington RSA. In 1985, however, the year of the controversial Homosexual Law Reform Bill, the gay community’s wreath went “mysteriously” unannounced, much to their anger.

The Anzac Day protests by feminists, Maori, and gays during the late 1970s and early 1980s received minimal media and public attention compared to the earlier anti-Vietnam War protests. These later protests were still significant, nonetheless, as they continued to stress that Anzac Day could mean different things to different people depending on one’s reading of the meaning of war. By the late 1980s, the observance of Anzac Day extended far beyond commemorating New Zealand’s war dead as revealed by wreaths to virtually all victims of war (such as the wreath laid by the Polish Ex-servicemen’s Association in memory of “Polish P.O.W. murdered in

---

82 NZH, 26 April 1984, p.5.
83 For a radical feminist view of Anzac Day see statement by S. Salmond of Wellington’s Rape Crisis Collective, EP, 26 April 1985, p.3.
84 NZH, 26 April 1979, p.16.
87 EP, 26 April 1985, p.3.
Ex-servicemen clash with Maori protesters who hold banners which read “For our tupunas who died in capitalist wars” and “The capitalist system killed our people in foreign wars and still rips us off today”, Auckland’s Dawn Service, Anzac Day 1979

(New Zealand Herald)
Kattyn by the Soviets" at Wellington’s Anzac Day service in 1989) and others with general messages of peace (such as the anti-nuclear wreaths laid during the early 1980s).88

The Vietnam wreath-laying era, therefore, precipitated a reevaluation of the meaning of Anzac Day. At the time, however, Anzac Day had sunk to its lowest point in terms of public consensus. The day, symbolising a united community and its shared sense of identity, seemed in stark contrast with a divided New Zealand during the Vietnam War. The ritual was no longer viewed, as it was once, as representing the hope that disunity might be overcome. In fact, as already noted, calls came for the day to be abandoned because it brought disunity. During this period, therefore, Anzac Day did not function as a means of social cohesion but it did continue to be expressive. It expressed the changes taking place within New Zealand society. The balance of power had begun to shift from the war generation to a postwar one. This generation challenged their elders’ worldview but, above all, the use of war as a means of foreign policy. In fact, Anzac Day’s public mythology of war was being challenged. This development had briefly threatened to turn Anzac Day into a dysfunctional ritual but it also had a positive outcome for the day. The wreath-laying incidents grabbed public attention, stirred emotions and made New Zealanders think and rethink about the meaning of Anzac Day like never before. For a few days in late April each year between 1970 and 1972, Anzac Day had been a hot issue. Without protests and the accompanying attention, however, would Anzac Day hereafter slowly fade away?

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM LAST POST TO REVEILLE

1974-1990

In stark contrast with the drama of the Vietnam wreath-laying era, Anzac Day languished throughout the mid 1970s. Falling attendances and the subsequent reduction of services were common in many places. Without protests, furthermore, services received little media and therefore public attention. In fact, the day seemed lifeless and boring to the majority of the population for whom it had little significance, apart from being a “day off”. Just when the Last Post seemed to be sounding for the observance of Anzac Day, however, the growing attendances of younger people instead raised the hope of a Reveille. The interest of this generation underpinned the resurgence of Anzac Day during the 1980s. It also provided optimism that Anzac Day would continue to have some significance in the future, even after the last returned serviceman and woman had died.

The falling attendances at Anzac Day ceremonies during the mid 1970s was possibly a reaction to the protests of the preceding years but more realistically reflected the declining numbers of South African and First World War veterans in the population. In 1974, the South African War Veterans’ Association held its final annual conference in Palmerston North with an attendance of only fourteen veterans. The following year it was the turn of the Anzacs themselves. On Anzac Day 1975, the sixtieth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, the national Gallipoli Veterans’ Association held its final reunion in Auckland. The highlight of the reunion for the 350 veterans was the Anzac Day service inside the Hall of Memories, Auckland War Memorial Museum. A journalist observing the final service wrote:

Then ‘The Last Post’ sounds from the mezzanine floor. Switches are thrown on the dimmer boards outback. Shade, shadow, then darkness closes in for the minute’s silence. It’s a good effect - then suddenly it’s much more than that, and a terrible memory is palpable in the blackness.... When the lights come back up, you can suddenly see how a long-ago mesh of shrapnel and bullets has diced the flesh; bullet holes in ears, scars and lesions, single and double amputations....

This last muster of the nation’s Anzacs went ahead practically unnoticed by the

---

1 Cited in King, *New Zealanders at War*, p.305.
media and public, as did commemorative ceremonies at Gallipoli itself attended by seventy Australians and New Zealanders.2

The nation's apathy towards Anzac Day during the mid 1970s led commentators, like Evening Post columnist John Parker, to pose the question: "Is Time Approaching For Anzac Observance To Die? In the fashion of traditions in the modern age, Anzac Day seems to be smothering under the blanket of immediate community interests and the only question is the time of its last gasp".3 While Parker was writing Anzac Day's obituary, however, a development in its embryonic stages was already beginning to resurrect the day. The development was an increase in the number of young people and children attending services, although the trend was not clearly identified until the late 1970s.

It began unevenly, but gradually during the late 1970s and 1980s larger and younger attendances at Anzac Day services were noted throughout the country. In 1977, for example, newspaper reports of increased attendances at Anzac Day services in various parts of the country enabled RSA Dominion President, W.D. Leuchars, to state that "there was a definite upswing of attendances".4 Three years later, Dunedin RSA's President was similarly positive after attending his city's Dawn Service: "It's really encouraging to see the young people there, and the crowds attending these functions seem to be increasing. This was one of the most pleasing mornings we've had for about 20 years".5 Such statements by RSA officials became common throughout the 1980s. At a time when the number of ex-servicemen and women was inevitably declining, the presence of younger faces not only boosted attendance figures but provided hope for the long-term future of Anzac Day.

What is the explanation for Anzac Day's increased popularity during the 1980s, particularly among a generation who had not experienced war or its effects firsthand? First, as with any social trend, the motivation to act a certain way is specific to each individual although generalisations can usually be made. In the case of Anzac Day, the explanation is complex and has a number of interrelated strands but essentially it was the result of a search by New Zealanders for a sense of identity. This search led New Zealanders to look at their history for answers, from whence they discovered their military heritage. Anzac Day encapsulated that heritage and subsequently attracted considerable attention during the 1980s. In a country with few national rituals commemorating its past and with Anzac Day traditionally viewed

2 Dominion, 26 April 1975, p.1.
5 ODT, 26 April 1980, p.3.
by generations of New Zealanders as a "national day" it was always going to play an important role in any emerging sense of national identity. In addition, New Zealanders' growing sense of themselves as an anti-nuclear people meant reconciling their military tradition with their new pacifist direction. Within this context, Anzac Day also prospered because the day not only commemorates the nation's war dead but provides a symbol for future peace in the hope that no more names will be added to the list remembered on Anzac Day. These developments explain the increased popularity of Anzac Day during the 1980s. They now require further explanation.

During the 1970s and 1980s, major and irreversible developments transformed New Zealand society. In November 1972 the Labour Party was swept into power, under the leadership of Norman Kirk, who quickly became New Zealand's first overtly nationalist Prime Minister. Under Kirk's leadership, New Zealand troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, the Chinese Government was officially recognised, a Springbok Tour cancelled and a naval frigate sent to Moruroa to protest French nuclear testing. These decisions collectively announced to the world New Zealand's pursuit of an independent foreign policy. Great Britain's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 provided further stimulus for New Zealand to develop an independent economic and foreign policy.

At the grass roots level, moreover, New Zealanders began to stress their national identity and pride. The "Come on, Kiwi!" campaign of the 1970s was one expression of this mood. Michael King argues the 1974 Commonwealth Games in Christchurch seemed like a "festival celebrating the country's self-confidence and optimism".6 Sporting successes during the 1970s and 1980s, such as John Walker's winning performance at the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games and the six gold medals won at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, certainly seemed to justify the confidence and pride of New Zealanders.

Outside the sporting arena, New Zealanders also began to take pride in their intellectual prowess as novels and films won international recognition. The growth of the domestic publishing and film industries signalled the development of an indigenous intellectual culture. New Zealanders increasingly turned away from London for their ideas and view of the world.7 In every facet of New Zealand life, Britain and things "British" shrunk in importance as New Zealanders became more self-confident of their own identity. The gradual disappearance of the Union Jack, "God Save the Queen" and her message from Anzac Day services during the 1970s and 1980s symbolised New Zealand's shift away from Britain.

During the 1970s and 1980s, furthermore, New Zealanders travelled overseas in

---

greater numbers than ever before. In 1979, one out of nine New Zealanders left the country on temporary visits.\(^8\) Travel forced New Zealanders to examine, as Janet Frame once wrote, “not the place of arrival but the place of departure”.\(^9\) Michael King has also explained the self-examination brought about by overseas travel: “The effect of my first year away from New Zealand was to make me feel more, not less, a New Zealander. I became more deeply conscious of my roots in my own country because I had experienced their absence.”\(^10\) Travel made New Zealanders more confident of their distinct identity.

In New Zealand, meanwhile, Maori actively began to stress their own distinct identity. A new generation of Maori embraced Maoritanga and demanded redress of past grievances under the Treaty of Waitangi. The Maori renaissance forced successive Governments and New Zealand society towards a stronger commitment to biculturalism, and then, multiculturalism. It also had the effect of forcing Pakeha to question their own sense of identity. Maori and Pakeha, including the thousands of postwar Polynesian migrants, all began to examine what it meant to be a New Zealander.

These social developments during the 1970s and 1980s collectively led New Zealanders to question their sense of national identity. In the process, they looked to history in search of events which had shaped that identity. New Zealand history continued to replace British and imperial history in secondary school and university curriculums during this period. After race relations, the nation’s military heritage came to be identified as a dominant theme in its history and thereby important to any sense of national identity. A considerable amount of material was subsequently published by historians on the subject during the 1980s.

Michael King’s *New Zealanders at War*, appropriately launched on Anzac Day 1981, set the ball rolling. King’s book provided a general history of New Zealand’s war heritage from pre-European Maori warfare through to New Zealand’s involvement in the Asian conflicts of the later half of the twentieth century. This broad sweep of the subject was necessary to allow other historians to add more scholarly detail. The first of these studies was Chris Pugsley’s *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story* launched three years later on the eve of Anzac Day 1984. Pugsley’s *Gallipoli* was the first scholarly attempt to write the history of New Zealand’s involvement in the Gallipoli campaign which in the process stripped bare the myth of Anzac.

---


\(^9\) Cited in *Ibid*.

With the launch of *Gallipoli* coinciding with Anzac Day, media attention centred upon Pugsley's claim that 8 August, the anniversary date of the battle by New Zealand soldiers for Chunuk Bair, would serve as a more appropriate date for New Zealanders to commemorate Anzac Day than 25 April. Gallipoli veterans vehemently disapproved of the suggestion, however, when questioned at the main citizens’ service in Auckland. One correspondent to the *Otago Daily Times* wittingly noted: “You could probably initiate a celebration on August 8, but it would no longer be Anzac Day - merely Nzac Day, and virtually unpronounceable.”

During the 1980s, a considerable number of books on aspects of New Zealand’s military heritage were published. They included James Belich’s path-breaking *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (1986); John McLeod’s *Myth or Reality* (1986) which demythologised the New Zealand soldier in the Second World War; followed by Nicholas Boyack’s *Behind the Lines* (1987); Boyack, Jock Phillips and E.P. Malone’s *The Great Adventure* (1988); Paul Baker’s *King and Country Call* (1988); and finally Boyack and Jane Tolerton’s *In the Shadow of War* (1990), all examining New Zealand’s involvement in the First World War. Both Sinclair’s *A Destiny Apart* (1986) and McLean and Phillips’s *A Man’s Country?* (1987) also devoted considerable space to discussing New Zealand’s military tradition and its effects on society. In addition to the published material, considerable research was undertaken at graduate and postgraduate levels in the universities. This work collectively enabled a new generation to gain knowledge of their nation’s military heritage. It was also devoid of the mythology of war which had often accompanied the subject in the past.

Theatre, radio and particularly television also played an important role in awakening New Zealanders to their martial past. In 1982, renowned author Maurice Shadbolt wrote a play entitled *Once on Chunuk Bair* which depicted the deeds of the Wellington Infantry Battalion when it took the summit of Chunuk Bair from the Turkish Army for a brief period on 8 August 1915. The play, first produced by Auckland’s Mercury Theatre, had its premiere on the eve of Anzac Day 1982. (In 1991, Shadbolt’s play was made into a full feature film *Chunuk Bair.*) In the mid 1980s, Shadbolt also conducted the interviews and wrote the script for the Television New Zealand documentary *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story*. Shadbolt’s interviews were later published as *Voices of Gallipoli* (1988) and serialised for radio in 1989.

The most expensive television documentary ever made in New Zealand to that date, *Gallipoli*, relied heavily on Pugsley’s book and his work as military advisor.

11 *NZH*, 26 April 1984, p.5.
12 *ODT*, 26 April 1984, p.4.
The screening of Gallipoli, on 22 April 1984, to much public and critical acclaim actually coincided with the launch of the book. Other notable television productions during the decade included a serialisation of General Sir Bernard Freyberg's life, screened in the late 1980s, and a documentary recounting the exploits of 28th Maori Battalion screened on the eve of Anzac Day 1990. There were also the obligatory war films screened on Anzac Day. Films such as All Quiet on the Western Front, The Lighthorsemen but, above all, Peter Weir's internationally acclaimed 1981 box-office hit Gallipoli. With its television premiere on Anzac Day 1984, Weir's film was religiously repeated each year and watched with as much reverence throughout the 1980s. Despite the film's failure to mention that New Zealanders were also at Gallipoli, Weir's Gallipoli, perhaps more than any other programme or book, has influenced the views of young New Zealanders about the campaign and provided them with some meaningful understanding and appreciation of Anzac Day.

With its ability to capture mass audiences, television introduced many New Zealanders to their nation's military history. How many young people were made aware of Anzac Day during the 1980s like this Mana College student: "Anzac Day was just another holiday to me. Then everything changed. One night a television documentary on Anzac Day showed the suffering that had gone on in the trenches, the dead bodies and shells exploding on all sides". Books, plays, films and television programmes all contributed to a growing awareness by New Zealanders of their martial heritage and of Anzac Day.

With New Zealanders becoming interested in their history and sense of identity, anniversary days which specifically commemorated past events central to national identity, subsequently attracted considerable attention during the 1980s. The attention was not always favourable as revealed by protests on Anzac Day during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was the rise of Waitangi Day as New Zealand's official national day, however, which attracted the most controversy.

On 6 February 1974, the inaugural national commemoration of New Zealand Day fulfilled the Labour Government's 1972 election promise to make Waitangi Day a national public holiday and to rename it New Zealand Day. The passage of the legislation the previous year had provoked public consternation. Some New Zealanders still viewed Anzac Day as New Zealand's national day, when the nation had "come of age", whereas Waitangi Day was relatively unknown outside Northland and, definitely, not commemorated as a national day. The RSA, however, had supported the latter's introduction. In his opening address to the 1973 Dominion Council Meeting, Sir Hamilton Mitchell stated: "[Anzac Day] is not and

---

14 This thesis, pp.121-2.
never was, the national day of New Zealand - it is and always has been a day of remembrance, commemoration and dedication....And from next year on there will be no doubt that it is not our national day - that will be Waitangi Day”. Sir Hamilton and the RSA believed Anzac Day had been the target of anti-Vietnam War protests partly because the day was popularly viewed as New Zealand’s national day. New Zealand Day won support from the RSA, therefore, as a means of taking the heat off Anzac Day.

The observance of New Zealand Day certainly attracted controversy from the outset. First, Maori generally opposed the new name and in 1976 the National Government reestablished 6 February as Waitangi Day. The name change did not, however, prevent Waitangi Day from being used as a forum by Maori radicals to voice their grievances through demonstrations at the official ceremony at Waitangi. They claimed that the Treaty of Waitangi had been a fraud and that the loss of their land and culture meant that Maori had little to celebrate after a century and a half of association with the British Crown. All New Zealanders felt uncomfortable commemorating Waitangi Day during the 1980s, just as they had commemorating Anzac Day a decade earlier. Both days, nonetheless, provided New Zealanders with the only opportunity to commemorate their heritage.

During the 1980s, for some New Zealanders, the decision to attend Anzac Day services was accompanied by the realisation that time was fast running out to pay personal homage to the original Anzacs and veterans of the First World War. The chance to participate in one of New Zealand’s few national rituals and one with much poignant symbolism, especially the Dawn Service: the time, place, bemelled veterans, uniformed service personnel, gun salute, parade of ex-servicemen and women, Anzac Dedication, Last Post and Reveille, wreath-laying and basically the ritual’s military milieu seldom seen in modern New Zealand society.

The growing interest in Anzac Day and New Zealand history led increasing numbers of New Zealanders to actually visit Gallipoli itself as part of their European sojourn during the 1970s and 1980s. The graves of New Zealanders, marked and unmarked, makes Gallipoli a “holy” place with some considerable emotional impact. Maurice Shadbolt, who first visited the peninsula in 1977, has written of its power: “For New Zealanders sensitive to their nation’s history Gallipoli is an emotional ambush. By day’s end my wife and I spoke to each other in whispers”. Shadbolt recalled only one other experience like it, his visit to the site of Auschwitz concentration camp. For many young Antipodeans, therefore, Gallipoli continued to

be a place of pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to New Zealanders’ growing interest in their national identity and history, another major political and social development of the 1980s also contributed to the resurgence of Anzac Day. The nation’s move towards a nuclear-free status probably best illustrates New Zealanders’ growing sense of confidence and independence during the 1980s. In the 1984 election, three of the four parties campaigned to oppose the entry of nuclear-armed vessels into New Zealand. The majority of voters supported these parties and the elected Labour Government under David Lange banned the entry of nuclear-armed or propelled ships. Both the Government and a majority of New Zealanders wished New Zealand to become “nuclear free”. The generation of youth who had lived, some protested, through the Vietnam War were now “thirty-something” and dominating the sociopolitical landscape. With this generation New Zealand became a nuclear-free and largely pacifist nation.

In adopting this new direction, New Zealanders had to come to grips with the paradox of their military heritage - so long central to their sense of national identity. During the 1980s, therefore, as New Zealanders acknowledged their military heritage, they incorporated it with their modern pacifist direction, in a new developing sense of national identity. Within this context, the Vietnam War generation who had previously viewed Anzac Day as a glorification of war, now older and more aware of the experiences of ex-servicemen, viewed Anzac Day in a new light. Journalist Tom Scott explained this transformation after Anzac Day 1985:

\textit{It has taken my generation, in particular, a long time to recognise that acknowledgement of the contribution of our old soldiers doesn’t make anyone a warmonger. These days, when old soldiers are becoming thin on the ground, and thinner still underground, there is a greater appreciation of the pains they endured. The sacrifices made. The terrible price paid by individual families and whole communities alike.}\textsuperscript{18}

Tom Scott’s generation also now increasingly brought their children to Anzac Day services to witness a ritual which for them not only commemorated New Zealand’s war dead but implicitly revealed to their children the tragic consequences of war and the need to maintain peace. The generation which had protested at Anzac Day services during the Vietnam War now, ironically, ignited a revival of interest in the day.

\textsuperscript{17} In December 1915, a writer stated that the New Zealand graves would make the Gallipoli Peninsula “a place of pilgrimage for generations of New Zealanders yet unborn”. \textit{Round Table}, Vol. VI (December 1915), p.375 cited in Sharpe, “Anzac Day in New Zealand, 1916 to 1939”, p.23. Until the 1970s and 1980s, however, most pilgrims were Gallipoli veterans returning as part of organised delegations to commemorate special anniversaries of the campaign such as in 1948, 1955, 1965 and 1975.

With New Zealand's nuclear-free direction, however, Anzac Day again became utilised as a forum for debate. This time by pro and anti-nuclear supporters. Prior to the election of the Labour Government in 1984, anti-nuclear protesters used Anzac Day services as a means to advance their cause. In 1983, for example, seven anti-nuclear demonstrators were arrested at Auckland's Anzac Day citizens' service. At Devonport, meanwhile, thirty anti-nuclear campaigners, some dressed in black and carrying a coffin depicting "nuclear death", marched to the gates of the naval base and buried a symbolic "bomb". A spokesmen for the "Christians for Peace" marchers, Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Rintje Westra, explained that the group was concerned nuclear ships would berth at the new wharf being built.

The demonstration reveals the latent tension within the "mixed ritual" of Anzac Day, between the military ethos of the day and the pacifist strain within Christianity so strongly represented in some of the Protestant denominations. In the past this tension had sometimes led the RSA to prefer laymen to speak at Anzac Day services so that the day would not be reduced to an expression of abhorrence of war and sympathy for those who had served.

On Anzac Day 1985, however, Reverend Westra was invited to address Auckland's Dawn Service. Westra told his audience that Christ had come to earth saying:

'I give you life in all its fullness'. This, I believe, is totally at odds with our country's involvement in a nuclear alliance, for in that we are prepared to countenance in our so-called 'defence' the death of hundreds of millions of innocent people.

Then Westra claimed that New Zealand forces were being trained to support oppressors rather than defend the country:

I would remind you that the scenario of the recent exercise on Great Barrier Island was that of New Zealand forces being called on to go to an Island state and support the president of that state in putting down an uprising by a disaffected population of that country. Isn't that contrary to what many of the people we remember today stood for.

Westra concluded by urging people to remember the Maori people who had died defending their lands last century and the women who had been raped during past

19 NZH, 26 April 1983, p.5.

20 This tension between the Anzac and Christian traditions had always existed: "The strands of New Zealand nationalism, of pride in a military achievement, interwoven with those of mourning, prevented Anzac Day from being associated totally with the Christian God of peace. Although some Ministers attempted to preach of peace on the day, it could not shed completely its war associations. Nor did many people wish for the deeds of the Anzacs to be entirely supplanted by pacifists propaganda. Thus the day became the centre of controversy in the 1930s." Sharpe, "Anzac Day in New Zealand: 1916 to 1939", New Zealand Journal of History, p.109.

Fig. 12

"Anzac Day 1980s style"

First World War veteran, Thomas Scott, with his daughter and grandchildren pass a group of “Women for Peace” campaigners at the Auckland Cenotaph, Anzac Day 1983

(New Zealand Herald)
An official Anzac Day speaker, selected by the AIF Ex-servicemen’s Association, championing the causes of groups (anti-nuclear, Maori and women) who over the last few years had protested at Anzac Day services! Had the divergent line suddenly become acceptable to ex-service officialdom? The answer is no, as Westra’s address was widely viewed as “subversive” by ex-service personnel. Auckland’s RSA President, R.F. Hanna, felt Westra had abused the privilege of freedom of speech for which soldiers had died: “He was right out of turn on the occasion...The members were incensed”. Another ex-serviceman said, “I did not listen. I walked away until he had finished. I was furious”. A number of the crowd did the same. Other angry people telephoned Westra himself and jammed the switchboard of a local talkback radio station in an attempt to express their disgust.

Auckland AIF Ex-servicemen’s Association President, Max Heather, said he had no idea of Westra’s background and views. Heather had even visited Westra prior to the service to explain that the service was in memory of the dead and not a place to discuss politics. Westra had not indicated at that meeting what he planned to say and if he had, “I would probably have looked elsewhere if he was not prepared to be a little more moderate”, said Heather.

For many New Zealanders born since the Second World War, Westra’s address was probably acceptable but for ex-servicemen’s organisations and many of their members, who had experienced firsthand the failure of Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement policy, the address was an anathema. For the RSA - military preparedness, alliances and deterrents - were the only means of maintaining peace. The address given at Wellington’s Anzac Day Dawn Service in 1984, at the same time that Westra was speaking in Auckland, was more akin to that traditionally heard on the day and favoured by the RSA. The Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshall Ewan Jamieson, warned the crowd present:

The call to disarm, to place our faith in pacifist neutrality, is a call to surrender in the face of force used for evil purposes - a deliberate policy of weakness has never enhanced security....We will not be worthy of those we honour today. We will not deserve to retain the material and personal rights which their sacrifices made possible.

By Anzac Day 1985, under a new Labour Government, New Zealand had banned the entry of nuclear-armed or propelled ships, thereby endangering its Anzus alliance with the United States, and placing the nation firmly in a nuclear-free

---

23 Ibid.
direction. The majority of New Zealanders supported this policy. This did not deter the RSA and some ex-servicemen from strongly criticising the move in Anzac Day addresses throughout the country. In Christchurch, former Chief of Air Staff, Air-Vice Marshall I.G. Morrison, delivered a “stinging attack” on the Government’s Anzus policy at Christchurch Boys’ High School’s Anzac Day service. Morrison exclaimed New Zealand had “blundered off the track in this our Government’s first adventure into foreign affairs and defence”.25 In Wellington the RSA Dominion President, Sir William Leuchars, told those gathered for the citizens’ service to endorse the concept of military deterrence and alliances.26 Finally, former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Muldoon, addressing Takapuna’s Anzac Day service, said his best advice was to “stand fast by our friends and allies”.27 These sentiments continued to be heard at Anzac Day services throughout the decade as the rift with the United States remained unbreached and Anzus moribund.

By 1986, newspaper editorials were calling for tolerance at Anzac Day services fearing clashes between pro and anti-nuclear groups. The Evening Post’s editorial offered an explanation for the tension:

Like Waitangi Day, Anzac Day attracts the anger of those who do not want New Zealanders to acknowledge the past simply as history but want judgments to be made on our forbears....Now public occasions do little more than offer a platform for those opposed to some aspect of past history or present policy. Public holidays of a commemorative nature have become uncomfortable times to be a New Zealander and there seems little chance of our coming to peace with ourselves in the immediate future.28

The “uncomfortableness” of commemorating national days was a by-product of New Zealanders coming to grips with their history and identity in a realistic manner, which meant acknowledging injustices, divisions, and conflict.

On Anzac Day 1989, during an address at Yale University, Prime Minister David Lange announced that the New Zealand Government would seriously consider withdrawing from Anzus as the security alliance was “a dead letter”.29 Back in New Zealand, news of the Prime Minister’s speech, and particularly its timing, drew heavy criticism in newspaper editorials and from ex-servicemen.30

26 Ibid
27 NZH, 26 April 1985, p.20.
29 ODT, 27 April 1989, p.5.
30 For criticism of Lange’s Yale address see the views of the five First World War veterans at Auckland’s Anzac Day service in NZH, 26 April 1989, p.1 and the editorials of the NZH, 26 April 1989, p.8 and EP, 26 April 1989, p.6.
The Anzus controversy, however, did not prevent Anzac Day from continuing to attract large attendances, particularly young people, during the late 1980s. For those who attended Anzac Day services the message remained one of commemoration rather than politics. By the late 1980s most New Zealanders, in any case, accepted their country’s nuclear-free status and many took pride in this stand. Although New Zealand had by no means become a pacifist nation, New Zealanders no longer looked to war as a testing ground of their identity. With their history dominated by martial exploit, New Zealanders now increasingly defined themselves in non-military terms. The turnabout had also been relatively swift. At the start of the period examined in this thesis, a majority of New Zealanders who voted in the 1949 referendum had done so in favour of peace-time military conscription. Forty years later the same people and their children had banned the entry of nuclear armed or powered vessels into their ports and made their country a nuclear-free zone. It was indeed “a remarkable transformation”. A consistent theme ran through this transformation, nonetheless: peace remained the desired end, only the means had changed.

What effect did this transformation have on Anzac Day? The day had always expressed the hope for peace in the future. The dead had thereby not died in vain. This sentiment was essential to keep faith with the dead and their families. Anzac Day had always been New Zealand’s “Peace Day”. The new pacifist mood of the 1980s remained true to this end, undoubtedly contributing to Anzac Day’s popularity amongst young people and to the day’s resurgence during this period.

While Anzac Day grew in popularity another social development simultaneously threatened the sanctity of the day, and particularly the morning. The traditional closed weekend underwent a dramatic transformation during the 1970s and 1980s, with the advent of Saturday trading, and the inevitable prospect of its extension to Sunday. The redefinition of Saturday but especially Sunday had serious consequences for Anzac Day as Section 3 of the 1966 Anzac Day Act stated that the day “shall be observed up to one o’clock in the afternoon as if it were a Sunday, and after that hour on that day such activities shall be permitted as may lawfully take place after noon on a Saturday”. In 1966, only essential businesses, such as dairies and garages, had traded in the weekend. The operation of these businesses on Anzac Day had generally been acceptable to the RSA. By the 1980s, however, New Zealanders were able to shop on Saturday and increasingly businesses were being granted permission to trade on Sunday as well. The increase of weekend trading subsequently meant more businesses were provided the opportunity to open their doors throughout Anzac Day, including the morning because of the Sunday

31 Sinclair, A Destiny Apart, p.259.
reference in the legislation. The consequences of Sunday trading in particular for Anzac Day were all too obvious to the RSA. A situation would arise where, while commemorative services were being held, it would be business as usual for many commercial interests. The commercialisation of Anzac Day had always been an anathema to the RSA and one vigilantly guarded against.

The RSA viewed the situation as fast approaching one where, while the Anzac Day Act prescribed the day as one of commemoration, the Shop Trading Hours Act would have the greater practical role in determining the observance of the day. The RSA realised changes to the observance of Sunday since 1966 meant Anzac Day could no longer be adequately protected by the reference to Sunday in the Act. In the mid 1980s, the RSA’s Dominion Executive searched for means of safeguarding Anzac Day from being traded away.

In December 1984, RSA Dominion President, Sir William Leuchars, made a written submission to the Minister of Internal Affairs expressing his Association’s concern over the extension of commercial trading: “if the present trend continues, Anzac Day morning will soon be like any other morning and its entire meaning will be lost to commercialism”. Sir William requested that consideration be given to changing the Anzac Day Act by specifically deleting “the reference to Sunday and giving Anzac Day morning the same degree of protection as Christmas Day or Good Friday - days on which only essential commercial services are permitted to operate”.32 The Minister met with Sir William and agreed that only essential retail shops should be able to trade on Anzac Day morning, but no action was promised.33 Throughout the late 1980s, the RSA successfully battled against applications to the Shop Trading Hours Commission for the extension of trading to Anzac Day morning,34 although its numerous submissions to the Government, requesting an amendment to the Anzac Day Act, fell on deaf ears.35

In May 1989, however, the Minister of Internal Affairs informed the RSA that a

32 Letter from Sir William Leuchars, RSA Dominion President to Peter Tapsell, Minister of Internal Affairs, 18 December 1984. RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box R/2.

33 Minutes of DEC Meeting, 27 August 1985, p.9.

34 The RSA’s submission to the Shop Trading Hours Commission in 1985 successfully prevented the extension of trading hours to Anzac Day morning in Queenstown. See letter from D.B. Quigley, RSA General Secretary, to the Shop Trading Hours Commission, 10 July 1985, RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box R/2 and Shop Trading Hours Commission, Order of the Commission, 29 July 1985, pp.5-6.

35 In 1988, the Government established an Advisory Committee to review the Shop Trading Hours legislation to which the RSA made submissions. The Advisory Committee’s final report was inconclusive and contained no clear recommendations for the future protection of Anzac Day. Submissions of the RSA to the Shop Hours Trading Act 1977 Advisory Committee, 22 February 1988, RSA Dominion Records, Misc. Box R/2 and Shop Hours Trading Act 1977 Advisory Committee, Report of the Advisory Committee, 30 June 1988, p.38 and pp.60-3.
separate definition for Anzac Day was feasible and promised to take action. Yet Anzac Day remained in bureaucratic limbo when Sunday trading was liberally relaxed by the Government in December 1989. The RSA now desperately pressured the Government to uphold its undertaking that Anzac Day morning would be protected from commercialisation. The Government finally added a last-minute amendment to the Shop Trading Hours Act Repeal Bill in late March 1990. Section 3 of the Bill prohibited trading on Anzac Day before one o'clock along with Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Day. The Bill itself satisfied the RSA's demands, except it would not be passed in time to prevent trading on Anzac Day 1990. In the end, the Minister of Labour protected Anzac Day 1990 by proclamation, prohibiting shops that did not usually open on Anzac Day from doing so. The RSA considered it vital that the morning of Anzac Day 1990 be free of commercialisation because of its special significance as the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign.

The year 1990 was also New Zealand's Seisquintennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. A special 1990 Commission was established to oversee the year-long commemoration and sponsor official projects. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli was acknowledged by the 1990 Commission as of special significance. This recognition not only brought greater mana to the occasion but considerable financial support.

The official national commemoration of Anzac Day was observed in Wellington and included a commemorative service at St Paul's Cathedral in the morning followed by a State luncheon at Parliament. Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, who had travelled to New Zealand especially for Anzac Day, attended both functions. Earlier in the day she had attended the Dawn Service in Auckland. At the luncheon, The Princess Royal presented prizes to winners of the RSA's 1990 Official Project, "We Will Remember Them", a competition for intermediate and high school students. The competition had called for active research into the effects of war on their local community. Special 1990 commemorative medals were also presented to Gallipoli veterans and two Victoria Cross recipients, Charles Upham and Jack Hinton. Finally, a collection of oral history tapes recording the reminiscences of First World War veterans, undertaken by Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton, were handed to the Government for depositing in the Alexander Turnbull Library.

The predicted highlight of the day, however, the RSA's live spectacular

---


37 The Shop Trading Hours Repeal Act became law on 3 July 1989 and came into force on 1 August 1990.

“Salute ’90”, was abandoned, as heavy rain had made ground conditions at the Basin Reserve venue impossible for the exhibition to go ahead. The planned two and a half hour, 1,000 member pageant, had taken a year to prepare at some considerable cost. The 1990 Commission had provided the RSA with a budget of up to $250,000 to cover the cost of “Salute ’90” together with the Anzac Day morning memorial service and a month-long international Carillon Festival. The organisers of “Salute ’90” had expected it to attract a crowd of about 15,000 people.

The guiding theme for “Salute ’90” had been the growth of New Zealand as a nation, with special reference to Gallipoli, and involving the participation of military and cultural groups. A surviving printed “Salute ’90” spectator-programme provides an insight into what would have been a grand spectacle. The programme was to have begun with a display by massed bands of the armed services, preceding the arrival of Gallipoli veterans and HRH The Princess Royal, who was to be greeted with a traditional Maori welcome before inspecting an ANZAC Royal Guard of Honour comprising Australian and New Zealand military personnel from all three services. The programme of entertainment included: cultural performances by local Maori, Pacific Island, Chinese, Greek and Indian cultural groups; a vintage aircraft aerial display and a reenactment of the days of the armed constabulary; various displays by army personnel; musical sequences commemorating the South African, First and Second World Wars; a depiction of the heroism of Henderson and his donkey at Gallipoli; and a mock “battle” involving army personnel, billed as the day’s surprise performance. The grand finale was to be the performance of Tchaikovsky’s “1812 Overture” by the combined armed services bands with gun and bell accompaniment provided by 22 (D) Battery The Royal Regiment New Zealand Artillery and the National Carillon situated on nearby Mount Cook. The programme clearly reveals that “Salute ’90”, possibly the RSA’s most ambitious public presentation in its history, would have been a highlight of Anzac Day. The considerable amount of money, time and energy expended on the project also reveals the importance placed on the seventy-fifth commemoration of Anzac Day by the RSA and 1990 Commission.

This sentiment was evident throughout New Zealand as local RSAs organised special Anzac Day ceremonies to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary. In Dunedin, for example, the RSA specially arranged a parade of ex-servicemen and women through the main streets to the Town Hall for the civic service, the first such parade in twenty years. Many RSAs held extra mid-morning services, or transferred the Dawn Service to this time, so that more people (especially families), attracted by

40 ODT, 26 April 1990, p.4.
the increased media coverage, could attend a service at a reasonable hour.\textsuperscript{41} A number of museums and galleries also held special exhibitions for Anzac Day, such as “Empire and Desire: Gallipoli 1915”, at the National Library Gallery in Wellington, while “Gallipoli 1915” and “Lest We Forget: Memories in Stone” were both special 1990 projects for the Auckland War Memorial Museum.\textsuperscript{42}

Anzac Day 1990 was also utilised to unveil special memorials such as the four plaques unveiled by the residents of Karitane, a small coastal town north of Dunedin, in recognition of members of their community who had fought in J-Force, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.\textsuperscript{43} In Wellington, an RSA commissioned bronze sculpture depicting Dick Henderson and the Anzac legend of the “Man with the Donkey” was unveiled in front of the National War Memorial by Henderson’s son and grandsons prior to Anzac Day.\textsuperscript{44}

The most significant unveiling, however, was that of the Ataturk Memorial on 26 April 1990. The marble crescent, situated on a ridge above Tarakina Bay on Wellington’s south coast, was built by the New Zealand Government as part of a reciprocal agreement with Turkey. When the Turks had agreed to the Australian Government’s request in 1984, that Ari Burnu be renamed Anzac Cove, they also built a large monument to all who had died in the Gallipoli campaign. In return, the Governments of Australia and New Zealand had agreed to build monuments in Canberra and Wellington respectively to honour Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Commander-in-Chief of Turkish forces who defended the Dardenelles in 1915 and founder of modern Turkey). From the outset the proposed memorial met with opposition from nearby residents as well as Wellington’s Maori, Greek and Cypriot communities (for different reasons).\textsuperscript{45} The memorial was deliberately damaged on several occasions during its construction. Its unveiling on 26 April was also accompanied by tension. The closed ceremony was surrounded by strict security amidst fears of an Armenian terrorist attack on the Turkish Minister of Agriculture, Lutfullah Kayalar, who unveiled the memorial.\textsuperscript{46} The Ataturk Memorial, according to McLean and Phillips, symbolises a reassessment of New Zealand’s involvement in the

\textsuperscript{41} Fielding, Morrinsville, Waikato-King Country and Bay of Plenty RSAs arranged special mid-morning services. Minutes of DEC Meeting, 3 October 1989 and 28 November 1989, p.14.
\textsuperscript{43} ODT, 26 April 1990, p.4.
\textsuperscript{44} EP, 21 April 1990, p.6. For more detail about the bronze sculpture of Dick Henderson see RSA Annual Report, 1990, p.6.
\textsuperscript{45} For more detail on the Ataturk Memorial and the opposition to its construction see Maclean and Phillips, *The Pride and the Sorrow*, pp.165-7.
\textsuperscript{46} ODT, 26 April 1990, p.3; also RSA Review, Vol. LXV, no.3 (June 1990), p.1.
Many monuments have been erected to ‘Our Glorious Dead’ whose ‘Heroic Sacrifice’ made New Zealand a nation on the bloody slopes of the Dardanelles. This is the first memorial to be built as an act of atonement for our invasion of another country. For this reason alone the Ataturk monument is of major significance.47

Anzac Day ceremonies which received the greatest attention, however, actually took place at Gallipoli itself. In early 1989, the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced that he would personally lead an official party, including veterans, to Anzac Cove to commemorate Anzac Day 1990. This statement aroused similar interest in New Zealand. The RSA subsequently made a submission to the Government recommending that New Zealand also send an official delegation to Gallipoli. The Government announced its decision to send a delegation in late November 1989. The official party, to be led by His Excellency the Governor General, Sir Paul Reeves, would include Government and Opposition representatives, while the Chief of Defence Staff and fifty service personnel would form a guard of honour at the ceremonies. The RSA was invited to fill fifteen seats on the official RNZAF aircraft with the understanding that all “on land” costs (mainly accommodation and meals) would be the responsibility of individuals.48 The RSA opened application for the seats to its entire membership. In the end, 93 applications were received, including applications from three First World War veterans who were given priority. The Government subsequently agreed to meet all the travel costs of these three veterans.

During April, however, Gallipoli veteran Bill Coppin suffered a fall, leaving him unable to travel. Fred Rogers of Invercargill thereby became the only original Anzac in the New Zealand delegation. In the days prior to his departure, ninety-seven year-old Fred, who had actually landed with the first New Zealanders on the afternoon of 25 April 1915, attracted immense media attention and came to capture the hearts of the nation.49 To many Fred symbolised the seventy-fifth commemoration of Anzac Day.

Apart from the official delegations from New Zealand, Australia, Britain, France, Canada, India and Turkey, thousands of tourists, many of them young Antipodean backpackers, converged on Gallipoli for this once in a lifetime occasion. By the early hours of 25 April 1990, therefore, a crowd of 10,000 people had packed inside Ari Burnu cemetery for the Dawn Service. The service, conducted jointly by New

49 Southland Times, 23 April 1990, p.4.
Zealand and Australian ex-servicemen and officials, included the Governor-General Sir Paul Reeves, who delivered the Prayer for the Nations, and RSA Dominion Vice-President, David Cox, who read the Commemoration for the Fallen. This momentous occasion was beamed live via satellite into New Zealand living rooms. The telecast was unfortunately of poor quality as fuzzy images moved in the murk of dawn accompanied by poor sound. For the first time in history, nonetheless, New Zealanders were provided the opportunity of watching a Dawn Service from Anzac Cove itself.

Later in the morning, a service was held at Eskai Hissarlik War Memorial for Turkish war dead at Canakkale. Sir Paul Reeves, as New Zealand’s Head of State, and thereby the highest ranking visiting diplomat, spoke on behalf of the foreign delegations in reply to Turkish President Turgut Ozal’s welcoming address.

For New Zealanders, however, it was the final service of the day at the New Zealand War Memorial on Chunuk Bair which held the greatest significance. Sir Paul Reeves again took a prominent role in proceedings. As head of the New Zealand delegation, he gave the address and, as a clergyman, also conducted the service. In his address, Sir Paul noted that, “Gallipoli was a milestone along the unending road that leads towards a New Zealand identity or nationhood”, and of Chunuk Bair, he remarked; “This is a powerful place, there is something here which is unmistakably us”. The Governor-General’s address was powerful but the impromptu speech by Fred Rogers best captured the occasion and mood of the day.

From his arrival in a wheelchair to applause and cheers from a large crowd of New Zealanders, Fred appropriately became the centre of attention. After receiving a 1990 commemorative medal from the Governor-General, Fred had his say:

They [the Turks] have, in no mean way, with other nations, helped make this memorial service such a success...I bring and I give all respect and love and memories from Southland, New Zealand, and you people for the fine, fond memories you have contributed to this occasion. Its been hard, its been tough on our loved ones. Be brave, and bring those memories, and carry on.

In his speech, Fred also mentioned fellow Southlander, Alec Black, whom he had buried on the evening of 25 April 1915, along with others in his company, only hours after landing at Anzac Cove. Prior to his departure for Gallipoli in 1990, Fred had received a call from Alec Black’s youngest sister which “doubled my emotion about

50 NZH, 26 April 1990, p.2.
51 Ibid.
52 Southland Times, 27 April 1990, p.2.
returning to the peninsula. I want to visit Alec Black’s grave, for his sister’s sake”.53
In fact, Fred found Alec Black’s name on the New Zealand Memorial at Chunuk Bair
which he later confessed to be the highlight of his journey.54

The brief but poignant Chunuk Bair ceremony concluded with a Turkish soldier
laying a wreath on behalf of his Government and people, Sir Paul Reeves
reciprocating on behalf of New Zealand and Fred laying a wreath in memory of all
who had served. There followed many private contributions on behalf of RSA sub-
branches, families and individuals back in New Zealand. Major Bill Meldrum (Ret.),
former commander of the New Zealand Special Air Service unit in Malaya, laid
perhaps the most poignant of the private tributes in memory of his father. Brigadier
William Meldrum had commanded the Wellington Mounted Rifles and Otago
Infantry in support of the Wellington Battalion during its assault on Chunuk Bair in
August 1915. Brigadier Meldrum survived Gallipoli and lived to the age of ninety-
eight years old. In 1890, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of New Zealand,
Meldrum had written in his diary: “As I follow the history of the colony, I feel proud
that I was born a New Zealander”. The message on his son’s private wreath, one
hundred years later, thus fittingly read: “I am proud to be a New Zealander in this
place and on this day: Chunuk Bair, Anzac Day, 1990. History made, history
honoured”.55

The ceremony at Chunuk Bair was also planned to be screened in New Zealand,
with only a ten minute delay, but a satellite-link failure meant the pictures were
received too late for transmission.56 As 25 April came to an end, nonetheless, New
Zealanders, having once again travelled from the uttermost ends of the earth, were at
Gallipoli fulfilling those immortal words reverently pronounced each year on Anzac
Day: “WE WILL REMEMBER THEM”. The commemoration of Anzac Day 1990
provided a fitting climax to the resurgence of interest in Anzac Day during the 1980s.
The Reveille had indeed sounded for Anzac Day.

---

56 NZH, 27 April 1990, p.18.
CONCLUSION

The observance of Anzac Day 1990 revealed that the day still had significance for many New Zealanders. It had, however, certainly changed since 1946. In that first year of peace Anzac Day had provided New Zealanders with an opportunity to mourn the dead of the Second World War and to reaffirm that they had not died in vain. As a ritual of community solidarity it had fulfilled a psychological need of people coping with mass death. The solemnity over the recent deaths made Anzac Day a holy day. The achievements of servicemen and women in the Second World War had also reinforced the public myth of war as a time when New Zealand proved its nationhood. The public ritual of Anzac Day continued to express the nation’s sorrow and pride. The ritual of ex-servicemen and women had also been one of community solidarity although provided meaning by the reality of war rather than the myth. Both rituals, however, had shared the desire to remember the dead. And, in 1946, most New Zealanders did remember, making this truly the one day of the year.

The passage of time ameliorated the impact of the war losses. A trend reflected in the changing observance of Anzac Day. It led to the manner of its observance as a holy day being questioned from the late 1950s and its meaning being challenged from the late 1960s by a generation born since the Second World War. The same generation and their children returned to Anzac Day services in the 1980s and in the process revived a languishing day with new meaning.

By 1990, Anzac Day no longer served a social or psychological purpose as a day of mourning. The day, however, continued to be expressive. It still provided an occasion for New Zealanders to express their feelings about the war dead and their sense of national identity. In short, Anzac Day was still a *New Zealand reading of New Zealand experience, a story they told themselves about themselves*, although the story had dramatically changed over forty years. The public and ex-service rituals also continued to shape Anzac Day. The Anzac mythology, however, had been exposed. New Zealanders were now less naive about the significance of Gallipoli and about war in general. By 1990, Anzac Day was still the most important commemorative day of the year, yet New Zealanders also enjoyed it as a holiday.

This thesis has argued that national commemorative days provide a key to understanding the social and cultural system of which they are a part. By studying commemorative days over a period of time, therefore, one gains an insight into how
both systems change. What, then, has this study of Anzac Day unlocked about changes in New Zealand since the end of the Second World War?

By 1990 Anzac Day was definitely observed as a holiday rather than a holy day. The secularisation of New Zealand society having by 1990 emptied churches and filled supermarkets on Sundays, made Easter and Christmas commercial rather than Christian festivals, also manifested itself in the reduced sanctity of Anzac Day. If the observance of Anzac Day during the interwar period was “the making of a holy day”, then the postwar period was its “unmaking”.

The study also concludes that Anzac Day does not provide evidence for the existence of a New Zealand civil religion during this period. The day instead continued to be a mix of civic and Christian sentiment. The day’s observance certainly had a much stronger Protestant religious content than in Australia. In fact, Hill and Zwaga concluded that, “Perhaps it is in the Australian celebration of Anzac Day that we come closest to the secularised version of civil religion”. Ken Inglis has certainly argued this line over the years.

In Tasman Relations Keith Sinclair noted, “Australia is so much larger, more populous and older, in terms of human settlement, that, inevitably, influences have flowed eastward across the Tasman, rather than towards the west”. This has certainly been true of the observance of Anzac Day during the postwar period. The growing popularity of the Dawn Service was the most significant Australian influence upon New Zealand’s observance. In general, New Zealand’s commemoration of Anzac Day was pallid in comparison with the Australian observance. Duncan Waterson concluded that:

In Australia, certain forms of 1890s bush nationalism, urban larrikinism, secular commemoration and mateship were present in greater degree than in New Zealand. There was also a greater emphasis on sacred symbols: the banners of the unions, the antediluvian members carted through the streets as holy human relics, and the aged Light Horsemen with their threadbare uniforms.

In short, Australia’s observance has always been more nationalistic, more elaborate in terms of symbolism, and far more an ex-servicemen’s day. This reflected political, social and cultural differences between the two countries but also the fact that the

1 Hill and Zwaga, “Civic and Civil”, p.33.
State and the RSL purposely worked on the construction of a civic ritual. The opposition to Anzac Day in Australia, however, was also stronger. The attempts by anti-Vietnam War protesters, and later feminists, to express their feelings at Anzac Day services resulted in greater confrontations than in New Zealand. The demonstrations reveal that the Vietnam War and the feminist movement impinged far more drastically on Australian society. On the other hand, Aboriginal Australians did not utilise the day to express their grievances to the same extent as some Maori radicals did during the early 1980s. Thus, while Anzac Day has been Australia’s and New Zealand’s most important shared symbol of national identity, revealing the close ties and shared history, it has also disclosed the differences between the two nations. Anzac Day may be an Australasian story but Australians and New Zealanders tell slightly different versions, expressing each country’s distinct identity and ethos.

Duncan Waterson perhaps had a point, therefore, when he referred to Anzac Day as “‘the one day of the year’ in Australia and the ‘special day of the year’ in New Zealand”. In comparison with other national occasions within New Zealand, however, Anzac Day remained justifiably “the one day of the year”. The State’s construction of Waitangi Day as a symbol of national identity and celebration of biculturalism failed to win widespread support. The observance of Waitangi Day throughout the 1980s was more divisive than any other on the ceremonial calendar. An example of a dysfunctional ritual. Most New Zealanders, moreover, simply found no significance in Waitangi Day as a celebration of nationhood. Nonetheless, they enjoyed the extra summer holiday.

In New Zealand, as in Australia, therefore, the State-sponsored national day commemorating the myth of origin failed to supplant the unofficial “national day” as established by the people. Australian anthropologist Bruce Kapferer has argued that Anzac Day expresses the conflict between state and nation in Australia:

Anzac Day is the celebration of the nation and people independent of the state. The formal day of the nation as state is Australia Day. It is a day that is treated as little more than an extra holiday by Australians. The agents of the state are attempting through strong appeals to Australian nationalism to make it a more celebrated occasion. So far there has been little success. But the nationalist interest in Anzac Day appears to be on the increase [during the 1980s].

In this context, Australia’s Bicentennial in 1988 and New Zealand’s Seisquintennial celebrations in 1990 were both massive attempts by the State to celebrate the birth of the nation-as-state and to fabricate a national identity along these lines. Kapferer’s

---

5 Waterson, “Anzac Day in the Countryside”, p.149.

argument essentially explained the situation in New Zealand. Anzac Day had always been commemorated in the fashion of a national day and viewed as a more poignant occasion than Waitangi Day.

New Zealanders' sense of national identity certainly changed over the postwar period from an imperial to an independently nationalist one. During the 1940s and 1950s, Anzac Day was an occasion of national pride as it commemorated the service and sacrifice of New Zealanders for King and Empire. The nationalism of Anzac Day had been in the imperial sense. By the 1980s, through historical research, documentaries and films New Zealanders realised the absurdity of the Anzac myth and its claim that New Zealand had "come of age" as a nation at Gallipoli. With the mythology shot with holes, Anzac Day as a day of national significance might have languished but instead it flourished. The day and the nation's war heritage was already intricately tied up with New Zealanders' sense of national identity and would not be broken easily. In any case, Anzac Day now expressed the new more indigenous and independent sense of national identity.

New Zealanders' changing attitudes to war played a major part in that developing sense of identity. These attitudes were nowhere more evident than on the day that commemorated the nation's participation in war. New Zealanders had certainly become less militaristic over the period. For two decades after the end of the Second World War Anzac Day speakers had promulgated the notion that New Zealand's best defence options were big-power alliances, war preparedness, and "forward" defence. The speakers had been preaching to the "converted". Most New Zealanders had wanted CMT in 1949, to send a military force to Korea in 1950, and to join ANZUS in 1951. New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War and the domestic opposition which grew in reaction became the catalyst for a postwar generation to question the old assumptions. The Anzac Day protests during these years mirrored a nation divided over the Vietnam War. The protests also shaped young New Zealanders' views about Vietnam and war in general. Some protesters attacked the nation's whole military tradition, denouncing ex-servicemen as warmongers and Anzac Day as a glorification of war. Most opponents of the war, however, came to reject the use of war as a legitimate means of foreign policy. By 1990, New Zealanders were less militaristic and no longer viewed their sense of identity in terms of military achievement. CMT was a distant memory, few school's had cadet training but, most importantly, the nation was nuclear-free and many New Zealanders took pride in this new stance. An increasing number of them also found significance in Anzac Day as a time to think about their military past and their new direction for the future. The postwar generation had come to realise that one could commemorate war without glorifying it.
The changing observance of Anzac Day also revealed the shifting social pattern. During the 1940s and 1950s women had participated in Anzac Day services within traditionally prescribed roles: as grieving mothers and widows; as wives and daughters of parading ex-servicemen; and as the “RSA ladies” who made the wreaths, prepared the food and served it to their warrior menfolk. Meanwhile, ex-servicewomen were often excluded from the parade and always from the ex-servicemen’s reunions. The day reflected the patriarchal dominance of society. The rise of feminism during the 1970s changed gender relations forever. By the end of the decade, the presence of feminists at Anzac Day services laying wreaths in memory of women raped and killed in war and protesting against what they viewed as a celebration of male power and glory showed the extent of change. In the following decade, women dominated the membership of the anti-nuclear peace movement and protested at Anzac Day services in this capacity. According to Sandra Coney, “women were the peace movement”. On the other hand, the sight of an all female regular army guard of honour at Mt. Roskill’s Anzac Day service in 1989 reflected the pervasiveness of change for women in forty years. On Anzac Day 1990, therefore, women were no longer just in the kitchen serving “old digs” but “standing in the sunshine”.

Protestant and Catholic ex-servicemen also now remembered together without a second thought. The bitter sectarianism which had prevented the adoption of a universal non-denomminational service in 1946 was no more. From the mid 1960s ecumenical Anzac Day services had become common in many places. The observance of Anzac Day showed the extent of ecumenical unity by the end of the period.

The sight of large numbers of Maoris and Pakehas standing around urban war memorials on Anzac Day 1990 revealed the greatest change in New Zealand society since the Second World War. The postwar Maori urban migration brought Maori and Pakeha into constant contact and dramatically changed race relations. Maori protests at Anzac Day services during the early 1980s revealed the extent of the Maori political and cultural renaissance and the frailty of the mythology that in the trenches Maori and Pakeha had become one people. It is surprising, however, that Maori did not protest more on Anzac Day, particularly the day’s failure to remember the Maori dead of the New Zealand Wars. In fairness, however, the New Zealand Wars per se were not acknowledged on Anzac Day during the postwar period. This absence reflected the collective amnesia of New Zealanders over their greatest civil


The lack of Maori protest on Anzac Day during the turbulent years of the Maori renaissance underlines the fact that Maori have been the greatest supporters of Anzac Day. As a day of remembrance for their ancestors but also as one of pride and hope. Maori viewed their contribution in both World Wars as a sign of their loyalty and as grounds for redress of grievances and inequality. The war experience also provided Maori with the leadership and mana to work for mana motuhake. Many Maoris continued to view military service as a worthy endeavour during the postwar period. In *New Zealanders at War* Michael King noted that by 1980 “Maoris were the most visible ethnic element in the New Zealand Army (even if not in the majority), and the Chief of General Staff was Major-General Brian Poananga. The warrior tradition had not died”. In the future, Maori ex-servicemen and women will increasingly become the Keepers of Anzac Day. In the context of this situation, and as Pakeha continue to appropriate indigenous events in order to give themselves a sense of identity and history in this land, the dead of the New Zealand Wars, especially Maori, may yet be remembered on Anzac Day. Recent memorials to the New Zealand Wars “which express from both Maori and Pakeha perspectives some sense of sorrow for the men and women who died in our greatest civil conflict”, provide some evidence in this direction.

By the late 1980s Anzac Day services also revealed the decline of the ex-service population and its influence upon society. The defeat of the Muldoon Government in 1984 symbolised the transference of political power from the war to the postwar generation, many of whom had cut their political teeth in the anti-Vietnam War movement. The RSA no longer had the same level of contacts or influence within Government. Its defence stance in favour of deterrents and alliances was also out of step with a Labour Government so committed to a nuclear-free nation that it willingly endangered New Zealand’s position in ANZUS. In society too, ex-service personnel handed over the mantle of leadership to a younger generation as they left jobs and positions of responsibility to begin retirement. This temporarily revitalised RSA branches as retired ex-servicemen had more time to devote to the Association. An increasing amount of that time, however, was spent attending funerals of past members. Between 1977 and 1987 the RSA’s returned membership

---


11 For discussion and pictures of recent memorials to the New Zealand Wars see McLean and Phillips, *The Pride and the Sorrow*, p.41-5 and for the quote p.43.
dropped from 86,386 to 72,852. A decline of 18% in ten years and one inevitably going to accelerate with most Second World War veterans in their seventies by the late 1980s. With the faint notes of the Last Post in the distance the RSA took measures, such as opening its membership to serving members of the armed forces and the police, in an attempt to secure its future after the last returned serviceman and woman had died. Whatever its future the golden era of the RSA when it was a force in the land during the 1940s and 1950s was a distant memory by the late 1980s.

In short Anzac Day is proof that national commemorative days are worthy fields of study as they reveal the changing social and cultural landscape. In this study one factor has continually stood out as shaping the observance of Anzac Day and much of New Zealand life throughout the period, and that is, the passage of time since the Second World War. This increasingly weakened the hold of Anzac Day as, from the late 1950s, the balance of population increasingly tilted towards a younger, postwar generation, to whom the First World War was history, and the Second only a vague recollection, if that. To recall Sir Guy Powles remarks, at Dunedin’s Anzac Day service in 1964, that, “grief, even deep and sincere, was a personal thing and could not in this day touch more than a steadily dwindling number of people. Grief on a national scale could not be felt for long”. New Zealanders did not grieve as a nation by the 1960s which led to the statutory introduction of the half-day observance in 1966. The passage of time which produced apathy also enabled a postwar generation to criticise as well as endorse Anzac Day with new meanings.

The changing observance of New Zealand’s day of commemoration for the war dead was not unique. The passage of time since the Second World War had a similar impact on the observance of memorial days in other countries. In Australia, as the shock of the war losses weakened during the 1950s Australians began to call for the introduction of the half-day observance as traditionally observed in New South Wales. By 1966 this pattern of commemoration was universal throughout Australia. In Britain too, Remembrance Sunday attendances at Whitehall and at local memorials declined, and demands for its reform or abolition became ever more widespread from the late 1950s. In 1968 a new service was devised “in response to criticism that the older form of service was too patriotic and warlike in tone, and too narrow and retrospective in its import to engage the interests of any but the elderly”. The changing observance of Anzac Day in New Zealand, though shaped by indigenous factors, was therefore part of a worldwide trend as the passage of time since the

13 ODT, 27 April 1964, p.5.
Second World War diminished the need for such solemn commemorations.

Above all, then, this study of Anzac Day enables one to gain an insight into how New Zealanders slowly emerged from the shadow of war. Michael King, born in 1945, has written of growing up under its shadow:

In *New Zealanders at War* I wrote that, after the First and Second World Wars, the following generations in New Zealand ‘did not need to be told that the Angel of Death had passed over the land: they had heard the beating of its wings’. For me, this was no exaggeration. My father’s father had been killed in France in 1915. My maternal grandmother displayed a photograph of her favourite cousin, Cuthbert, killed in the same war at the same time and place. Next door to us lived Mrs Hornig, who had lost her husband in World War One and her only son, Colin, in Italy in World War Two. Sepia photographs of young men in khaki, frozen in youth and with what seemed like an expectation of death on their faces, were among the icons of my youth. They had faded ‘Flanders poppies’ wedged in the corners of the frames.

I had closer reminders of war. My father’s photographs of his four years in the Royal Navy and two in the Royal New Zealand Navy. His medals worn on Anzac Day dawn parades....And there were his reminiscences of war, which usually emerged when he had old comrades-in-arms (or in-ships) at home....but he was reluctant to talk about the torrid features of war, however.

Our neighbourhood abounded in veterans....Tiny had fought in the South African War and he showed me photographs of men on horseback, wearing slouch hats and bandoliers....Professor Bob Munro, another neighbour, had fought in France in World War One....[and] he loved talking about ‘the war’. And Jim Crabbe...his injuries bequeathed him a lifelong limp....

All this was a constant reminder to me that, within living memory, each generation preceding mine had had to go to war....15

By 1990 New Zealanders no longer expected to go to war. The Angel of Death had flown from their shores. Nonetheless, many would swear that they heard the sound of beating wings on “the one day of the year”.

---

EPILOGUE

The future for Anzac Day is not at all clear on the eve of Anzac Day 1994. The day continues to attract large and youthful attendances. On the other hand, the surviving few Gallipoli veterans and few hundred First World War veterans are in their late nineties, if not centurians. Sadly, even fewer will be here on Anzac Day 2000. The majority of Second World War veterans, meanwhile, are in their seventies. Not many of their number will still be marching by Anzac Day 2020. The returned servicemen and women of the Asian wars are younger, especially Vietnam War veterans, but their ranks are small. Is the frequently expressed fear of returned servicemen and women - that Anzac Day will die with them - a real and appropriate one? Who can predict? The historian’s crystal ball only looks into the past but this can provide clues for the future.

Without large numbers of returned service personnel Anzac Day will undoubtedly lose much of its present character and meaning. In short, the ex-servicemen’s ritual which brings to the day its real spirit and power will either elapse or become an anachronistic ceremony. In the future, participants might understand the military symbolism of Anzac Day but without the firsthand experience of war and the consequent memories this entails, will not be emotionally touched or transported back for the purpose of remembrance in anything like the same manner. They simply will not have the past into which the performance is asking them to march.¹

In the past, furthermore, returned servicemen and women have been symbols themselves, providing a living link with the nation’s war heritage and with those remembered on Anzac Day. The resurgence of interest in Anzac Day during the 1980s was partly a result of people’s realisation that this might be the last opportunity to see those who had actually been at Gallipoli and the Western Front. It is probable that a similar development will occur in twenty years time, just before the last Second World War veterans die. Without veterans, then, Anzac Day will lose its most important symbols of remembrance. By this time, however, the day will probably be less one of remembrance because few people will have memories of the war dead. Like grief, true remembrance is personal and requires a sense of affinity with the dead.

In a future without large numbers of ex-servicemen and women, the best chance

¹ Sackett, Marching into the Past", pp.29-30.
of survival for Anzac Day will be for it to continue to develop as a day of national commemoration in the wider sense than just remembrance. An occasion for New Zealanders to express their feelings about war and peace, their history and sense of national identity. The observance of Anzac Day during the 1980s already provides evidence in this direction. Unless the next few generations continue to find meaning along these lines, Anzac Day seems doomed to disappear from the New Zealand calendar sometime late next century. They will determine whether Anzac Day remains “the one day of the year”.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

I. Manuscripts

*Records held at New Zealand Returned Services' Association (NZRSA) Dominion Headquarters, Wellington.*

Minutes of Dominion Executive Committee Meetings of NZRSA, 1946-1990.


NZRSA Dominion Annual General Reports, 1946-1990.

Miscellaneous Papers, 1946-1990: Boxes R/2: Anzac Day Act
Boxes R/3: Anzac Day Observance
Boxes R/10: 1990 Commemorations
Boxes R/10/2: Gallipoli 1990 Delegation

II. Official Publications

III. Newspapers

Bruce Herald (Milton), 1946-1971.
Dominion, 1946-1990.
Evening Star (Dunedin), 1946-1979.

IV. Periodicals

Craccum (Auckland University Students' Association), 1970-1972.
Critic (Otago University Students' Association), 1968-1972.
New Zealand Listener, 1946-1990.
Rabble (Wellington Progressive Youth Movement), 1970.
Rebel (Auckland Progressive Youth Movement), 1971.
Reveille (Official Organ of Takapuna RSA), 1974-1975.
Saliant (Victoria University Students' Association), 1967-1972.
Te Ao Hou (Department of Maori Affairs), 1952-1975.
V. Books/Pamphlets


VI. Personal Correspondence

Letters held by author of thesis.

G.T. Carmichael, 23 June 1992. (Malayan, Borneo and Vietnam War veteran.)

J.B. Christophers, 28 April 1992. (Korean War veteran.)

VII. Oral


*Radio New Zealand Sound Archive, Timaru:*

Maori Anzac Day Dawn Parade, Ohinemutu. 1950s. (ref. no. D619)

War widow, returned soldier and war historian comment on importance of Anzac Day. Recorded 1960. (ref. no. T143)

Veterans of both World Wars comment on the future of Anzac Day. Recorded 7 May 1976. (ref. no. T1033)
SECONDARY SOURCES

I. BOOKS


*Being Pakeha*, Auckland, 1985


The *One Day of the Year*, London, 1967. (novel)


II. ARTICLES

Cannedine, D., "Death and Grief in Modern Britain", *Mirrors of Mortality* 


“75 Years since Gallipoli”, *Towards 1990: Seven Leading Historians Examine Significant Aspects of New Zealand History*, A. Anderson et al., Wellington, 1989, pp.91-106.


### III. Unpublished Theses and Research Papers


IV. Video/Television
