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What diggers drank: the AIF and its refreshments 1914–18

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol consumption has dominated the very limited discussion of the AIF's liquid intake, but there has been no study of the totality of the role of various beverages in the health and well-being of the diggers. This article explores the physical and cultural context of all beverages consumed by the AIF, noting the successes and failures of official army supply. This article reveals that alcohol, while dominating contemporary accounts of the AIF and prevailing ideas about digger identity, was actually subject to contests over its utility and legitimacy, in part due to the influence of the temperance movement. Meanwhile, non-alcoholic beverages such as tea, water, cocoa and coffee made far more important contributions to the physical and emotional well-being of soldiers than previously recognised, and have been routinely overlooked in scholarly and popular accounts of the AIF.

KEYWORDS

AIF; Anzacs; alcohol in the military; tea; beverages

Introduction

Alcohol has long been associated with 'the heroic, masculine or desirable' in Australian culture, Richard Mitford considering it to be central to Australian ideals of manly egalitarianism and mateship.[1] Given the centrality of Anzac mythology in Australian identity, it is little surprise, then, that Alistair Thomson identifies alcohol as one of the defining elements of the Australian digger in the popular image of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).[2] It is not merely a post-war reputation, but a notoriety acquired during their time overseas, as Peter Stanley has observed.[3] However, Mitford argues that popular ideas exaggerate the actual consumption and place of alcohol in Australian civilian and soldier life, producing misconceptions of the Australian past and present.[4]

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[1]Janet Chrzan, *Alcohol: Social Drinking in Cultural Context* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6; Richard Mitford, 'Australia and Alcohol: Living Down the Legend', *Addiction* 100, no. 7 (2005): 891.
[2]Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 43–44.
[3]Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Sydney: Pier 9, 2010), 109, 138–40.
[4]Mitford, 'Australia and Alcohol', 891–96.

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Scholarship on alcohol and the AIF, while confirming its centrality to the public image of the contemporary digger and his post-war mythology, has relatively little to say about the extent and meaning of its actual use in the AIF, generally only evaluating it when considering rates of crime and unsoldierly behaviour. Even less examined in scholarly literature is the role of other beverages in the life of the AIF, for alcohol was only a part of the totality of what was drunk. The fact is, we have only incidental knowledge of what diggers drank, we have little sense of how authorities managed this, and we do not know the meanings that accrued around drinks and patterns of drinking. This is true not only of the AIF, but across all militaries and wars. Studies in the use or abuse of alcohol form almost the entirety of the relatively few studies on military refreshments, and we know next to nothing about other drinks.[5]

Even an examination of a broader literature on food and beverages only helps in part, for the overwhelming majority of attention given to beverages is still to alcohol. These studies usefully identify its complex and conflicting social meanings, as drinking is 'both a physical and a cultural act … embedded in a context of values, attitudes and other norms', some of them contradictory.[6] Few behaviours are 'more natural and necessary' while simultaneously 'more hedged about by rules, laws, and understandings about when it's to be done and not done'. Drinking is an 'emotionally laden' activity capable of bringing warm acclamation when done well and an 'intense degree of rancor' when not.[7] The importance of alcohol is evident in it being synonymous with the word 'drink', though many other kinds of beverages exist. It is embedded in secular and religious rituals and rites of passage and it 'has symbolized religion, rebirth, civilization, status, refinement, taste, sophistication, relaxation, play, masculinity, forgetfulness, sin, debauchery, and abuse at various times in its history'.[8]

The dominance of alcohol in the scholarly literature acts to obscure the paucity of research into other beverages, especially of their social functions. Tea, for example, played a role akin to alcohol in both physical and cultural significance in Australia in the early twentieth century, being a crucial way through which Australians imagined 'their own personal ties with the mother country and the friends and relations they had left behind'.[9] While in-depth studies of the culture of tea drinking cast light on its role in Australian civilian life, its place in the AIF is unexamined. Probably the most overlooked beverage in a scholarly context is water. A major study claims that there is extensive coverage by historians of drinking water, but the sources that it quotes as

[5]M. Waller, A.C.L. McGuire and A.J. Dobson, 'Alcohol Use in the Military: Associations with Health and Wellbeing', *Substance Abuse Treat Prevention Policy* 10, no. 27 (2015): 4, https://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-015-0023-4; Paul E. Kopperman, '"The Cheapest Pay": Alcohol Abuse in the Eighteenth-Century British Army', *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 3 (1996): 445–70; Tim Cook, '"More a Medicine than a Beverage": "Demon Rum" and the Canadian Trench Soldier of the First World War', *Canadian Military History* 9, no. 1 (2000): 6–17; Jenel Virden, 'Warm Beer and Cold Canons: US Army Chaplains and Alcohol Consumption in World War II', *Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 79–97; Tom M. McLellan, Lyndon A. Riviere, Kelly W. Williams, Dennis McGurk and Harris R. Lieberman, 'Caffeine and Energy Drink Use by Combat Arms Soldiers in Afghanistan as a Countermeasure for Sleep Loss and High Operational Demands', *Nutritional Neuroscience* 22, no. 11 (2019): 768–77, doi:10.1080/1028415X.2018.1443996.

[6]Chrzan, *Alcohol*, 5–6.

[7]Dwight B. Heath, *Drinking Occasions: Comparative Perspectives on Alcohol and Culture* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2000), 10.

[8]Tom Brennan, 'Drinks: Water, "Soft", and Alcoholic', in *The Handbook of Food Research*, ed. Anne Murcott, Warren Belasco and Peter Jackson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 353.

[9]Nancy Cushing, '"Cheaper and More Plentiful than in England": A History of Australian Food', in *A Sociology of Food & Nutrition: The Social Appetite*, ed. John Germov and Lauren Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 117.

examples give it scant mention, instead focusing on broader contexts such as urban, agricultural and industrial use, as do most other studies.[10] Perhaps the best analysis devotes less than 10 pages to a history of drinking water from ancient times to the present.[11] We still do not know to what extent Australians, or any other culture for that matter, drank water as a beverage in the early twentieth century.

Hydration is central to health, making the meagre number of studies on a topic crucial to military enterprises surprising. Beverages support both physical and emotional well-being, the latter also mostly overlooked as a factor in the limited scholarship on army drink. Much of the existing literature concerns itself with the uses and abuses of alcohol in the military, such as studies on the eighteenth-century British army, and the Great War Canadians and French.[12] Alan Weeks' volume on British army catering, titled *Tea, Rum and Fags,* offers only minor coverage of the two refreshments that dominate its title, hinting however at their emotional significance in the lives of soldiers.[13] Other studies give passing consideration to the role of drinking water, and to the relationship between alcohol and AIF identity and discipline.[14] This limited analysis of the role of beverages reflects contemporary perspectives, as military leadership saw food and drink primarily in mechanistic terms of supplying energy to fighting men, with minimal awareness of their sociological role.[15]

This article seeks to redress the lack of research on the kinds of refreshments drunk by the AIF and their roles in the lives of the soldiers. First, it identifies, quantifies and qualifies the kinds of beverages supplied by the army, and their role and effectiveness, before examining the soldiers' experiences, including refreshments drunk in addition to official issue. It argues for a more nuanced understanding of the position of alcohol, especially as a site of contested meanings, considering the ways and extent to which its consumption was, by some, denigrated and resisted. It also seeks to demonstrate the critical roles played by tea, water and other drinks, noting how their consumption was essential to physiological and emotional well-being, in many ways filling the same roles traditionally understood to be filled by alcohol, but without the problematising behaviours and contested significations that alcohol brought. The study locates its discussion of AIF refreshments within the broader scholarship of beverages in military and civilian contexts, particularly those of Australia. It draws from official documents of the

[10]Veronica Strang, *The Meaning of Water* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 3; Jamie Linton, *What Is Water? The History of a Modern Abstraction* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2010); Michael Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent* (Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 2009).
[11]Poul Astrup, Peter Bie and Hans Chr. Engell, *Salt and Water in Culture and Medicine* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1993), 92–101.
[12]Kopperman, 'The Cheapest Pay'; Cook, 'More a Medicine'; Charles Ridel, 'L'armée française et les boissons alcoolisées entre 1914 et 1918: des liaison dangereuses?', in *Manger et Boire Entre 1914* et *1918*, ed. Caroline Poulain (Gand: Snoek, 2015), 67–75.
[13]Alan Weeks, *Tea, Rum and Fags: Sustaining Tommy 1914–18* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009).
[14]David Stone, *The Kaiser's Army: The German Army in World War One* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 340–41; Alison Wishart, '"As Fit as Fiddles" and "As Weak As Kittens": The Importance of Food, Water and Diet to the Anzac Campaign at Gallipoli', *First World War Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 131–64; Arthur Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, Vol I: Gallipoli, Palestine and New Guinea* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1938), 229–39, 599–611; Arthur Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, Vol II: The Western Front* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1940), 583, 590–601; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 43–44; Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 85–90.
[15]Rachel Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 146.

period to position the importance of beverages in the AIF, and then reflect on soldiers' experiences from their diaries, letters and memoirs.

Australian beverage culture: contextualising AIF refreshments

Three beverages dominated pre-war Australian society: beer, tea and water. While rum was the primary alcohol for the first century of European settlement, beer rapidly replaced spirits as the most popular alcoholic drink in the 1880s, though wines and spirits remained in regular use among Australia's upper classes, often in private settings. Beer had more potent public meanings as well, because beer drinking was principally a communal activity, an essential social lubricant that bound communities together. By the end of the nineteenth century, beer was understood as a marker of egalitarianism and mateship. 'Shouting' a drink was a 'rite of incorporation', a dynamic heightened in the tight-knit communities of the military.[16] Given the strongly egalitarian, civilian and masculine culture of the AIF, the emphasis on alcohol is no surprise.

Several converging forces were at work to challenge the centrality of alcohol in Australian life in the early twentieth century. Improved health science weakened two time-honoured roles of alcohol in civilian life: as the principal source of hydration, and as medicine. As cities rolled out safer water in the nineteenth century, and as science uncovered the negative health impacts of alcohol, alcohol began its transition from necessity to recreational.[17] The temperance movements seized on scientific discoveries as further evidence of the dangers of alcohol, forging an unlikely alliance between socialists, feminists and Evangelical Christians, most visible in the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Their considerable political leverage made alcohol 'the focal point of many anxieties', social, economic and moral. The war heightened these apprehensions, causing the 'unprecedented' regulation of alcohol on the part of Australian governments.[18] Temperance organisations attacked alcohol use as a financial, physical, social and moral blight on the national character, badging it a besetting sin of the working class.[19] Government, churches and moralists joined them in portraying it as a threat to the British-Christian moral high ground of the war effort, and detrimental to soldierly efficiency.[20] Drawing many of its members from the social elite, Australian temperance lobbying placed significant pressure on the federal government and the military over the wartime supply of alcohol. While most soldiers wanted it to be available, there were influential voices calling for its prohibition within the army, and threatening to withhold their sons from the ranks of volunteers because of the risk of them taking up 'the demon drink', as it was characterised by the temperance movement.

Yet tea matched, and arguably surpassed, alcohol in cultural, social and practical significance. Julie Fromer points out that it was considered 'specially suitable to the

[16]Heath, *Drinking Occasions*, 53, 115, 126–28, 138–57, 180; Rod Phillips, *Alcohol: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2014), 198; Mitford, 'Australia and Alcohol', 891; Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott and Anneke H. van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture* (London: Sage, 1994), 115.
[17]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 187–91, 207–12.
[18]Ibid., 173, 191, 240.
[19]Cook, 'More a Medicine', 9.
[20]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 240–41.

English constitution and climate'.[21] While Australia's climate was different, Australians clung to the social-Darwinist illusion of possessing uniquely British physical constitutions. Indeed, Australians had taken to this quintessentially English drink with greater fervour than their English cousins, becoming the greatest tea-consuming nation per capita in the world. The exact reasons for this are still unclear, Erika Rappaport suggesting that 'it seems a combination of colonial culture, economics, and trade relations shaped this market'.[22] Tea was also a complex and paradoxical carrier of social meaning: simultaneously a definer of social class and a unifying social leveller, a uniter of genders and a distinctly feminine brew, a luxury and a necessity, a symbol of British imperial nationalism and solidarity and yet a brew with particular colonial expressions. It was also seen as a moral improver by displacing alcohol, and an important source of calories for the poor.[23] Rappaport argues that Australian tea drinking was a vital link to a British heritage and identity threated by Australia's geographic isolation and convict legacy, a maintainer of 'settlers' social and racial identities', and therefore, as Nancy Cushing states, 'a way of demonstrating that no deterioration [of Britishness] was taking place'. In short, tea drinking in Australia was a cultural ritual, marking a determination to remain British, though Australian tea was often brewed very strong and heavily sweetened by English middle-class standards.[24]

Unlike alcohol, however, the paradoxical meanings of tea did not produce social or political contest. Rather, these multiple meanings provided a mechanism for its widespread approval. At a practical level, tea, a mild diuretic though a net hydrator, provided safer hydration in an era when drinking water could still be unsafe, the boiling destroying bacteria and the tea hiding the taste of contaminated water.[25] Other drinks included coffee, though it had yet to attain its current pre-eminence, being seen primarily as an upper-class breakfast drink, cocoa, beef teas such as Oxo, milk, and a variety of soft drinks (though the last two were mostly regarded as drinks for women and children).

Finally, there was water, about which we know the least as a beverage. Water was imbued from antiquity with overlapping spiritual, ceremonial, cleansing and medicinal qualities, and water from specific locations was invested with particular beneficial properties. On the other hand, it was also notorious for carrying diseases, for it was common for communal water supplies to be polluted. Thus, it had a mixed reputation. By the late 1800s, the provision of purified drinking water to urban areas stripped away not only most of its impurities, but also many of its locational variations, homogenising it as a modern industrial commodity free of its ancient mystical and cultural associations.[26] The process was incomplete by the start of the war, and many still avoided it for practical and social reasons; its reputation as a safe beverage was recent and patchy, its flavour even in its cleaner forms tainted by chlorine, and it had low prestige as a

[21]Julie E. Fromer, *Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 28.
[22]Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 187.
[23]Fromer, *Necessary Luxury*, 13, 16, 17, 27–28, 47, 65, 70; Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 57, 187; Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting*, 53.
[24]Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 187–88; Cushing, 'Cheaper and More Plentiful than in England', 117, 122.
[25]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 214.
[26]Astrup, Bie and Engell, *Salt and Water*, 79–101.

drink. How widespread it was as a standalone refreshment is unknown. Probably, many Australians drank water principally through the medium of tea.

Official army provisions of refreshments

These civilian complexities, especially over alcohol, inevitably carried over into the army, and political and military authorities walked a perilous tightrope between gratifying the majority of the AIF while mollifying the powerful temperance lobby calling for restrictions on alcohol. Throughout the war, the work of temperance advocates and prohibitionists featured regularly in the press, occasionally countered by articles in favour of moderation.[27] Prohibitionists argued for the banning of alcohol across the whole of society, including the army, quoting famous generals such as Lords Kitchener, Roberts and Wolseley in support of statements that drink impaired military performance. They claimed that alcohol bans in the navies or armies of various nations such as Russia, Norway, the USA and Japan had led to less crime and improved performance.[28] Those who liked their drink struck back, badging the 'fanatical temperance advocates' as 'wowsers', a damning epithet of un-Australianness.[29] These battles were fought not only in the press but also in federal and state parliaments and occasionally quite literally at meetings where confrontations led to brawls.[30]

The Australian army was aware of the need to provide adequate drinks resources to its soldiers, but wholly relied on the British army's experience, copying its tables of official provisions of tea, coffee, water and rum. A daily allowance of 5/8th ounce (about 7 grams) of tea per soldier per day was enough for about three or four cups. Despite the popular reputation concerning alcohol and the AIF, tea was probably its life-blood. It accompanied all army meals: breakfast, dinner (lunch), tea and supper, and army canteens and YMCAs also sold tea as perhaps their most common beverage. In foreign climes, it was a welcome relief from the omnipresent coffee, reminding them of their British-Australian identity. It was also essential in wintry Europe and Palestine, while it helped hide the taste of tainted water on all fronts.[31] Official historian Henry Gullett noted that 'the importance of tea increases during a long advance; give a man strong, sweet tea two or three times a day and he will care little about the quality of his hard biscuit and salt bully. But the tea he will have'.[32] On the other hand, some nurses were short-changed of proper rations, including no tea or coffee, simply because they were women in a war zone. All around them, the men received full rations, but petty-minded officers with a prejudice against women at war meant that the nurses were forced to buy extra out of their own pocket, which they quite naturally resented.[33]

[27]For example, see 'Temperance', *Launceston Examiner*, 29 July 1916, 9; 'Temperance in War Time', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1915, 14; 'Soldiers and Alcohol', *W.A. Sportsman*, 13 November 1914, 2.
[28]For example, see 'Against Alcohol', *Adelaide Daily Herald*, 17 August 1917, 4; 'Alcohol and War', *Brisbane Daily Standard*, 7 November 1914, 7; 'Alcohol Forbidden', *Hopetoun Courier*, 5 February 1915, 3.
[29]'Wowsers and the War', *Melbourne Truth*, 11 September 1915, 5.
[30]'Like All the Wowsers', *Adelaide Register*, 12 November 1914, 6; 'A Hobart Riot', *North Western Advocate*, 15 March 1916, 5.
[31]Fromer, *Necessary Luxury*, 16; Philip Ayton, *Hell of a Time – An Australian Soldier's Diary of the Great War* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2019), 20, 164; John Treloar, *An Anzac Diary* (Armidale, NSW: Alan Treloar, 1993), 4–6 September 1916; Weeks, *Tea, Rum and Fags*, 21.
[32]Henry Gullett, 'The Army that Vanished', *Kia-oa Coo-ee*, 15 December 1918, 3.
[33]Mary Pocock, Diary, 17 July 1916, PR5050, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Canberra.

Other hot drinks were also common, though overshadowed by tea. Coffee was usually only served at breakfast, the allocation of ¾ ounce (21 grams) being good for two or three cups. Hot chocolate or cocoa was a favourite in canteens in camps and at the front, as were beef teas and soups, all seen not only as warming but also nourishing. Hot drinks provided a comforting sense of a full stomach when other rations failed, and were often served free to men entering or exiting the trenches by attentive chaplains, who used battalion funds to purchase them.[34]

During the freezing northern hemisphere winters, hot drinks played a more practical role in keeping men warm than the illusory effect of rum. Some officers made attempts to have soldiers issued hot food and drinks daily to combat the cold. However, well-intended orders could not overcome the massive logistical difficulties in delivering them several kilometres through water and glutinous mud under fire, while icy weather was capable of freezing a hot drink in minutes. In the 1st Division, bitter recriminations flew between senior army administrators and divisional medical staff over the high number of medical evacuees in December 1916, partly blamed on the lack of hot drinks.[35]

On the other hand, both government and army officials were cautious over the matter of supplying alcohol to soldiers. The widespread consumption of rum in the seventeenth-century British army had given way to the more moralistic Victorian era, where a combination of greater centralised control over enlisted men, a rise in religiosity in the military, and the impact of the temperance movement resulted in a massive reduction in the official supply of alcohol to soldiers.[36] This paralleled the philosophy of the peacetime French army, which upheld water as the 'usual drink' and forbade alcohol. It only resorted to wine during the war out of fears of contaminated water, though it did note the 'happy effect on soldier morale' of wine.[37] The wartime daily ration of up to 750 ml attracted little controversy, as the French temperance movements were more concerned with distilled drinks rather than fermented ones such as wine and beer, which they considered to be healthy.[38]

The Australian army followed the British military custom of theoretically issuing about 35 ml of rum per man every day, not enough for intoxication unless men hoarded, traded or stole additional rum. And even this was at the discretion of commanding officers and regimental doctors, who more typically issued it at most only once every few days. The rum issue was justified by tradition and for medicinal reasons, and filled a variety of physical and emotional functions. A post-war study on shellshock concluded that rum was 'a significant agent in fortifying the body and the mind', and more than one soldier considered it the difference between winning and losing the war. Rum was also used in the prevention and

[34]Duffett, *Stomach for Fighting*, 53; Daniel Reynaud, *The Man the Anzacs Revered: William 'Fighting Mac' McKenzie, Anzac Chaplain* (Warburton: Signs, 2015), 159; 'Chaplain Hunter in France', *Sydney Methodist*, 30 June 1917, 10; 'Salvation Army Chaplain's Work', *Bendigo Independent*, 8 October 1917, 6; Thomas Hely-Wilson, 25 January 1917, OM71-51-74, Canon David John Garland Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.
[35]Sturdee to Divisional Headquarters, 9 November 1916, AWM25, 481/204, AWM.
[36]Kopperman, 'The Cheapest Pay', 445, 468–69.
[37]Ridel, 'L'armée française', 68–69, 75 (authors' translation).
[38]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 202–3, 245.

treatment of influenza and colds, and as a short-term treatment for shellshock and phosgene gas poisoning.[39]

Rum could be supplied to men before a battle as a stiffener or steadier, though more often it was issued after an action or a particularly arduous set of duties, as a reward and a calmer of nerves.[40] Rum issues at Gallipoli were irregular but welcome, limited by constrained logistics as well as a desire to keep alcohol away from the enclave. In France, the rum issue varied with the season, the activity, and the inclination of the battalion CO. It might be issued once every few weeks, or stopped altogether in the summer months.

There were other alcohols available through army channels that neatly sidestepped the political difficulties. While free beer was not officially supplied with the rations, demand in the British imperial forces stationed in France was so great that the British army appointed an Army Breweries Officer, who oversaw the brewing of 360,000 pints (over 200,000 litres) per week.[41] Some army camps had only 'dry' canteens, especially in Australia where they were more easily monitored by temperance vigilantes, fearful of drink corrupting the sacredness of Australia's military mission. However, alcohol could be purchased in most army canteens, typically selling light beers. Some officers saw the supply of safe alcohol as a way of preventing greater mischief, reducing alcohol consumption by removing it from the banned behaviours that provoked soldiers into independence-asserting excess, while others considered it safer than the potentially toxic local spirits. Most units supplied beer for festive occasions such as Christmas and battalion anniversaries, and some sympathetic officers issued beer or wine as a one-off special treat. This did not stop many Australians getting drunk, which remained a regular problem for the military provosts.

The provision of safe drinking water fell to the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC). The Regimental Medical Officer supervised a 'Water NCO' at battalion level, who commanded a small team of 'watermen' to provide clean water. Because of the extent of the task, the Army Service Corps (ASC) also became involved. A sliding scale of water rations covered various contexts: 20 gallons (91 litres) in barracks; 3–5 gallons (13.5–22.5 litres) in standing camps; and just 1 gallon (4.5 litres) on active service, with a minimum 3.5−5 pints (2–3 litres) for drinking. Battalions were issued a water cart with a capacity of 110–200 gallons (500–910 litres, effectively only 0.5–1 litre per soldier), and with just two horses allocated to tow it, there were places it could not reach, such as when battalions were on manoeuvres in the Egyptian sands.[42]

Wartime placed great strains on the supply of potable water to armies in the war zone, and the British army slowly came to terms with the problems shared by their enemies. Existing water infrastructure in northern France was not only contaminated by wartime activity, but also remained in a semi-medieval state of impurity, requiring effort to upgrade to modern standards.[43] 'Water specialists' were appointed to each

[39]Cook, 'More a Medicine', 7–8, 13–14; Robert Melloy, *Time Will Tell: Memoirs of a Kangaroo Point Kid* (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1993), 103; Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1991), 410.
[40]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 242–43; Cook, 'More a Medicine', 12.
[41]Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 89.
[42]Butler, *Official History II*, 591n, 593; William Westerman, *Soldiers and Gentlemen: Australian Battalion Commanders in the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 127.
[43]Stone, *The Kaiser's Army*, 340.

division, taking some time to evolve a systematic sourcing, purification and delivery of drinking water, and to drill unmindful junior officers and soldiers in safe water drinking practices. Even then, the purifying chlorine powder left a residual sludge, and a powerfully unpleasant taste that conversion into tea unfortunately accentuated, making it 'very unpopular with the men'.[44] Officers had to maintain unceasing vigilance; as late as July 1918, increases in dysentery and diarrhoea prompted General Monash to insist on clean water discipline.[45]

Official supply was one thing; what soldiers actually physically received, or emotionally registered, is another matter. In practice, water was usually sourced locally, being bulky, heavy, and difficult to transport, and campaigning in water-poor regions revealed serious lapses in planning, leading to ad hoc arrangements to redress deficiencies. Service in the trenches also had the effect of lessening the appetite but increasing thirst, accentuated by the excessively salty diet.[46]

Water shortages were a potential problem at all stages of soldier life. Some troopships had insufficient water, restricting drinking and hygiene. Training exercises in Egypt often failed to provide enough water for the troops, and at Gallipoli, various makeshift attempts to solve the chronic water shortage were routinely ineffective. The hopelessly inadequate ration of about 4 pints (2.3 litres) was disastrous, provoking dehydration and unsanitary conditions, exacerbating the bowel diseases that Alison Wishart considers to have critically undermined the army's performance, though the official history denies that it 'was a factor in the military situation'.[47] But even the meagre official allowance was often not met, with supplies disrupted by storms, lost in transit, or rendered undrinkable through contamination.

The Palestine campaign suffered from similar problems at times, despite the epic construction of a pipeline across the Sinai desert, and in November 1917, large bodies of mounted troops were effectively immobilised for lack of water.[48] When available, it was often brackish artesian water, and contaminated with sand and dust. As already noted, established water supplies in northern France and Belgium, when not frozen in winter or damaged by war, were of poor quality, ironically exacerbated when Australians saturated rotting farmhouse manure piles with disinfectants that seeped into wells.[49] Expediencies learned at Gallipoli were implemented, hand-carting water to the trenches in petrol tins, but that still often failed to deliver sufficient quantities, and tainted its flavour.

The AIF experiences of alcohol

Alcohol was important in the lives of the mostly young men asserting their adulthood in the intensely competitive, hyper-masculine world of the AIF, where drinking was a marker of manhood. Communal drinking became the means to simultaneously

[44]Butler, *Official History II*, 600–1; Butler, *Official History I*, 610–11.
[45]Westerman, *Soldiers and Gentlemen*, 127.
[46]Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting*, 117, 172–73.
[47]Christopher Millar, Letter, 2 September 1915, MLMSS 7288, State Library New South Wales (SLNSW), Sydney; Wishart, 'As Fit as Fiddles', 155–57; Butler, *Official History I*, 359.
[48]Butler, *Official History I*, 665.
[49]Butler, *Official History II*, 590.

announce their individual masculine identity in front of their fellow soldiers and forge a collective 'digger' image – the moniker most favoured among the AIF.[50] Drunkenness, while common to many armies, was exacerbated in the AIF by its centrality to digger identity.[51] One British general, no stranger to heavy drinking in the British forces, once exclaimed, 'do all Australians drink quite so much?'[52] The trope of drunkenness became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as men of the AIF sought to live up to digger and civilian stereotypes of the Australian soldier, 'as a matter of pride or identity'.[53]

The central socialising role of alcohol is evident in soldier diaries, letters and memoirs. The post-work routine 'after a hot day's work' for some in Egypt was a shared bucket of 'shandy or beer and ginger beer'.[54] The ritualisation of collective binge drinking in the AIF emerges in the routine payday drunkenness of large groups of soldiers. 'Today we got paid 20 Francs each and needless to say all of the boys got drunk', wrote a soldier in France, one of a number of soldiers who noted this recurring ritual.[55] One who took army drinking to a level he had not practised in civilian life excused this communal drunken bonding as 'pardonable and amusing', rebadging potentially delinquent behaviour into harmless, perhaps even essential, fun.[56]

Drink also played vital pragmatic roles in the life of the AIF. Behind the lines, alcohol remained a crucial source of hydration where water supplies were polluted or scarce, though of course, the higher the alcohol content, the more it acted as a diuretic. The strain of war trauma accentuated the primary function of alcohol in what Dwight Heath calls 'the reduction of anxiety', where it could play a vital therapeutic role.[57] As Stanley has observed, drinking 'had its place in service life', helping men cope with 'a place of combat and fear, of crushing responsibility, of the traumatic loss of close friends'.[58]

Of course, war trauma could not be cured by alcohol; instead, all too often trauma led to its abuse. Stanley noted that the link between alcohol and crime was obvious, a view reflected in contemporary accounts, one 'prominent general' attributing 'nearly all crime in the army' to 'intoxication'.[59] Though much of the crime was often petty, the AIF experienced higher rates of it than in comparable armies of the era, including fellow colonial Canadians and New Zealanders.[60] Long defaulters' lists in battalions, and crimes against civilians were the result, committed by both rankers and officers. While men could be punished by battalion officers, battalion commanders could do little to manage alcoholism among officers, short of sending them home, as no regulations

[50]Cook, 'More a Medicine', 16; Nathan Wise, *Anzac Labour: Workplace Cultures in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 69; Graham Seal, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 3–4.
[51]Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 43–44; Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 109, 138–40.
[52]C.E.W. Bean, 'Australia's Fair Fame', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 22 January 1915, 6.
[53]Heath, *Drinking Occasions*, 180.
[54]Thomas Louch, n.d., circa December 1914, 'The Thomas Steane Louch Memoirs', accessed 19 April 2021, http://11btn.wags.org.au/index.php/chronicles/ts-louch-memoirs.
[55]Michael Hannan, Diary, 8 April 1916, PR01387, AWM.
[56]Frank Molony, Diary, 10 February 1916, 16 August 1916, MLMSS 2883, SLNSW.
[57]Heath, *Drinking Occasions*, 183.
[58]Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 88.
[59]Ibid., 85; 'Alcohol and Efficiency', *Daily Post*, 10 August 1915, 2.
[60]Jean Bou and Peter Dennis, *The Australian Imperial Force* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2016), 174.

existed to monitor or control their consumption.[61] The hypocrisy of being punished by officers also guilty of drunkenness did not escape the rankers. Alcohol abuse was also rife among Australian prisoners-of-war seeking relief from the feminising stigma of surrender and captivity.[62] AIF indiscipline was a major concern to Australian and British army leadership, but it is hard to pin down the precise impact on its fighting capacity. Certainly, it consumed resources in policing, disciplinary meetings and enforcing punishment that could have been directed elsewhere, but in the long run, the AIF's proven record as an effective fighting force, particularly by the end of the war, suggests that the negative impact did not outweigh the bonding fostered by drinking.

In fact, an officer wrote that there was 'nothing like a good wad of rum to put life and spirits into tired wet men', noting that the rum issue was 'always an important occasion in a soldier's life and is very welcome after a hard anxious night'.[63] Many soldiers considered the rum issue essential to surviving the freezing temperatures, one arguing that without it he 'might have gone under'.[64] Ironically, alcohol achieves the sensation of warmth by bringing body heat to the surface, where it is more quickly dissipated, so rum was actually counterproductive in keeping men genuinely warm, a fact that featured in prohibition campaigners' arguments.[65]

For many, alcohol needed no practical justification, rather being simply a pleasure enjoyed in its own right. However, they had to overcome the hurdle of unfamiliar foreign brews. In Britain, Australians often disdained the light beers in the canteens for the darker brews in pubs. Egypt offered alcohols from the authentic to the bootleg, matched in price from expensive to the irresistibly cheap, although the latter was often corrupted and potentially unsafe. Nicknamed 'camel's wine' by many, and reputedly occasionally made of methylated spirits and camel urine, it could cause alcohol poisoning among the unwary. The Australians were astonished by the light beers of northern France and Belgium, regularly served with meals even to small children. While some considered it a bonus that one could drink vast quantities without getting drunk, others were dismayed at their insipidity, describing them as 'sour water, horrid' and 'not fit to drink'.[66]

There were also alcoholic alternatives to beer, especially in France. While many Australians, like their British cousins, were suspicious of French cuisine, there appeared to be less resistance to its unfamiliar alcohols. Both wines and ciders, and when available, prestigious spirits, were happily consumed. The well-established tourist dimension of the AIF experience, captured in their contemporary nickname of the 'six-bob-a-day tourists' (a reference to their generous pay scale), bred a mind-set of taking advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that surrounded their service in prime tourist locations such as Britain, France and the Holy Land, which helped break down the

[61]Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 85–86, 92, 178–79.
[62]Kate Ariotti, '"I'm Awfully Fed Up with Being a Prisoner": Australian POWs of the Turks and the Strain of Surrender', *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2016): 283–84.
[63]Ayton, *Hell of a Time*, 213, 217.
[64]John Walder, 'Letters from the Front', *Queensland Times*, 7 November 1916, 2.
[65]'Campaign against Alcohol', *Maryborough Chronicle*, 23 January 1915, 7; 'Soldiers and Alcohol', *Westralian Worker*, 26 March 1915, 3.
[66]Robert Drummond, Diary, 12 September 1917, MLMSS 1485, SLNSW; John Hutton, Diary, 31 May 1917, MLMSS 1138, SLNSW; Denver Gallwey, Diary, 30 July 1917, 2DRL0785, AWM.

barriers to drinking unfamiliar alcohols.[67] As France was an elite tourist destination, sampling the local wines and spirits was part of the experience, sometimes gratifyingly conducted in the refined atmosphere of exclusive restaurants and fashionable company. In fact, many Australians needed little additional motivation; there were always large numbers of willing soldiers on hand to try anything alcoholic. Wine was readily available in the multitude of estaminets, and was also served by generous hosts when soldiers were billeted with French civilians. While French soldiers held red wine to be the manly drink, Australians, like their British counterparts, were less discriminating, enjoying 'vin blonc' as they often wrote it (later corrupted to 'plonk'), as much as the supposedly virile reds.[68] One soldier wrote enthusiastically of acquiring 'champagne, rum, whisky, vin blonc and vin rouge' from French soldiers in the trenches, 'all of which are calculated to keep one's spirits up should they be on the down grade (but they were not on this occasion)'.[69] In the wine-growing districts of Palestine, wine was freely available, though again so weak as to make intoxication difficult. However, wine could not completely shake its snobbish and feminine character, only replacing beers when the latter were unavailable, suggesting that the Australian working man's drink remained foundational to digger identity and culture.

An additional attraction to drinking was the company of young French ladies in the estaminets, with whom they often flirted, again foregrounding the social dimension of drink. As Duffett notes, civilian female company formed a charming contrast to masculine military society.[70] Ironically, while French women were welcome to join them over wine, a number of Australian men were offended at the sight of British women in pubs enjoying a beer.[71] Beer, except in its bland northern French forms, was an unshakeably masculine drink in Australian eyes.

Of course, one of the most popular sources of drink was by theft, or 'foraging', to use a contemporary euphemism. Army stores were raided, and regimental journals offered tales of ingenious Australians tricking British guards into issuing them cases of whisky intended for British officers.[72] While probably apocryphal, these stories reinforced the larrikin digger identity and the centrality of alcohol within it. The well-stocked cellars of French civilians billeting Australian soldiers were also susceptible, as were recently evacuated shops and villages. These could provide access to quantities of fine drinks, a cellar in April 1918 yielding 'a great champagne dump – of Carte d'Or and a dozen other brands, and Prunellas and Liquers [*sic*]' prompting 'an orgie [*sic*] of a minor character'.[73]

British educator Alan Weeks attributes the Australians' celebrated recapture of Villers-Bretonneux on 24–25 April 1918 to the fact that they were 'enraged at the thought of losing all that fine wine', thus 'launching a furious and wild counter-attack',

[67]Richard White, 'The Soldier as Tourist: The Australian Experience of the Great War', *Kunapipi* 18, no. 2 (1996): 115–29.
[68]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 246; Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting*, 215.
[69]Anon, 'Soldiers' Letters', *Port Pirie Recorder*, 15 July 1918, 3.
[70]Duffett, *Stomach for Fighting*, 217.
[71]C.R. Pettigill, 'Soldiers' Letters', *Port Fairy Gazette*, 5 October 1916, 2; W. Martin, 'Soldiers' Letters', *Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 2 February 1918, 3.
[72]'Getis', 'Anzacalities', *Kia-ora Coo-ee*, April 1918, 5; 'Jerboa', 'Spirits from the Desert', *Kia-ora Coo-ee*, April 1918, 20.
[73]Molony, Diary, 20 April 1918.

which 'won back their cellars before the enemy could make inroads into them'.[74] An AIF captain reputedly claimed that Australians and Germans were 'drunk as owls together' in some recaptured cellars.[75] Like some of the Australian tales of theft, these may be cases of not letting the facts interfere with tall stories that reinforced the relationship between larrikinism, alcohol and digger identities.

Temperance and the AIF

The dominant Anzac narrative of the boozy digger obscures an important 'other' narrative. About a quarter of the AIF listed their church memberships as Methodist, Presbyterian, or with the smaller Dissenter churches, though it should be acknowledged that some would have been nominally rather than actively religious. These were temperance-advocating, if not outright prohibitionist, denominations, often requiring pledges of abstinence from their members, and usually driving forces in various temperance organisations. Temperance and prohibition also had prominent advocates across other denominations, including Anglicans and Catholics, as well as those who saw it as a moral issue separate from religious conviction. Arguments for abstinence included not just the usual factors of reducing crime, increasing efficiency and raising morality, but that the wartime manufacture of alcohol used grains and potatoes more urgently needed as food.[76] As already indicated, these matters received considerable airing in pulpits, public meetings, political campaigns and through widely syndicated articles in the press, most of them in favour of varying degrees of alcohol restriction at home and in the military.

It is not surprising, then, that the widespread Australian practice of teetotalism included a sizable minority of diggers who did not drink. AIF diaries support such a conclusion, where the number of temperance-oriented comments indicate that drinking was far from universal among the soldiers, one signaller for example noting that about half his unit did not drink, and that he was offended by civilian assumptions that he did.[77] Even among drinking men, there was sometimes a defensive tone that crept in when writing about alcohol, as if wary of the moral high ground of the abstainers. Soldiers occasionally debated the matter among themselves, with a few adopting abstinence for the duration of the war, while others opposed this as extremism, instead advocating moderation as a more effective strategy for managing its abuse.[78] Teetotal officers and NCOs who earned the respect of their men could, by precept and practice, moderate alcohol abuse in their units.

Drunkenness generated negative comments from officers and men in the AIF. Many soldiers openly praised 'dry' canteens, and were proud of their own self-controlled behaviour in the light of their inebriated comrades' actions, which they sometimes noted as shaming Australia's name. One soldier who had no wish 'to pose as a wowser

[74]Weeks, *Tea, Rum and Fags*, 155, 157.
[75]'Rum, Port and Beer: Called Booze or Grog', accessed 13 October 2019, http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-equip/grog.htm. Note that no Captain F.C. Russell appears in AIF records.
[76]'Alcohol or Food', *Maldon News*, 28 November 1916, 4.
[77]Henry Dadswell, Memoir, 137, MSS0828, AWM.
[78]Treloar, *An Anzac Diary*, 19 November 1914; Thomas Richards, Diary, 23 May 1916, 2DRL0786, AWM.

or Christian of the first order' found the drunkenness enough to put him off drinking for life.[79]

Non-drinkers experienced sustained peer pressure to drink, and they banded together whenever they could to provide mutual support, though some took up showy drinking in order to fit in. For their comrades, the refusal to drink smacked of a rejection of incorporation into the digger fraternity. A new convert to the Salvation Army was urged by former drinking buddies to 'be sociable for once', and labelled a wowser and mocked for drinking lemonade instead.[80] Some drinkers were alarmed at the number of teetotallers in the AIF, one reacting with only semi-mock horror when two teams that won a competition both refused the prize of beer.[81] However, teetotallers were popular when rum was issued, as their drinking friends counted on being given their issue.

France presented non-drinkers an additional challenge, for the French found abstinence an incomprehensible aberration. Wine-drinking was a nationalistic statement, in the same vein as beer-drinking for Australians, and users of non-alcoholic alternatives such as water, tea, lemonade and chamomile were derided as being 'bad Frenchmen'.[82] AIF teetotallers bemoaned the lack of soft drinks available, often limited to a couple of syrupy cordials and rarely available in the many smaller villages.

The AIF's experiences of non-alcoholic refreshments

Hot drinks were not merely practical as warm hydrators, they were also emotionally important. As Weeks noted, hot food and drink 'was something to look forward to, a comforting and sustaining event in an otherwise terrifying and miserable existence' of life in the trenches, an aspect that lifted it far above its civilian social roles.[83] Tea was ubiquitous, but its acceptability was undermined when careless cooks brewed it in improperly cleaned stew dixies, giving it the flavour of onions. The commonness of this complaint, even featuring in the popular song 'Oh, It's a Lovely War', suggests that there was a ritualistic element to it, a standard gripe over institutional food that pervaded British imperial forces, though doubtless it was true often enough to keep the trope alive. Some soldiers complained of tea as weak as dishwater. On the other hand, army cookery inspectors labelled some teas they sampled as 'poisonously strong', though this may reflect nothing more than tea brewed to Australian bush standards.[84] Many men liked their tea so sweet that it had a 'toffee-like consistency'.[85] In a soldier's world, where daily life was physically punishing, the additional calories were essential to good health.

Soldiers also brewed their own tea during any reasonable pause in activity, usually in improvised billies over open fires, makeshift stoves or small portable cookers, some measuring their culinary expertise on the quality of their teas. At the front, where

[79]Robert Adam, Letter, 31 August 1915, 1DRL0003, AWM.
[80]Charles Pike, 'Reminiscences of a Returned Soldier', *War Cry*, 28 July 1917, 2; *War Cry*, 4 August 1917, 2.
[81]'R.A.S.', 'Anzacalities', *Kia-ora Coo-ee*, 15 March 1918.
[82]Phillips, *Alcohol*, 203.
[83]Weeks, *Tea, Rum and Fags*, 7.
[84]Reports of the Inspection of Catering and the Organization of Cooks 1916–1919, AWM25 221/3, AWM.
[85]Weeks, *Tea, Rum and Fags*, 42.

alcohols were usually unavailable, and water often contaminated with mud, waste and human remains, tea was a critically important hydrator, as well as a physical warmer and emotional comfort. Fuel was often at a premium: soldiers stole coal, purloined wood, or improvised with straw or candles just to make their precious 'cuppa'. At the front, the tea was usually black, though condensed milk was added when available. The sacredness of the ritual of tea reputedly led soldiers at Gallipoli to allow an elderly Turk to collect firewood in plain sight every morning, on the assumption that he was a priest preparing his morning tea.[86] While this account is probably mythic, coming from a diarist with a penchant for fanciful tales, even if untrue, it reinforces the centrality of tea in the Australian soldierly imagination.

Australians imitated the British in typically having coffee only with breakfast and after meals in restaurants, with its consumption more widespread among the middle and upper classes. Otherwise, Australia was not yet a coffee culture.[87] The fact that army coffee sometimes tasted like castor oil did nothing to improve its popularity.[88] Soldier diaries suggest an acceptance of a limited role for coffee, as long as it did not displace tea, the true drink of the Anglo-Australian. Hence, the monopoly of coffee in France aggravated some, who lamented that it is 'almost impossible to get any of our beloved tea, as *café au lait* seems the universal drink'.[89] On the other hand, others expressed their appreciation of French coffee, some proclaiming themselves 'gluttons for coffee'.[90] Coffee, like wine, was socially important in France, occupying the role of tea in British culture, and Australian diaries make it evident that part of the attraction of coffee was sharing it with young women in estaminets, restaurants and private homes.[91] The mode of consumption in Europe and Egypt was as much a cultural challenge as the coffee itself. Diggers were astonished to be served large bowls of coffee for breakfast, and ridiculously tiny cups after meals in Egyptian and French restaurants. They were much more eager for French coffee when it was served 'royal', with a dash of rum.

Cocoa was probably more popular with Australians than coffee, not only purchased from canteens but made by the soldiers, and it was a treasured presence in food parcels from home. One proudly shared his secret of success in making cocoa with tinned or fresh milk instead of water, considering it the equal of his mother's, and drinking two cups a day as a means of putting on 'some much needed condition' after debilitating active service.[92] A number of soldiers echoed his claim of making hot drinks as well as mothers and wives, a reassuring ritual and yardstick connecting them to home.

Cold drinks were harder to come by, as already noted. Soft drinks were relatively rare, and socially proscribed by many soldiers and by French society. Milk was seen as a pure food, often welcome but also scarce due to problems of transportation and storage, and the risk of contamination. It was usually added to teas and coffees, and was most often available in France, purchased directly from farmers or in cafes. In the war

[86]John Turnbull, Diary, n.d., 1915, PR91015, AWM.
[87]Catherine M. Tucker, *Coffee Culture: Local Experiences, Global Connections* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 61.
[88]Frank Hebbard, 'Soldiers' Letters', *Donald Times*, 2 October 1917, 3.
[89]Treloar, *An Anzac Diary*, 4–6 September 1916.
[90]Stanley Hayne, Diary, 12 October 1916, MLMSS 2775, SLNSW.
[91]For example, see Donald Coutts, Diary, 17 December 1918, PR83155, AWM; Hayne, Diary, 15 August 1916.
[92]Verner Knuckey, Diary, 30 August 1916, PR03193, AWM.

of movement in 1918, soldiers sometimes came across abandoned cows, quickly milking them to add fresh milk, cream and butter to their diet. In the more usual absence of fresh milk, tinned condensed milk was popular, combining longevity, portability and sweetness, forming an important source of additional calories to the digger diet. It was often a prized item in parcels from family, one soldier scoffing it 'by the tin' and begging for parcels containing nothing but Nestlé milk and chocolate.[93]

Soldiers recorded difficulties with water supplies. Water shortages were particularly acute at Gallipoli, a battalion history observing that, alongside news from home, water was the dominant obsession of the men.[94] The limited quantity was also often brackish, muddy and tepid, providing little sense of refreshment or enjoyment. At times, especially during battles, drinking water could be unavailable for days at a time. The shortages in Palestine were harder to bear when some officers were culpably wasteful of water while restricting their men to pitiful supplies.[95] Even in France, the limited water available could be so heavily chlorinated or tainted by petrol as to be effectively undrinkable, leaving soldiers vociferous in their annoyance. In desperation, soldiers drew water from shell holes, which could be corrupted by rotting corpses. Tainted water drove men to a greater dependency on alcohol and hot drinks, though even the latter could not always hide the taste, and it is probable that men generally avoided such water if it could not be made into tea. Some measured their degree of hardship by whether they only had water to drink.[96] One soldier tellingly observed that while water was 'unjustifiably scorned' as a drink in Australia, 'there is no excuse for drinking it in France', noting the unsanitary impact of both war and French provincial habits that contaminated the ground water in wells. 'Thus, beer is ever favourite, coffee a bad second, giving way to champagne on pay days', he concluded.[97]

Conclusion

The way alcohol has dominated perceptions of AIF refreshments reflects the Australian cultural bias in privileging alcohol, and parallels the emphasis in international scholarship, at the cost of a focus on a holistic appraisal, especially in the military. This study offers a fuller understanding of refreshments in the AIF during World War One, opening the discussion for a wider examination of their role across other armies and time periods, as well as in civilian Australian society.

While alcohol played an important, indeed irreplaceable role in the life of the AIF, it was inevitably a double-edged sword. It was crucial to the development of the AIF's esprit de corps, a useful though not unproblematic hydrator out of the line, and also a short-term solace but a long-term scourge in managing war trauma, and an important factor in the AIF's high crime rates. In a no-win situation, the army probably got its approach to alcohol right, by making it officially highly restricted but unofficially effectively available to the vast majority who wanted it. This muted the opposition of

[93]Norman Young, Letter, 27 August 1918, MS 10134, AWM.
[94]Newton Wanliss, *The History of the Fourteenth Battalion, A.I.F.: Being the Story of the Vicissitudes of an Australian Unit during the Great War* (Melbourne: Arrow, 1929), 85.
[95]Leslie Morris, Diary, 13 September 1918, MLMSS 2888, SLNSW.
[96]Arnold Mason, Diary, 2 March 1917, PR01877, AWM.
[97]Robert Donaldson, 'Letters from the Front', *Adelong and Tumut Express*, 13 October 1916, 2.

the temperance movement while allowing soldiers their essential companionable drink and accessible emotional escape route.

The temperance movement's dream of having alcohol banned in the AIF was both unrealistic and inappropriate, given its entrenched social and emotional roles in Australian society, ones which military service only enhanced. On the other hand, it is also possible to exaggerate its use and abuse; AIF apologist C.E.W. Bean noted that a small dissipated minority, which he almost certainly understated at 'one or two per cent', created a reputation that misrepresented the whole.[98] Soldier diaries indicate abstinence in a previously ignored but far-from-negligible minority. This echoes scholarship that critiques the exaggerated emphasis placed on alcohol and alcoholism in Australian history and public memory.[99]

Eclipsed by the discussion about alcohol, tea was actually the unheralded hero in the AIF. It could never have replaced the social role of alcohol, but at the same time it offered many of alcohol's advantages with virtually none of its liabilities, being central to both physiological and emotional well-being. It was the most important and effective hydrator, being almost universally available even in places such as 'dry' camps and the trenches. Its boiling provided safer drinking than cold water, and it contributed additional calories through its sweetness. Furthermore, it was an effective counter to the intense cold, something alcohol could only falsely mimic. It was the backbone of crucially important social rituals that maintained some continuity with civilian British-Australian society and identity for soldiers thousands of kilometres from home, providing a degree of emotional comfort and sociability only matched by alcohol. As such, it played a similar role to that of coffee in the armies of coffee-drinking cultures. In the AIF, other hot drinks such as cocoa, coffee and beef teas played a supporting role alongside tea, with most of its virtues replicated on a smaller scale, though lacking the affirmation of Britishness that tea carried.

The greatest difficulty was in the provision of water, where at best soldiers often suffered mild dehydration, forcing them to resort to risky expediencies, and at worst were left debilitated, compromising their fighting capabilities. Furthermore, dehydration often led to compensation via an increased alcohol intake, with a consequent possible acceleration of dehydration on the one hand, and crime and delinquency on the other, further diminishing fighting efficiency.

This research shows that the army invested thought and effort into providing beverages that met physiological needs, but the issue was more complex than leadership realised, especially at the socio-emotional level. The three pillars of tea, alcohol and water each played significant roles, though major problems emerged with the latter two, some of them posing intractable tensions that afflicted all Great War armies. Between the army's official provision, and the access soldiers had to drinks through licit and illicit means, the members of the AIF improvised their way sufficiently out of the physiological and emotional challenges of hydration to facilitate it becoming one of the most effective fighting forces in the British Empire's armies.

The AIF's wartime wine and coffee intake appears to have had little impact on Australia's post-war drinking habits. Beer and tea remained the principal social drinks

[98]Bean, 'Australia's Fair Fame', 6.
[99]Mitford, 'Australia and Alcohol', 891.

of choice, as the war reinforced an Anglo-Australian identity. While wine was widely drunk by AIF members in France, it was a de facto alcohol, and retained its associations with the feminine, the elitist and the foreign. Beer's strong cultural association with Australian egalitarian masculinity meant it could not be displaced. Similarly, the popularity of coffee with many Australians failed to shift tea from its prime position as a marker of British-Australian culture. Wartime Australian society may have been divided on matters of politics, religion and social class, but it remained effectively united in the drinks it considered to mark Australianness.

This study highlights a need for a more diverse and comprehensive analysis of refreshments across other Great War armies, and indeed armies of other eras, dethroning alcohol from its monopolistic hegemony in writing about military beverages. It also points to a need to better understand the role of humbler drinks such as tea, coffee and especially water in the effectiveness of armies in wartime, as well as in civilian contexts.

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