Private Desmond Guilfoyle came from Kerang in northern Victoria. He volunteered to serve in the Korean War and became a member of 1 Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), leaving Australia in early 1952. Private Guilfoyle later commented modestly that he did not think that his 'experiences there were any different to those of any other Australian soldier'. Indeed, many of the details he recorded are to be found in the accounts of other Australian veterans. Meals were 'edible if unappealing' and 'the terrain uniformly bleak no matter what the season', though winter 'was something else'. Within this unfriendly and alien environment the young Victorian, who wrote years after the event that he had no real idea why he had enlisted, found the locals largely indifferent to the soldiers around them except as possible sources of danger or of profit. For the Koreans 'it was purely a matter of survival'. At the time, Private Guilfoyle considered that the Communists were 'welcome to the God forsaken place'.

In 1989 Guilfoyle returned to Korea as one of a group of Australian veterans, the visit being sponsored partly by the Korean War Veterans' Association of Seoul. Possibly by design, his trip back north retraced the steps he had taken in 1952, first to Japan, then to Pusan, the port on the southern tip of South Korea which had represented the first sight of Korea for many Australian soldiers during the war. No Australian soldier, regardless of when they served in the war, described Pusan at the time as anything but a conglomeration of misery, swollen by refugees, especially when the tide ran against the United Nations in the first months of the war or again after the Chinese intervention late in 1950. For example, Harry Kammerman of 2 RAR described Pusan as 'a very dirty place, and horribly overcrowded' where the swarming and orphaned children 'would try to sell you anything, from a piece of polished shrapnel, to a sister that perhaps was no more than twelve years of age'. Sergeant Clement Govett of the Royal Australian Army Service Corps described refugees in Pusan as a pitiful sight. Hordes of 'children, without parents or anyone to care for them, wandered about'.

For Desmond Guilfoyle the transformation in 1989 was 'amazing'; Pusan, 'like all of South Korea, is now vibrant and confident'. Pusan, Seoul and the other cities had

1All quotations from D. M. Guilfoyle, 'From the Rubble' in MS 1453, Australian War Memorial (AWM), with the exception of the citation of the last sentence in the paragraph which comes from 'Dog Outpost' in the same collection.
2Harry Kammerman, 'Bob Menzies 2 Year Tourists', PR 85/269, AWM, p. 22.
3Sergeant C. N. Govett, 'Korean Diary: September 1950 to January 1951', MS 9258/76, Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Library, p. 16.
‘risen phoenix-like from the ashes they were reduced to during the war’. Visiting Australian veterans had a busy schedule. On 25th April 1989, for example, Guilfoyle attended Anzac Day ceremonies at the UN cemetery in Pusan where 281 Australians are buried, Australians whose ‘luck ran out at such places as Kapyong, Hill 355 and the Hook’. (23-24 April is also the anniversary of Kapyong itself). Guilfoyle added that these ‘names are unfamiliar to most Australians’.

But not so to the Koreans apparently. Guilfoyle was moved to see the interest taken in the great events of 1950-1953 by Koreans of all ages. He saw ‘whole classes of children, brought by their teachers’ to visit the Pusan cemetery, and ‘to revere those who fell for their freedom’. But what really struck the Australians was the care taken by the South Korean government and the veterans’ organisations to honour their visitors’ achievement and to commemorate their role in the war. Guilfoyle’s last official engagement in Korea was a dinner hosted by the Seoul veterans’ group. He was touched to receive concrete reminders that, in Korea at least, the contribution of the Australians to the UN forces had not been forgotten, for each visitor was ‘presented with a medal and certificate to mark our service’.

The experiences of the former Private Guilfoyle of 1 RAR have been described at length because they encapsulate the attitudes of many Australian veterans towards the forgetting and remembering of the Korean war, the public commemoration of that conflict in Australia, and Korea’s place in popular memory and Australian military tradition. These are notoriously difficult questions to answer definitively, or even in some cases to respond to at all. We are dealing with attitudes, perceptions, memories of motives and reasons — memories often overlaid by half a century of consolidation and confirmation (for example, that ours was the original ‘forgotten war’) and also revision (as may have occurred in revisiting Korea or when receiving the long delayed Australian service medal). The public or social aspect of memory has its own difficulties too. Barbara Falk is just one of a long line of historians (as well as philosophers, psychologists and social scientists in general) who have asked:

How do you verify propositions that begin, I remember?

Yet, while verification of attitudes, whether private or public, in this area, is problematic, careful use of different sources of information allow us, in John Barrett’s words, to discover ‘useful indicators and signposts’ to underlying beliefs.

4 Guilfoyle, ‘From the Rubble’.
5 Guilfoyle, ‘From the Rubble’.
Therefore, in this article we shall explore three issues to do with the remembering in Australia of the Korean War. First, we shall examine the veterans' perception that they have been relegated from history. Here, we shall consider some possible explanations as to why the Korean War seems to have such a tenuous grip on the public imagination. In turn, this problem is connected to the more general question as to why some historical events are celebrated communally and why others are recalled only by participants or historians. Secondly, we shall look at what might be called the public validation of private experience — how returning veterans were treated, and what official acts of welcome occurred. Finally, in further examining public intervention in the consolidation of memory, we shall consider two efforts at commemoration of the Australian role in the Korean War — the controversy over the awarding of the service medal and the celebration in 2000 of the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the war. With that focus on commemoration we come full circle to ceremonies like those attended by Desmond Guilfoyle upon his return to Korea.

In the section which follows I have used a variety of terms such as 'social memory' or 'collective memory' or 'public memory' more or less interchangeably. 'Public memory' is often my preferred term as it has connotations of officially endorsed commemorative activities such as monuments, exhibitions and museums which serve 'to anchor collective remembering, a process dispersed, ever changing, and ultimately intangible, in highly condensed, fixed, and tangible sites'. The key point behind the concept is best expressed by Peter Burke:

> Individuals remember, in the literal, physical sense. However, it is social groups which determine what is 'memorable' and also how it will be remembered. Individuals identify with public events of importance to their group.

Korea is not only a forgotten war now; it was slipping from Australians' attention as it was being fought, especially in the period from late 1951 to the eventual armistice in 1953. The testimony of Korean veterans is compelling concerning contemporary ignorance of the war. A written survey directed to veterans posed the question:

> Did you feel that Australians at home had much understanding or knowledge of the war in Korea?


An effort was made in framing this item to avoid casting it as a leading question, something that merely invited the respondents to confirm a popular prejudice amongst Korean veterans.

The overwhelming majority of questionnaire responses asserted that Australians at home were not much interested in the war and had little knowledge of the issues involved in the conflict or the nature of Australia’s operations in Korea. Even those few that were at all ‘positive’ about domestic knowledge of the war register some doubt. For example, Private S, formerly of 3 RAR, responded ‘to a certain degree yes’, scarcely an overwhelming endorsement of the level of interest at home. Brigadier James Shelton, a long serving Army officer (1944-1980) initially responded ‘They did not’, but the Brigadier also considered that there were excellent reasons for this state of affairs:

They did not. Nor was this wrong. Australians had put everything we could into World War II. The challenges in the post war period were reconstruction, trade, education etc. Military operations were just another facet of life. Political leaders had to get on with building up of Australia. Defence had to be kept in perspective. There has to be a balance.

No other veteran adopted this wide ranging point of view. A more typical response was that of John ‘Bushy’ Burke from Geelong:

Definitely not. Only the parents of the servicemen over there. You know what. Ruxton calls it the forgotten war. Not by us who served there. One woman asked by Mum, ‘Where’s John?’ ‘In Korea’ she answered. The woman replied, ‘Oh, on holidays.’ I’ll say no more.

Many veterans suggested that there was a direct relationship between ignorance at the time and the amnesia now. For example, Keith Langdon, another Victorian veteran, believed that ‘Australians at home I don’t think had any knowledge of the war and seemed to care even less’. According to this soldier, the common sentiment was ‘that it was only a police action’ and he concluded by remarking that ‘to this day they

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10 Questionnaire response, Private S. The other ‘yes’ responses to this question are equally curt. Thomas Jubb’s response — ‘most Australians had a good knowledge of the Korean war as it was well reported in the press at the time’ is the longest. See questionnaire responses, Thomas Jubb, Allan McInnes and Aubrey Clare.
11 Questionnaire response, Brigadier James Shelton.
12 Questionnaire response, John (Bushy) Burke.
know little if anything’. Vic Lowe agreed that people today still know little of the conflict, and stated that though ‘Korea was very close to being World War III (sacking of MacArthur was the saviour)’, there is little doubt that the ‘Korean War is the original forgotten war’.

Veterans often assert that exceptions to the general ignorance of the population were to be found amongst family and close friends, those with a personal involvement in the war. In some cases Second World War veterans are also credited with some knowledge of, or interest in, Korea. In other cases, however, they were unaware of what was happening or were even downright hostile towards the Korean veterans. Albert Merrick from the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps wrote that ‘there was antagonism towards returned Korea veterans at the time, even from former World War II veterans’. He believed that the ‘RSL did not even consider it to be a real war, and was reluctant to admit Korea veterans as members initially because it was “only a police action”’. Overall then, the reaction of the Australian community, according to the questionnaire responses, is best described as indifference punctuated by instances of more actively expressed dislike.

A number of the responses bear signs of deriving from well polished anecdotes, being self-contained stories with a sting in the tail. Prominent amongst these are the responses which, like Bushy Burke’s, refer to Australians’ total geographical and political bewilderment when it came to Korea (or in some cases, anywhere foreign). The structure of this form of narrative is illustrated by John Lewis from Subiaco. Lewis served a total of 27 years and three months in the army, nine months of that with the Assault Pioneer Platoon of 3 RAR in Korea. He came home after the armistice had been signed at Panmunjom in July 1953. There, he discovered that the ‘average Aussie at home had virtually no knowledge of the war in Korea and no interest if they didn’t have family there’. Further:

When I returned to Australia several people asked me where I had been, and when I said ‘In Korea, fighting die Chinese’, they said ‘You’re kidding. The Chinese are our friends and allies.’ My answer to that was ‘Tell that to the 900,000 UN troops who have been killed or wounded in Korea between June 1950 and July 1953.’

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13Questionnaire responses, Keith Langdon, Vic Lowe.
14See questionnaire responses from Ron Land, Richard Woodhams, Major-General J.C. Hughes, Dennis Robinson, Edward Green, Clement Kealy, Norman Glenn, Norm Grose, Phillip Greville, Keith Eberle, Allan Carmichael, John McCabe, Paddy Outridge and H.
15Questionnaire response, Albert Merrick. See also questionnaire response from Tom Waters.
16Questionnaire response, John Lewis. For similar stories in this ‘where is it?’ vein see questionnaire responses, Clement Kealy, Keith Eberle, James Broderick, Richard Seddon and Lindsay Perry.
Of all the different responses to the 21 survey questions it is this item which most provokes the anecdotal style of retelling, where the particular fragment of Korean experience is a well-crafted story, smoothed by time and practice. A parallel may be drawn with Alistair Thomson’s sensitive account of Percy Bird, 5th Battalion veteran from the First World War. Thomson wrote that Percy’s way of retelling his war — ‘the anecdotal style of the stand-up comedian’, with each vignette having ‘a punchline or “tag” that...helped Percy to fix it in his memory’ — was always expressed in positive or humorous terms. The Korean anecdotes on the other hand, while also humorous, are down beat, occasionally savage, asserting the worth of ‘our’ struggle in the face of the ignorance of the majority. Yet they too ‘fix’ the war, or important elements of it, in the memories of the returned soldiers.17

Claims to exclusion from the collective memory, to being forgotten by the majority of the population, to ‘missing out’, are made by many groups. Confining our attention to Australia, and to military history, claims to have been forgotten have been made in recent years by the Women’s Land Army, Vietnam veterans, participants in the Konfrontasi against Indonesia, women in all wars in which Australia has fought, air force personnel in the European theatre after 1941, black soldiers at all times and survivors of the Voyager disaster. Inserting formerly neglected groups into the historical narrative is now a commonplace. Typical is the claim from Lake and Damousi’s Gender and War that women in earlier ‘historical accounts were confirmed in their position of marginality’ — almost a standard prefatory statement in much recent writing on Australia’s military history as the contribution of different groups within society is reassessed.18 Acknowledging that Korea is not the only forgotten event in Australian history means great stress has to be laid at uncovering what is specifically forgettable about it.

There is little doubt that Korean veterans, their families and friends, and service organisations, believed as early as 1951 that their war was being given short shrift by the rest of Australia. The evidence for this is very strong. By 1952 the accepted form for many newspaper stories on Korea was to refer to the soldiers there, especially the long-serving 3 RAR, as ‘The Forgotten Legion’ or some similar term — labels quickly adopted by the returning soldiers. Even when surrounded by the tea and cakes of a municipal welcome, Private Vance, back home in Ballarat, proclaimed that ‘it is a fact that the 3rd Battalion RAR call themselves, and are known under that heading [of the Forgotten Legion]’.19 Other returned men agreed. On Anzac Day 1952 Private

19Ballarat Courier Mail, 9 April 1952.
Ronald 'Nugget' Dunque, who had won the Military Medal at Kapyong the year before, told readers of the Melbourne Argus that he was 'very much a realist' about the war. According to journalist Hilton Rees, Dunque told him after the march that 'few of the people seemed to recognise us, or to appreciate fully the nature of the Korean War'.

This was despite the best efforts of some of the RSL march organisers in this period, as demonstrated by newsreel evidence, to place the Korean veterans in prominent positions in the proceedings.

Often the strongest feelings were expressed by those who had not been frontline soldiers in Korea but had filled support roles. Again we see the accepted form of telling stories about the forgotten war: gormless Australians, safe at home, ask the chap who had been on the spot an amazingly naive question about Korea. Dr. Bryan Gandevia served as Regimental Medical Officer to 3 RAR and then at BCOF Headquarters between 1950 and 1951. Upon his return to Australia Gandevia gave lectures on the medical lessons of the war. In one of those speeches he stated that he had come to 'the realisation, chiefly on his return, of the extraordinary apathy and indifference of the Australian people to the war in Korea'. He was stunned to be asked 'whether the Australians had ever suffered any casualties to speak of in Korea'.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Reverend Alan Laing who served as chaplain to 3 RAR in the first year of the war in a newspaper article published shortly after the padre took up a military appointment in New South Wales. Another newspaper clipping attached by the padre to his copy of this article asserts the importance of Australia's contribution to the war, proclaiming that 'no force ever sent abroad by Australia has acquitted itself more honourably than the tiny contingent which has been campaigning continuously in Korea for the past year'. The newspaper leader then stated that the Korean force's 'achievements deserve from their country fuller recognition and more adequate support than they have so far received'. Laing was not the only cleric to be concerned by Australia's apparent indifference to the war. The following year in 1952, another padre, the senior Church of England chaplain to the Australian Military Forces in Japan and Korea, spoke pathetically of the troops — whom he described as 'fighting

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20 Argus, 26 April 1952. For other newspaper references of the 'forgotten legion' sort from this period from various Australian centres see the Melbourne Sun, 5 April 1952; the Melbourne Herald, 9 April 1952; the Ballarat Courier Mail, 24 May 1952; the Melbourne Herald, 8 July 1952; the West Australian, 19 August 1952; the Adelaide Advertiser, 29 September 1952; the Perth Daily News, 1 October 1952; the Adelaide News, 21 October 1952.


22 Notes of a speech given by Dr Gandevia, probably in 1951, in Papers of Captain B. Gandevia, Australian Army Medical Corps, PR 82/125, AWM.

23 'His Church Was A Battlefield' in the Argus, 3 August 1951 (the Argus Magazine Supplement); clipping from Sydney Morning Herald, 5 December 1951. See Papers of Rev. Alan W. Laing, MS 6210, National Library of Australia (henceforth 'NLA').
a crusade' — looking 'a little wistful' when 'talking of home' for they were wondering if the folks back there were 'really wholeheartedly behind us'.

The difficult circumstances of the Korean conflict — just what sort of what war was it? — meant that narratives were often couched as a union of opposites: one with a strong juxtaposition between there at the front, and here at home. This is not an entirely new situation. In previous wars too there had been a significant distinction between home and the front; after all, as Ken Inglis points out, the Anzac legend draws much of its power from the contrast between the transcendent experience undergone by those privileged to serve and the less significant experiences of those who had not been 'there', who suffered a 'sense of exclusion from the tradition'. But Korea — smaller in scale and much less dramatic in its consequences for Australians — struggles to find a place in society's consciousness at all. Perhaps this was most strongly felt by those whose sex made it impossible for them to serve in the front-line. June White's husband John, formerly a parachute jumps instructor at the RAAF base at Williamtown, went to Korea in 1952, first with 3 RAR and then with Commonwealth Brigade Headquarters. Left with a small daughter and a baby boy to care for on her own, Mrs White found that the 'worst part of this time was the loneliness & lack of knowledge of what was happening to my man on the other side of the world'. This loneliness was compounded by her society's failure to attach much significance to the conflict in which her husband was eventually wounded:

Korea was little publicised in day to day living. I can remember being at a party at my sister's house & a woman asked me where my husband was that night. I told her he was in Korea — she asked me was he doing in that country?

Why then has Korea faded from view and remained 'out in the cold'? The reasons offered for this are complex and intertwined; they range from the nature of the media coverage of the war to the undifferentiated nature of much of the war in popular opinion. The specific reasons for the forgetting of Korea which we shall examine are the role of television, the shadow of Vietnam and the absence of the heroic in popular perceptions of Australia's Korean War.

24 Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Daish in the Age, 5 April 1952.
26 June White, 'A Long Year for an Army Wife During the Korean War', handwritten account in Papers of Mrs. June White, PR 89/183, AWM.
A number of veterans argued that the absence of television at the time of the Korean War made contemporary reporting of events on the peninsula difficult. An extension of this argument is that the absence of a television record meant that ‘preservation’ of the war in the sense of creating records for posterity was also difficult. Norm Glenn who served with 3 RAR in Korea between 1950 and 1951 stated that the ‘absence of television in those days made it more difficult for people to keep up with events’. Similar sentiments were expressed by Corporal Ronald Cashman, also of 3 RAR. Cashman’s war in terms of incident was particularly memorable as he served in Korea almost continuously between 1951 and 1953, was wounded three times and received a Military Medal in the last days of the war. He attributed the forgetting of Korea to two factors — ‘political reasons’ (which are left unexplained) and the fact that there was ‘no TV in Australia at the time’. Without television, according to former POW, Brigadier Phillip Greville, the print media had a hard job to make Korea newsworthy:

The journalists that went to Korea were of the old school — reporters of news rather than makers of it. Most, if not all had served in armed forces and/or had been correspondents in the Second World War. The war was reported but not to the exclusion of the races or football or strikes.27

The United States, and before them, the United Kingdom, had introduced television before Australia, and before the commencement of the Korean War. But as Bruce Cumings notes ‘the war in Korea occurred in the early dawn of mass television...[it] was mostly unseen and therefore unknown’. The role of television and Vietnam is another matter. Cumings goes on to argue that ‘Vietnam was just a way station between Korea and the Gulf: only the latter perfected the full capacities of television for fighting, packaging, and selling warfare’; yet many people have seen television as crucial in shaping attitudes in the West to the war in Vietnam.28 Many on the conservative side of politics have blamed ‘television’ for helping ‘us’ lose that war; General Westmoreland, for example, argued that ‘the strategists in Hanoi indirectly manipulated our open society, and hence our political system’.29 It is interesting in the Korean context that television is seen positively by veterans as a device that would have

27Questionnaire responses, Norman Glenn, Phillip Greville.
29Quoted in Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: a History, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p. 488. Cumings and Karnow both argue that the conservatives’ argument is overstated. As Karnow says on the same page already cited: ‘But the press, with all its shortcomings, tended to follow rather than lead the U. S. public, whose opinions were usually shaped more by such events as the tax surcharge or the death of a local boy than by television broadcasts and newspaper commentaries.’
enabled their war to be remembered better. As Dennis Robinson expressed it, the
‘people here had no idea what was going on unless they had a family member serving in
Korea, maybe if we had TV in those days, like they had in Vietnam we may have got
some better recognition’. Cinema newsreels were not seen on a daily basis by the
Australian public, and though newspapers were scanned more frequently, readers had
to rely on still photographs to gain some impression of the Australian presence in
Korea. Television with its dissemination of moving images on an immediate and
virtually universal basis is regarded by some veterans to be more effective than the still
photograph in overcoming ‘the normal gap between sense experience and mental
comprehension’ which in war’s case ‘is stretched to an extreme’.

Introducing the Vietnam War was inevitable at some point in this article: the
Korean veterans often contrast Australia’s role in Vietnam with that in Korea. In the
current discussion of why Korea has been largely forgotten Vietnam plays an
ambiguous role. On the one hand, as noted above, it is seen as having an advantage
because television gave it such a prominent place in Australian living rooms. On the
other hand, Vietnam veterans are seen by many Korean diggers to be worse off in
terms of public neglect or hostility. A common opinion is that ‘the returned [Korean]
diggers received better treatment than the later Vietnam vets’. This is not always the
case. A number of Korean veterans assert that they too had their share of physical and
mental suffering as a result of their wartime experiences. Some will cite these problems
as additional evidence of the Korean War’s significance. Vic Lowe, later State president
of the NSW branch of the Korean Veterans’ Association, wrote that he ‘paid a very
high price like a lot of others’ with the ‘first 35 years...spent in an alcoholic haze’. He
‘spent most of the time consumed with guilt for surviving — terrified most of the
time’, his ‘only friend, “Jim Beam”’. Significantly he considered that his was ‘a very
common story among Korea vets — our suicide rates are horrific’. Yet the majority
opinion is that the Vietnam veterans had it worse. The issue here is not the actual
degree to which Korean veterans have suffered as a result of their service, and how this
compares to other wars — it is the perception that Vietnam veterans may have even
been worse off. As one Army wife expressed it:

I cannot but wonder today how the service men and women of 1939-1945 war and the Korean war coped with their emotional and family
problems on their return to Australia. There was nothing like the

30Questionnaire response, Dennis Robinson. Also see response from Edward (Curly)
Schunemann.
31Alan Trachtenberg, Reading Photographs: Images as History. Matthew Brady to Walker Evans, Hill
32Questionnaire response, Ronald Smith.
33Questionnaire response, Vic Lowe. For similar accounts see questionnaire responses from
Thomas Jubb, Edward Green and Dave Irving.
problems which have arisen since the men returned from Vietnam both here & in the USA or we didn’t hear of them...[They] just mainly got on with living — perhaps because they had to.3 4

Sandwiched between the Second World War and Vietnam, Korea occupies an unfortunate place chronologically. There are just so many conflicts, it seems, which the collective memory can keep hold of. The Second World War dominates that mental arena in so many ways; history appears to have intended it for its many starring roles on stage and screen. In the end we are fascinated ‘with a global cataclysm in which the enemies were commensurable, and grouped themselves according to clearcut categories of good and evil’.3 5 Whereas the Second World War is resolutely unambiguous, Vietnam is profoundly ambiguous, offering ample opportunity for discussion, revaluation, controversy and debate. Korea is dwarfed between two media giants.

The third issue associated with the forgetting of Korea is that the war lacks loci around which memory can collect. There are few heroic or tragic elements which could operate as convenient centres for popular recollection. This broad statement only makes sense with some major qualifications. Firstly, it is restricted to Australia’s involvement in the conflict: the misery and suffering endured by Koreans in the period 1945-1953 renders the term ‘tragic’ wholly appropriate when applied to that people’s war. Secondly, it is not meant to underestimate the efforts, pain and loss of Australia’s service personnel in Korea. If there were any temptation to do this the narratives of many Australian soldiers would serve to correct the injustice — delicate questions of scale are irrelevant when recalling the intensity of the fighting:

It was 24 hour continuous fighting, we lived in underground dugouts when the war became stagnant, for instance our battalion held and defended Hill 355 (Little Gibraltar) for 14 week living on C. rations. Water came up in jerry cans, we washed out of our divvies, fighting patrols was an every night job also standing, ambush patrols, shelling was consistent which kept us underground for the best part of the day. The valley was no mans land, at the most was 500 yds. between them and us.3 6

The absence of tragic and heroic elements is to be understood as a relative thing, something that is really only apparent when compared to the popular response to other wars in which Australia has been involved.

34Nell Honeysett, ‘An Australian Army Wife’s Account of Life for Her during the United Nations’ War in Korea 1950-1953’, PR 89/028, AWM.
35Cumings, *War and Television*, p. 49.
36Questionnaire response, Edward Green.
The absence of the tragic is highlighted by the Australian casualty list in the Korean war. Losses were on a much smaller scale in Korea, though so of course was the scale of the commitment. There were 60,000 dead in World War 1, 25,000 in World War 2, and 339 in Korea. Unlike the First World War casualties are not associated in legend or history with symbols of futility and slaughter on a mass scale such as Bullecourt, Pozieres, trench warfare or gas attacks. Unlike the Second World War, Australian dead and wounded are not associated with enduring memory sites such as the Death Railway or Changi, potent images of evil and loss. Commemoration needs something to work with; commemoration of war, amongst other things, requires deaths. It needs avenues of honour leading into country towns; it needs long lists of names cast around the walls of shrines or war memorials. Rightly or wrongly, Korea is not felt by the public to have enough wreaths to lay down on a fixed date each year. Perhaps, there is only room in a tradition for a handful of wars.

Ours is not the only tradition which has difficulty finding this space. The term ‘forgotten’ is a cliche in the records and histories of the other countries who fought together under the United Nations banner. The indeterminate nature of the wider ideological conflict of which Korea is a part is also a contributing factor here. Peace, when it finally came, certainly sent the solders home, but the outcome of the war, despite the thwarting of the original North Korean incursion, was, in some hard to define way, rather unsatisfactory. As John R. Gillis has argued, the wars of the 1950s and 1960s altered the forms of public memory, for the ‘blurring of the old distinction between war and peace meant that it was very difficult to define the beginnings or endings that had previously been the focus of memory’. He concluded that the ‘Korean, Algerian, and Vietnam conflicts proved extremely difficult to commemorate, except on a private basis’. And commemoration on a private basis seems to many to be inadequate; commemoration implies community.

Australian participation in the Korean war also suffers from an absence of heroic resonances, especially those associated with battles. A question of causation arises here: are the battles overlooked because the war has been forgotten, or is it vice versa? The two processes may have occurred simultaneously, though any inquiry must be highly speculative. What is undoubtedly true is that in Australia the Korean War has few identifiable battles which can serve as powerful memory sites enabling the whole conflict to occupy an important position in legend or tradition. Australia’s Korean War has one battle — Kapyong, 23-24 April 1951 — which comes close to being

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37See Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates About Memory and History', in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, (eds), Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia, pp. 20-22 for how the public have consumed a wide range of accounts of the Australian POW experience in World War 2.

‘memorable’ in the sense of being known to some extent outside the narrow confines of the career army. At Kapyong, 3 RAR, together with troops from Canada, New Zealand and the United States, broke ‘the offensive of a full Chinese division’, leading in part to the blunting of the entire Chinese push. This status is almost semi-official given recent attention given to Kapyong by the defence forces. As the analysis of the battle produced by Headquarters Training Command states, the ‘Australian Army’s participation in the Korean War included several quite exceptional unit actions’ but Kapyong ‘is the most commemorated Australian battalion action of the Korean War’. Significantly, this comparative fame is attributed, in part at least, to the fact that, alone of all Australian actions in Korea, Kapyong resulted in a public gesture that indicated that this was a battle to remember. The public gesture was the bestowing on the 3 Royal Australian Regiment of a US Presidential Unit Citation, the American award perhaps adding even greater lustre than an Australian equivalent might have.

The Army is not the only source of commemorative power for Kapyong. Norman Bardett, the first official historian of Australia in the Korean War, devoted an entire chapter to the two days of the Kapyong engagement, as much as the Royal Australian Navy received for the entire war. Commenting on the fact that the US Presidential Citation may be worn by all serving members of the battalion, now and in the future, Bardett concluded that the battle ensured one victory over time, for ‘Kapyong added a permanent honour to the battle traditions of the Australian Army’. Bardett was careful to ensure that Kapyong’s importance would be perceived by the readers of his book. While he was preparing *With the Australians in Korea*, Bardett wrote to Lieutenant-Colonel Laing, chaplain to 3 RAR, who had participated in the Kapyong action. Bardett had already drafted an account of the battle, described by himself as ‘necessarily a bald factual account’, when he wrote to the padre in April 1954 seeking more colour and incident for ‘what we want is the full story as it happened to human beings’. Though Bardett told Laing that ‘we’ve got the bare bones of a magnificent story’, he added ‘we want to clothe them in living flesh’. In seeking this admirable historical objective Bardett was in tune with the media coverage of the period for, despite the jaundiced opinions of several veterans, the battle of Kapyong was treated as a major event during the Korean War, even if this attention subsequently waned. Indeed, for sheer over the top description of Australians at war in any period it is hard

41Norman Bardett, (ed.), *With the Australians in Korea*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1954, p.106.
42Norman Bardett to Lieutenant-Colonel Laing, 1 April 1954, in Laing Papers, MS 6210, NLA.
to go past the *New Australasian Post* on the first anniversary of Kapyong, which, amidst the rhetoric, fudged the date of the battle towards the sacred day of Anzac itself.

With suspense-packed understatement, a digger in Korea describes the bloody battle of Anzac Day last year. For Australian fighting men, it was death or glory in the Gallipoli pattern. Last year as the old and older Diggers were gathering on Anzac Day, Diggers of a new generation were counting their dead. They had just come out of one of the bloodiest and most glorious battles ever fought by Australians.43

After the war Kapyong featured occasionally in popular narratives of Australia’s military history and was discussed in the more academic histories from other participating nations.44 However, it was not until the recent spate of Korean memoirs, with their intricate and detailed accounts of the battle, that Kapyong truly came into its own.45 One veteran who was invalided home before Kapyong felt that the battle now unfairly overshadowed Australian achievements in Korea in late 1950 — testimony to this battle’s dominance within the limited Korean arena.46 In some quarters Kapyong occupies a similar position in popular memory to that of the battle of Long Tan from the Vietnam war. In other quarters Long Tan, alone of post-1945 battles, has been ‘made a candidate for legend alongside Gallipoli, and Beersheba, Tobruk and Kokoda’.47 Even Kapyong may yet have to struggle to establish its place in the collective memory.

Significantly, the period immediately after Kapyong marks a watershed in the Korean War. After May 1951 Communist and non-Communist leaders both moved — at an agonisingly slow pace and with continuing heavy losses — towards the limiting of conflict to the peninsula itself and an armistice. The armistice was eventually achieved over two years after the Soviet Union first proposed a cease-fire and long after the fighting had settled into the so-called ‘Static War’. This in some ways resembled trench warfare from the First World War with more or less fixed lines, little movement of a spectacular sort, vigorous patrolling, forays into No-Man’s-Land and the maintenance

41 *New Australasian Post*, 24 April 1952, pp. 4-5 and 34.
of heavily defended positions. Meanwhile the politicians dithered to find a formula which could send everybody home—except the Koreans, of course. In a revealing passage Bartlett argues that the nature of the Static War meant that it was going to be hard for the public and for history to find anything memorable to recall from the period after Kapyong:

The Press and the public in Australia soon lost interest in this sort of warfare but the period was anything but 'phony' for the infantrymen who fought through it, and Australia's contribution was mainly infantry. Shelling was constant and there was a ceaseless struggle for the domination of no-man's land, a struggle which brought casualties and many awards for bravery to Australian troops. These patrol actions were as real and dangerous to men who fought through the static war as the advances and withdrawals experienced by the 3rd Battalion in the first year. The trouble was that one patrol, to the outside world, was much like another. The public was interested in spectacular advances or catastrophic retreats.48

Bartlett's judgement is borne out by the less successful efforts to highlight a battle from the period after Kapyong: Maryang San which took place between 3-8 October 1951. This clash was part of 'Operation Commando' and took the form of a series of attacks on Chinese positions on Hill 317 followed by consolidation and resistance against counter-attack. Twenty Australians were killed and eighty-nine wounded, as opposed to thirty-two dead at Kapyong.49 Once again the Army Training Command has produced a monograph on the battle and other discussions have featured Maryang San with Kapyong as 'two of the famous battles of the Korean War'.50 Although official historian Robert O'Neill stated that the 'victory of Maryang San is probably the greatest single feat of the Australian Army during the Korean War', the consequences of the battle in the overall strategy of the war were less significant than at Kapyong.51 Certainly, the action had its contemporary admirers. The account by Captain A. G. Keys of the Operation Commando action in the special Anzac issue

48Bartlett, With the Australians in Korea, p. 141.
49For casualty figures I have relied on O'Neill, Australia in the Korean War 1950-53, Vol. 2, pp. 157, 199. Gallaway, The Last Call of the Bugle, p. 283, has thirty-seven Australians killed at Kapyong.
of *Reveille* in 1952 placed it above Kapyong in some respects as it was ‘only a fair opinion in the history of the 3rd Battalion in Korea that there has been nothing to equal the assault by “D” Company’. A retrospective article from 1959 on the battle, which had been by then re-christened ‘Little Gibraltar’, is equally enthusiastic about this action and the earlier battle of Kapyong. According to the *Daily Mirror* one ‘of Australia’s most renowned fighting units, the Third, during 50 months service in Korea, distinguished itself in some of the most bitter and bloody battles of our military history’. They acknowledged that ‘Kapyong was the Third’s most famous and important Korean victory’ but argued that this regiment ‘were heroes of an even bloodier encounter when they stormed the impregnable heights of “Little Gibraltar” and ousted its fanatical Chinese defenders with cold steel’. After that, Maryang San, under whatever name, disappeared from the printed record until the 1980s.

Only recently has ‘Maryang San’ been selected as the definitive description and the battle once again equated with Kapyong as one of the two Korean War battles that are famous. Despite the claims that have been made for the tactical skill of the Australians in the battle, Maryang San has had even less success than Kapyong in staking out a place in the public memory. This state of affairs may in part be attributed to the overall pointlessness of the battle in the wider scheme of things. As Donald Cameron from Western Australia wrote, ‘Operation Commando was a waste of our mates’ lives...I voice my opinions for my mates’.

The second major theme to be examined in this article in connection with Korea and memory is what I have called the public validation of private experience, the intersection between the returned veteran and the community’s welcome of, and reaction to, the soldiers’ arrival home. The first element of this theme is the march granted to returning soldiers, or the absence of it.

Some Korean veterans claim that one of the standard elements of public ritual associated with public reception of soldiers — a march through city streets by returning soldiers — did not occur, or occurred only rarely. Edward Green, who served in both 1st and 3rd Battalions RAR, and was wounded in December 1952, stated that ‘we came home in dibs and dabs, no big march down Swanston Street’. Charles Neil, a member of 3 RAR, expressed this belief in similar language but more strongly. Neil wrote that ‘we felt very let down when we came home, even the RSL was having second thoughts about accepting us’. At least one journalist thought at the time that the welcome at Australian airports, while efficient and practical, was ‘a cold official business’, devoid of

52 Captain A. G. Keys, ‘Operation Commando’, *Reveille*, Vol. 25, No. 8, April 1952, pp. 16-17, 30-33. *Reveille* is the journal of the NSW Branch of the RSL. Keys later became Federal President of the RSL.
53 *Daily Mirror* [Sydney], 16 February 1959.
55 Questionnaire response, Donald Cameron.
any real warmth and emotional significance, because the returning veterans were ‘treated like any ordinary passengers’ whereas they ‘should be treated as VIPs’.56

It is important not to overstate the case. Surviving newsreels indicate that there were a considerable number of enthusiastically supported marches through city streets by both departing and returning battalions at all stages of the war. A typical example occurred in 1954 when men and women of No.77 Squadron, RAAF returning from Korea marched along George Street, Sydney, ‘while a large and jubilant crowd’ watched them.57 Other marches by returning soldiers appear to have been equally enthusiastically supported. Cecil Fisher, a Queensland member of 2 RAR, returned to Australia after the war’s conclusion and recalled marching with his regiment through Brisbane streets in front of a cheering crowd before going on leave.58 Occasionally — though this might have been on a more selective and individual basis — soldiers were invited to large-scale events. Upon his return to South Australia, Harry Kammerman, now restored to civilian status, received an invitation from the Lord Mayor of Adelaide to attend a ‘Civic Reception in honour of Veterans of the Armed Services who served in the Korean War’.59

The men who did miss out on the march appear to have largely come from 3 RAR, which, rather unfortunately, was Australia’s longest serving force in Korea and certainly its best known formation there. Given 3 RAR’s prominence, together with the other problems which some returning veterans claim to have encountered and which will be discussed below, it is perhaps not surprising that the march in some cases became yet another symbol of being forgotten. It appears that the men of 3 RAR, who were replaced on an individual rather than unit basis, were a special case, missing out on the sense of unity and celebration which other formations enjoyed when they

56Questionnaire responses, Edward Green and Charles Neil. John Ulm, former war correspondent in Korea, in the Sydney Sun, 23 October 1952.
57Movietone News, Vol. 26, No. 2, 12 September 1954, National Film and Sound Archive. There are numerous other instances. For example, Cinesound Newsreel, 3 June 1953, where the departing troops of 2 RAR were given ‘a tumultuous farewell’ by the citizens of Melbourne. The descriptions are those of the Archive cataloguer. The date given in this footnote is that given by the National Film and Sound Archive catalogue and is incorrect for the battalion actually marched through Melbourne on 26 February 1953. See O’Neill, Australia in the Korean War 1950-53, Vol. 2, p. 267, where it is also stated that the ‘battalion had been given an enthusiastic farewell.’
58Whereupon his real problems began for while Fisher, as an Aboriginal, had no problems with his Army mates, and Victoria (where he trained at Puckapunyal) was relatively tolerant, civilian Queensland in 1954 was considerably less accepting. See Cecil Fisher Papers, PR 91/163, AWM.
59Sydney Sun, 23 October 1952. Lord Mayors’ invitation in the Kammerman Papers. The reception was fixed for 28 June 1954. Kammerman, a member of 2 RAR, was serving in Korea at war’s end. There are other references to municipal welcomes. See for example the Ballarat Courier Mail, 9 April 1952, 24 May 1952. Also see the Argus, 8 July 1952 and the Age, 9 July 1952 where it is argued that returning men should have received a civic reception.
marched from the docks upon their return. In another way too they were often the victims of improved technology and transport. Many members of 3 RAR had enjoyed the novelty of flying to war; they also often returned by air. Finally, even if they ended up returning in large groups, departure from the war zone could commence with small formations, leaving at different times. This state of affairs compelled a senior Australian officer in Japan to prepare a round robin letter of appreciation to members of 1 and 3 RAR returning to Australia towards the end of 1952. Formerly he had been in the habit of seeing the soldiers off personally but, as he informed the departing troops, he had discovered that he ‘was missing a lot of you owing to the variety of ways and times you moved from Kure to Iwakuni’, the Australian air base in Japan.

The point about the march is important: it asserts the value of an individual’s war. In his discussion of the First World War veteran, Percy Bird, Alistair Thomson argued that ‘public viewing of the performance’ — in our case, a march down a major city street — ‘is influential, because it provides personal validation’ for individual veterans. Extending Thomson’s argument, it could be suggested that the public viewing of the performance also validates the conflict on a group level — for those who took part and for those who observe. The centrality in the Australian military tradition of the annual Anzac commemoration with its ritualised and regular acts of devotion has perhaps overshadowed the value of their ‘own’ march (or other public ceremonies) to veterans of particular conflicts. The best known example of this in recent Australian history is the rash of ceremonies somewhat belatedly mounted from the 1980s on to ‘rehabilitate’ the Vietnam veterans in public sentiment, including the 1987 Welcome Home March in Sydney and the dedication of the Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra in 1992. Even though many marches of Korean veterans did occur, the general sense of being overshadowed by other events and other wars, has resulted in them occupying a small place in Korean soldiers’ memories.

Even more significant for Korean veterans than whether they marched through city streets upon their return is the alleged frosty reception they received at the hands of the RSL. It is remarkable how many veterans in their questionnaire responses drew attention to the RSL’s apparent indifference, if not open hostility, to the Korean


Brigadier L. R. Campbell, HQ Australian Army Component, Hiro, Japan to returning members of 1 and 3 RAR, 23 November 1952. Copy of circular in Cashman Papers, PR 89/110, AWM.


See the closing remarks in John Murphy *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia’s Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p. 278, commenting on the mixed reactions of Australians to returning Vietnam veterans in the latter stages of that war: ‘It was the final, and saddest, irony of the Vietnam intervention that its veterans were denied even the simple dignity and solace of the returning soldier. That they should feel their experience shunned was one wound too many’.
soldier. Recently, Michael McKeman wrote that it 'is possible that RSL influence on national life was one of the great myths of twentieth-century Australia'. This may be so if we are measuring influence on social policy and political direction at the highest national level. Yet, returning Korean veterans felt strongly that membership of the RSL was a highly significant undertaking, for that organisation was at one level the body which would push their claim to entitlements, pensions etc but at another—and possibly deeper—level it also represented their collective identity as returned men, former soldiers, heirs to Anzac. As Russell Braddon wrote of returning soldiers in the year that the Korean war ended, 'their only military ambition was to become Returned Soldiers' for 'having been a member of the services was and is to an Australian of supreme personal significance'. While one could question this sweeping statement it points towards something essential in the value systems of those who volunteered for overseas service in the armed forces.

If this was their belief then disappointment awaited. Ray McKenzie, veteran of the battle of Kapyong and member of 3 RAR, expressed the attitude of many Korean veterans when he wrote that as 'it was called [a] Police Action, people at home in Australia did not think of it as war'. Soldiers returning from Korea could 'not become a member of the RSL in the early days, Police Action, not war'. Kevin Dutton restated this line when he stated that 'the RSL were reluctant to admit us to their ranks and referred to Korea as Police action and not a war'. Even the most disgruntled Korean veteran conceded that later the situation improved: many of the respondents to the questionnaire are now members of the RSL, yet the apparent initial reluctance to admit Korean veterans as members still rankles.

Once again we need to qualify any generalisations about the RSL's attitude to the Korean veterans. Many of the respondents to the questionnaire self-identify as 'Korean veterans', and many indeed are members of the Korean Veterans' Association. While very effort has been made to be as broadly inclusive of the entire surviving population of Korean veterans as possible, we are dealing with a group made up of a core whose identity is, to a large extent, defined by their status as men from Korea, sharing many of the attitudes discussed in this article. To this extent their attitude to the RSL — qualified enthusiasm — is affected greatly by what they see themselves primarily to be.

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66 Questionnaire responses, Ray McKenzie, Kevin Dutton. Also see questionnaire responses from Albert Merrick, Phillip Greville, Leonard Best, Mervyn Weekes and Les Foote.
67 See Rachel Jenzen's work on the US Marine presence in Australia in the Second World war.
In terms of the actual attitude of the RSL to the Korean veterans a distinction may be made on the one hand between the leadership of that body, and, on the other, its branches and sub-branches, where former soldiers met to socialise or work together on local projects. There is much evidence that the national and state leaderships were highly conscious of their responsibilities to the Korean soldier, and later the Korean veteran. We have seen how the RSL, as custodians of the Anzac day ceremonies, attempted to give some place of honour to the Korean veteran in the early 1950s. It is also crucial to note that the RSL moved early to formally welcome applications from those who had served in the Korean conflict. The membership files of the national body bulge with paperwork dealing with such requests. Not only were Korean veterans permitted to join the RSL, there is evidence that they were actively encouraged to do so even while they were still serving. At a Federal, State and Sub-Branch level there were frequent efforts during the war to sustain interest in the conflict, to provide comforts to the serving Korean soldier and to ensure that the Federal government ‘ accorded all rights and privileges which were extended to those who served in the 1939-1945 war’ to the Korean veteran. The war’s conclusion may have seen a slackening of interest in the Korean soldier as the health and pension problems of an aging cohort from the First World War, and the demands of the large number of Second World War veterans took precedence, but the 1950-1953 Digger was not entirely neglected. Later in its history too the RSL attempted to ensure that the Korea-Australia link was maintained, and the memory of Kapyong preserved in a practical fashion, by ‘providing a scholarship or some form of assistance to the child of a Korean veteran’. The first scholarships were awarded at Kapyong Middle School around the time of the battle’s anniversary in April 1977.

At a local level, however, the reception given to Korean veterans could be quite frosty. This was not always the case, of course. For example, Ron Cashman’s award of the Military Medal in the closing days of the war was described enthusiastically and how they self-identify as former marines for the purposes of both collective action and commemoration of the past. M. A. thesis, ‘American Marines Remember World War 2 in the South Pacific’, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 2000.

68 For example, see the Report on Visit to Japan and Korea by Brigadier Eastick, member of the RSL Federal Executive, March-April 1951. Eastick reported on a number of topics including potential members: ‘The trip has done much to enhance the prestige of the League in the eyes of its members at present serving in Japan and Korea, and created a very favourable impression in the minds of those who will, I feel, become members of the League on their return to Australia’. Docket 3560c, MS 6609, RSL Papers, Series 1, NLA.

69 The quotation comes from a successful motion from the Brunswick and South Melbourne Sub-Branches at the State Conference of the Victorian Branch of the RSL, 25 July 1951, Minutes 1951-1952, Victorian RSL Papers, RSL, Melbourne.

70 A. G. W. Keys, National Secretary, RSL to M. G. M. Bourchier, Australian Ambassador to South Korea, 4 February 1975; Wing Commander N. B. Williams, Defence Attache, Seoul to Keys, 29 April 1977, Box 130, File 339, RSL Papers, MS 6609 Additions, NLA.
in *The Seagull*, the journal of the Williamstown (Victoria) Sub-Branch — Corporal Cashman hailing from that suburb. However, a current senior figure within the Victorian RSL has stated that, despite the seriousness with which the RSL formally regarded the Korean War, he had been informed that 'it was generally known amongst Korean veterans that some RSL Sub-Branches turned away applicants for membership whose only active service was in Korea'. Then again it was apparently the same for 'World War II and Vietnam veterans after their conflict', established members being reluctant in many cases to admit that others had really experienced war. In the end the Second World War personnel grew to dominate the RSL; then the Vietnam veterans seemed to have been welcomed back, at least by the wider community; but the Korean soldiers have preserved the memories of their original repudiation by their local branches.

A final question arises in connection with the reception of Korean veterans back into the community. A number of Korean veterans have claimed that they were abused, physically or verbally, upon their return by those in Australia opposed to the war. Such incidents appear to have been few in number. The Korean veterans may have found ignorance and indifference when they returned home but outright opposition to their role, let alone openly expressed hostility as was experienced by some Vietnam veterans, was rare. In a powerful article examining the intersection of the anti-war movement and Vietnam veterans, Ann Curthoys has suggested that, even in the case of Vietnam, the degree of physical incidents has been exaggerated: from 'a very few isolated incidents, a myth, a collective memory, has been and is being created'. Similarly, in the case of Korea, it is important not to overstate the number of hostile actions directed at returning soldiers. In some instances there may have been confusion between the memories of two different conflicts (Korea, Vietnam) — either because the individual concerned fought in both wars or because of the 'transfer' backwards of the more visible Vietnam era anti-war movement. This is an example of

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72 Brigadier K. V. Rossi, State Senior Vice President, RSL (Victorian Branch), to author, 27 February 2001. The emphasis (underlining) is in the original. The unfortunate state of affairs in regard to Korean veterans was not assisted by a line drawn between those who had enlisted in the first part of the war for K Force, that is, specifically for service on the peninsula and those who were members of the Permanent Forces. The former had to wait until discharge from the Force before being permitted to join the RSL, the latter could join whilst still in the forces. See the case of Donald Herbert Lanyon of 3 RAR who as a member of the Special Force had his original application for membership rejected. J. R. Lewis, State Secretary, NSW Branch to J. C. Neagle, Assistant Federal Secretary, 11 September 1952; Neagle to Lewis, 15 January 1953, Docket 3987, Part 1, RSL Papers, MS 6609, NLA.
73 See for example in the *Age*, 25 April 1996. Also see questionnaire responses from Dave Irving, Donald Cameron and Albert Merrick. The questionnaire response from James Broderick refers to strong hostility from left-wing elements in Australia but is not more specific.
what might be called 'false friends': two or more memories resembling each other externally, but actually chronologically disparate, being exchanged. It is difficult to be precise here; we simply do not know enough about what actually took place when returning soldier encountered domestic critic. Still, one needs to be careful about the allure of the eyewitness, the person on the spot, for as Bruce Cumings wrote of his travails when working on the Thames Television production, Korea: the Unknown War, they may well assert in the face of incontrovertible evidence, 'My dear boy, I don't care what your documents say, I was there'.

The third major theme to be examined in this article deals with official efforts at commemorating the Korean War; attempts to preserve the memories of the war and make them meaningful to generations that will come after the last Korean veteran has passed away. Though much of the focus is on Canberra, the analysis actually commences in South Korea.

In the period 1953 to 2000 much of the public commemorative activity in which Australian veterans participated took place in the country in which they had fought. Australia was not precipitate in establishing monuments, memorials or museums for any of its Asian military engagements and Korea was slower than some. As we have seen, the Vietnam Forces Memorial, which many veterans of that conflict considered to have been overdue in coming, was dedicated in 1992; the Koreans had to wait another eight years for their equivalent structure. Before the late 1990s Korean veterans had to be content with plates marked 'Korea' being tacked onto existing monuments, below battle entries from the First and Second World Wars. Also, in the 1980s the efforts of Korean veterans to have their war publicly recorded were overshadowed by the public controversies associated with the reception and subsequent treatment of Vietnam soldiers, including the Royal Commission into the effects of Agent Orange (1983-1985).

South Korea was quicker off the mark. We have noted early commemorative activities such as ceremonies associated with Kapyong and co-operative efforts such as the RSL scholarship but for many veterans the links really started to be renewed in the

75 Cumings, War and Television, p. 51. Or as Gilbert Ryle stated in The Concept of Mind 'recalling is something which we sometimes have to try hard and which we often fail to bring off, and very often we do not know whether we have brought it off or not'. Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, Penguin, London, 1949, p. 278. General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, a 'Glorious Gloster', Korean War hero from the defence of the Imjin River position and POW from 1951-1953, was military consultant to the television production and the above statement was his defence when confronted with contrary documentary evidence.

76 See Peter Edwards, 'The Post-1945 Conflicts: Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam' in Michael McKeran and Margaret Browne, Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace, Australian War Memorial in association with Allen and Unwin, Canberra, 1988, pp. 296-309 for a succinct statement of the number of themes and topics which makes Vietnam so fascinating for social commentators, historians and consumers of military history — toxic chemicals, post-traumatic stress disorder, the protest movement, even pop songs from the era.
1980s. Former soldiers, such as Desmond Guilfoyle, whose story opened this article, travelled to South Korea, generally at the invitation of that government, to participate in a range of functions and ceremonies. These visits had the consequence of alerting the Australian visitors to the economic vigour of the South and how this contrasted both with the devastation of the war and more straitened circumstances in the North. The efforts undertaken to the South Koreans to make the Australian veterans welcome also brought home how the Australian government had not been so accommodating. Veterans on sponsored trips received medals and certificates (again a contrast with the Australian situation) or were made Ambassadors of Peace. They laid wreaths or attended dedications at places of special significance to Australian troops such as Pusan and Kapyong. For some the experience had as much significance as their original service. Peter Ireland wrote how 'going back' had invested his year with 3 RAR in Korea with fresh meaning:

I have just returned from realising a dream. I returned with a small group which were invited to take part in the remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the start of that war. It was the most revealing & emotional period I have ever experienced. People in the street, hugging & thanking us, the receptions, the gifts, the generosity, were totally overwhelming. We took part as VIPs in all the celebrations. To visit the KAPYONG MEMORIALS (TWO) was extremely moving. To see now what has been done is mind boggling. To go to the DMZ & see the vast state of readiness is frightening. To see the country now fully reforested, factories, high standard of living makes me proud of the part we put in & and what does it matter what others think, we now know, what we did was worthwhile.

The various pilgrimages to South Korea have also been assisted by smooth arrangements and a host anxious to acknowledge the Australian contribution to the United Nations force as something worthwhile in its own right and not just subsumed within the larger roles of the United States or the Commonwealth as a whole. This is not just a matter of efficient tour organisation. Getting the details right as to the important memory sites for Australians has been crucial. A useful comparison can be made here with the 50th anniversary visit by Anzac veterans to Gallipoli where, despite the best efforts of the RSL and the Turkish communities, confusion with British sites, the lack of a dawn service and a general sense of being rushed, meant that amidst the joy and pain of seeing the battlefield again there was relief at leaving. Ken Inglis

observed, the veterans 'who had come to visit the place where many of them fought half a century ago and where men they loved were killed', were then anxious 'to get back across the world as far as QANTAS could carry them'. In the case of Korea there was a greater sense of returning to the right place.78

In two ways the Australian Government has recently attempted to restore the balance on Korea and to reinsert it into the Australian military tradition, at least as far as that tradition is publicly celebrated. These two initiatives are the granting of a service medal to Korean veterans and the development of the Australian National Korean War Memorial in Canberra.

Much effort was expended by the veterans' association in obtaining a Korean Service Medal from the Federal Government. The warmth with which this activity was invested may be judged by some of the language used by former participants to describe various Ministers of the Crown (of various parties) who opposed their efforts in this campaign. For example, a former Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs was described as an 'evil eyed little bastard', and, though not all veterans are as abusive, the sentiment is common.79 In fact, in the context of the general complaint about being 'forgotten', the failure to award a specifically Korean service medal is the most cited grievance. A medal is a symbol of service recognised, its absence a token of ingratitude.80

The double function which the eventual granting of the service medal performed is significant. On the one hand it helped provide that sense of personal validation for efforts undertaken which has already been discussed in the context of the welcome home march; on the other hand it offers public recognition and partial assurance that not all has been forgotten. It also served as a useful demonstration of a newly elected Government's compassion for the digger, especially when contrasted with Labor intransigence.81 The medal was gratefully received but there was also a sense that it was very late in the day. When the Howard government agreed finally in 1997 to the issuing of the Australian Service Medal 1945-1975 with clasp 'Korea', veteran Neil Miller commented that 'it took the Aust. Government over 45 years to

78Ken Inglis, 'Return to Gallipoli' in Lack, Anzac Remembered, pp. 43-62. Article originally published in 1966. Inglis notes the presence of four Australian 'hitchhikers' at Gallipoli in 1965, the ancestors of today's backpackers who visit the Anzac sites in increasing numbers each year, for example, in 2000 when the Australian Prime Minister took part in the 75th anniversary celebrations. The Turkish contribution to the preservation of the Australian sites is of course now both crucial and apposite.
79Interview with Mick Everett, 5 December 1996.
80Questionnaire responses, Charles Neil. Also see responses from James Pashen, George Hutchinson, Peter Ireland, Mervyn Weekes, Dave Irving, Charles Neil and Dorus Van Itallie.
recognise our service and issue a medal, which should be enough to show what they
thought of the Korean War Veterans’.82

There were two public ceremonies associated with the Korean War Memorial project—the dedication of the site in 1996 and the dedication of the completed memorial in 2000. At the dedication of the site, on the 45th anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong, one veteran spoke to a newspaper about the occasion’s significance:

“This means a lot,” Mr Irving said. “It's about time. I didn’t think I would ever live to see this. Those blokes [the dead] have somewhere now. Somewhere back home here. We all do. Somewhere for our grief and anger…”

“They call it the forgotten war. Only trouble is I’ve never been able to forget. If only I’d been able.”83

Four years later the new Memorial was completed. As 2000 marked the 50th anniversary of the commencement of the Korean War there were many commemorative activities in Australia and elsewhere besides the completion of the Memorial project. For example, the Australian Prime Minister journeyed to Korea and visited places associated with the war such as the 38th parallel. Yet the Memorial, dedicated on 18 April, remained the central event for Australians. The ceremony was televised nationally and was attended personally by thousands of veterans, their friends and families, and dignitaries, the crowd coming close to 20,000. The National Capital Authority booklet intended to provide criteria for the competing designers set out the following commemorative purposes which were to be read in part with the bureaucracy’s desire for the Memorial to meet the requirements of the Korean veteran community (which was assuming this body spoke as one voice on the subject). The new monument was ‘to honour those Australians who died and commemorate those who served in the Korean War 1950-1953’ and ‘communicate a message that is inspirational in content, relatively timeless in meaning, and representative of noble, heroic and patriotic virtues’. It is not the place here to discuss how well the final result — the installations merging into the surrounding urban landscape — met these criteria (one analysis has already been published), but to note how the Memorial was one part of a process consciously restoring Korea to history.84

82 Questionnaire response, Neil Miller.
83 Age, 25 April 1996.
The Memorial designers were well aware of, or were well advised about, the value of Kapyong in Korean memories. The Memorial incorporates 'a boulder from a Korean battlefield [Kapyong]'. According to the official brochure of the occasion this boulder 'is located in the Contemplative Space' of the Memorial 'and serves as a ceremonial focal point'. Thus we see another attempt to focus public remembering on Korea via its most famous battle. If Kapyong was used to give significance to the Memorial then the latter was used as the point around which other public activities in 2000 were organised. For example, a travelling exhibition, *Out in the Cold*, was organised by the Australian War Memorial, which celebrated Australia's involvement in the Korean War. The accompanying booklet of the same name had a Ministerial foreword which sounds as if the exhibition's intention was to resuscitate something almost completely lost:

Korea has been described as a forgotten war. It was, indeed, overlooked by many at the time, and does not figure in popular memory. But in the recognition accorded to veterans of the conflict and in respect paid to the dead, Korea has never been a forgotten war. This booklet will help to ensure that Australians understand why.

The Korean war should be remembered.

Despite these and other efforts at historical CPR the attention given to the events, outside the ranks of the Korean War cognoscenti, was not extensive. For example, press coverage of the dedication was thin as was the coverage of other events in the anniversary year. Such a comment is inevitably somewhat subjective in nature but it is also the judgement of others who have worked long in the field of Korean War history. One of these, Olwyn Green, chronicler of her husband's achievements in the Second World War and Korea, remarked recently that 'it is a puzzle why, despite the renewed interest in things military, that the Korean War still cannot arouse real interest'. She also felt that the 'media did not give much attention to the Dedication of the Memorial in so far as producing stories or some history'.

It is possible then that the dedication of the Korean Memorial did not attract the publicity which it was hoped it might draw. Yet a war memorial, like any public sculpture, installation or museum has a range of functions and the education of the

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85Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Order of Service: Australian National Korean War Memorial Dedication 18 April 2000*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 2000, p. v.
87Olwyn Green, personal communication to author — email 12 May 2000. For the Green work see Olwyn Green, *The Name's Still Charlie*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1993.
current generation is only one of them. The Korean Memorial, like the other artefacts in the Anzac Parade complex, is in part at least an attempt to project the past of fifty years ago into the future as we judge now what posterity needs to know about its antecedents. There is another aspect of the Korean monument, one that may have a more local tinge. It marks another step in the fixation of successive Australian governments in celebrating anniversaries, expanding them if necessary from simple one-off dedications or openings to a whole programme that plays out temporally and spatially and is intended to embrace the whole community, perhaps to gather it more closely together. Whether the collective memory has been enhanced with fresh insights into the Korean War, and its place in Australian history, is probably not something that can be judged by this generation. The ‘Forgotten War’ may be an accurate description of the Korean conflict, as well as an historical and literary cliché, but it may now have a status of its own which is positive rather than negative, serving as a useful mental hook, or, to vary the metaphor, a conduit to approach Korea. If we did not think of it as forgotten, would we remember Korea at all?

Department of History
University of Melbourne

88There is an extensive literature on war memorials. The above has been especially influenced by Ken Inglis, Sacred Places and James M. Mayo, War Memorials as Political Landscape, Praeger, New York, 1988.