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Representing Australia on the Somme & Flanders Battlefields and in Paris

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The formidable contribution made by the Australian Army in World War 1 was one of the most important factors that brought victory to the Allies in 1918.

Our country's first battles in the war were fought at Gallipoli in 1915—the contribution of our troops there was marked by untold bravery and dogged perseverance. Overshadowing our valiant efforts at Gallipoli was the remarkable performance of the 300,000 Australians who fought for more than three years on the Western Front (France & Belgium), and in particular the spectacular success in 1918 of the First Australian Army Corps under General Sir John Monash. Fighting on the Somme Battlefields and in Flanders, their superb leadership, their skill in battle and their steadfast courage earned the unqualified praise and admiration of all the Allied Governments and their military leaders.

Today, more than ninety years after the Australians and the Allies defeated the Germans in a number of decisive battles and drove them out of France, the citizens of the many cities and towns the Australians liberated keep the memory of their deeds alive – particularly on ANZAC Day.

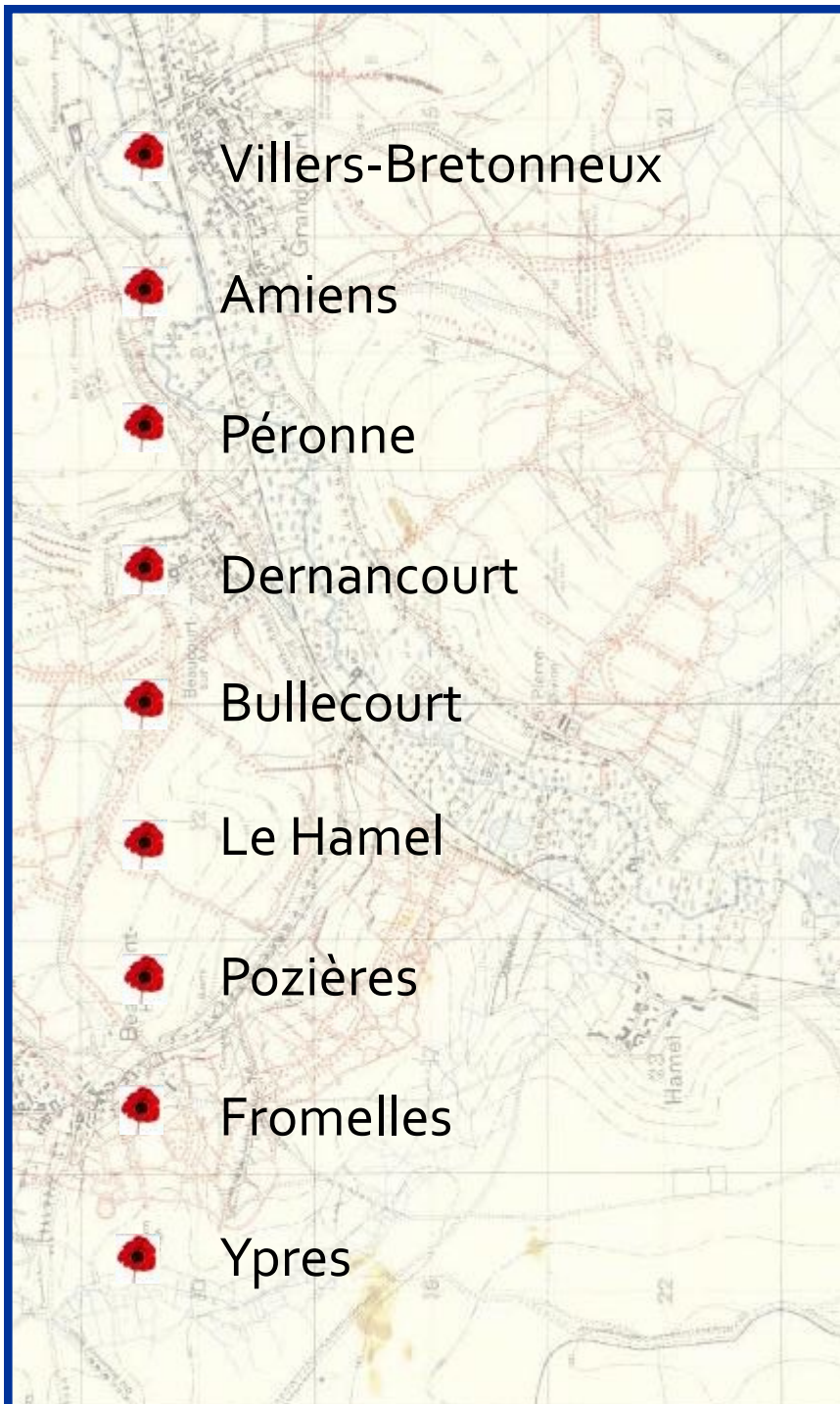
All over Picardy and in Flanders there are immaculately cared for Commonwealth war cemeteries where most of the bodies of more than 50,000 'diggers' rest in peace. Each year on ANZAC Day, the Australian Government conducts an important international Dawn Service at the Australian Memorial on the outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux, the town the AIF liberated on 25 April, 1918.

For the Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux, a band or orchestra—often with a choir—is selected by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to perform at this and other ANZAC Services. To make the trip to France all the more memorable a number of other exciting concerts and engagements are arranged to give the selected musical group an opportunity to perform in some of the most prestigious venues in Europe.



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Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux

**THE CITIES & TOWNS IN PICARDY AND FLANDERS WHERE
AUSTRALIAN GROUPS PERFORM**



For the annual ANZAC Day ceremonies the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is the government agency that organises everything, and as the agent appointed by DVA, Professional Conferences International (PCI) / Angas Travel Agency (ATA) is able to work closely with the chosen group for their inclusion and to plan a comprehensive concert tour to France—and in other parts of Europe too. DVA has laid down strict guidelines concerning the quality of music that the Australian group performing at the ANZAC services and commemorations delivers. The first thing PCI / ATA has to do is to ensure that those musical groups wishing to play in France will be able to adequately showcase Australia's musicians.

France is considered one of the most prestigious destinations in Europe and, throughout the year, there are many groups from all over the world wishing to have concerts there; as the quality of the music to be delivered by our Australian groups has been assured, the civic authorities in the Somme and Flanders regions will work willingly with us to provide the promotion of the group plus the venue and appropriate facilities to host a successful concert.

It is hoped that this brochure will enable bands and orchestras contemplating a European tour to recognise what a truly fantastic experience awaits them!



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The Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux

Amiens is one of the big cities of France and its cathedral is one of the very finest in Europe. Situated in the north-east of the country, it was pivotal in the fighting in the northern section of what was known as The Western Front. It is the capital of the Département of the Somme and administratively is responsible for many of the towns where there are Australian war cemeteries. Amiens has a very active conservatory with a number of highly regarded bands and choirs. One of the highlights for our groups visiting the battlefields is the one or more combined concerts with the Amiens Brass Band.



Amiens Cathedral

The reason Pozières is important to all Australians is that in both 1916 and 1917 there were long and bloody battles fought there, and the number of Australian diggers who were killed in these battles runs into thousands. Although it cannot be boasted that we won amazing victories at Pozières, the name of Australia is still held with great respect and, of course, the number of war cemeteries around the town remind the locals of the sacrifices made by Australians to recapture Pozières from the enemy.

Pozières is particularly important to South Australians because it was here that one of its famous sons, Lt. Arthur Blackburn (later Brigadier), won the Victoria Cross in 1917.

As the Mayor of Pozières is one of Australia's great admirers, he always ensures that the concert groups who perform there receive a warm and enthusiastic welcome.

The formal memorial services on ANZAC Day, and less formal performances as well, take place in and near Villers-Bretonneux. During World War 1 this town was captured by the Germans and was almost completely destroyed by artillery fire. On ANZAC Day (25 April) the Australians launched a major counter-offensive and drove out the invaders. To this day the deeds of the First AIF are remembered and honoured by the people of Villers-Bretonneux.



Le Mairie, Villers-Bretonneux

When the Australians returned home they arranged for a collection to be taken up in Victoria, Australia to rebuild the school which had been totally demolished. Today the school is a living memorial to remind the young people who attend there that everyone in the town owes a lot to the Australians. In huge letters written across the front of one part of the school are the words:

N'OUBLIONS JAMAIS L'AUSTRALIE (Let us never forget Australia).

A few kilometres from Villers-Bretonneux is the ***Australian National Memorial*** and here at dawn on ANZAC Day each year, a formal memorial service takes place and this is attended by civil and military dignitaries from Australia and France. This Dawn Service is arranged and directed by the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Many French were killed during the German invasion and occupation of the town. There is a service held each year at the French Memorial located adjacent to the Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall) and also a concert given in Le Marché couvert (The covered market).



Unley Concert Band, Villers-Bretonneux

Villers-Bretonneux is remarkable in that everywhere one goes there is evidence of the connection between the town and the people of Australia—the names of the streets, the public notices and signs; there are Kangaroos in almost every shop and even the coat of arms of Villers-Bretonneux features a kangaroo. The big concert given there by visiting bands and choirs always attracts a full house.

One of the really important towns in the Somme battlefields is Péronne,

which today has a population of about 9,000. At the outset of World War I in 1914, the French Army passed through Péronne as it withdrew westward in the face of the German advance, and the town was occupied by the Germans until 1916 when all the inhabitants were evacuated prior to the French shelling it in an attempt to wipe out the occupiers. The Germans, however did not budge until March 1917 when they retreated towards the Hindenburg Line. The British moved in and stayed in Péronne until the German offensive early in 1918, and in September of that year the Australians liberated the town which had been virtually reduced to ruins.

The Château de Péronne dates back to the Middle Ages. In fact, the ramparts were built in the 9th Century and over the years it has been devastated by a se-

ries of invaders: the Normans, the Spanish and the Germans (in 1870 and again in 1914). In World War II the town was again heavily bombarded and devastated by the German Air Force.

Most of the castle was built by King Philippe II in the 12th Century. Today it houses the great museum of the Great War which is known as the *L'Historial de la Grand Guerre*. It deals in detail with the various phases of war and a visit to L'Historial almost always includes an excellent film of the fighting there.

From a musical point of view, the Château makes a brilliant backdrop for a concert. When weather makes this impossible, concerts are held in the *Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste-de-Péronne* or *l'Espace Mac Olan*. Despite the bombarding and pillaging in a series of wars, almost all of the damage has been repaired to its original form.



The Château de Péronne

Dernancourt is a small town to the East of Amiens. In the context of World War 1 the battle there in March, 1918 was of enormous importance, and not just because it was basically an AIF battle and one that demonstrated clearly to the higher command that the troops of the First Australian Army Corps were some of the finest on the Western Front.

Town of Dernancourt



In this theatre of the war the very wet winter of 1917 had forced both sides to a stalemate, as the mud and slush had kept both the Germans and the Allies very much in their trenches and, apart from both sides sending out small patrols into no man's land, the action was limited to endless artillery bombardments and counter-bombardments.

In the North the front line was astride the Franco-Belgian border near Comines-Warneton. During the winter, the British troops did very little to build solid defences, so when spring arrived those that were built would not have held against an enemy advance into France. This weak defensive line was all the more remarkable because everyone knew that as Russia had pulled out of the war during 1917, the more than a million German soldiers on its Eastern Front would move to the Western Front to reinforce their countrymen and march on to Paris.

The German advance was initially successful. By the beginning of March, 1918, they were approaching Amiens – the only real defence between them and Paris. The stage was set for one final thrust that would give the invading force total victory.

All through 1916 and 1917 the five Australian Divisions had been spread out over the Western Front as part of the various British armies. Both the Australian High Command and the Australian Government were constantly pleading with Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister to bring all the AIF divisions together to fight as one force under an Australian general—this was achieved early in 1918. However, it was not until the last week in May 1918 that the Australian Army Corps came together under the truly remarkable leadership of General Sir John Monash.



In March of that year the Allied High Command acknowledged that if Amiens fell to the Germans they would be 'at the gates' of Paris within a week. Monash was rushed to Dernacourt with two Australian brigades to halt their swift advance. They dug themselves in and under the dynamic leadership of General Glasgow, the enemy force (numerically about three times as large as the Australians) with infinitely stronger artillery – was stopped and finally put to flight. Although the casualties were heavy, the AIF was totally victorious. Their triumph at Dernacourt saved Amiens and of course Paris, too—and today, more than 90 years later, the acknowledgement of the AIF's outstanding effort and the bravery and resilience of its soldiers is regarded by the locals as it was in 1918. The South Australian officers in 48th Infantry Battalion wrote home about the battle and the people in South Australia raised the money to rebuild what is now proudly called

the "Adelaide School." The concert our bands and choirs perform for the people of Dernacourt is given in the church opposite Le Mairie and it is always received by a warm and appreciative audience.



Unley Concert Band, Bullecourt



Adelaide School

BULLECOURT: In April, 1917 and again in May, two major battles were fought at Bullecourt. The aggression and amazing courage of the Australian, British and French units that formed part of the offensive was incredible; however, because of the unrealistic expectations, bad intelligence and poor planning of the Allied Higher Command, the outcome of both battles was an unmitigated and bloody disaster. The Australian casualties exceeded 12,000 and some hundreds more were captured.

There are two Memorials in the little town of Bullecourt where, each year at ANZAC time, Australian groups perform for an Australian, British and French audience gathered to remember the gallantry of their First World War heroes.

Although today Le Hamel is only a very small town with a population of less than 1000 inhabitants, it was not always the case. In World War I the town was almost obliterated by the German Forces who in turn were almost totally annihilated by the Australians in July 1918.



The Battle of Le Hamel is now considered as the most significant battle of the war, and by the French and English Governments as the battle in which the Australians demonstrated to the world that they were among the finest soldiers fighting in France. General John Monash was a military genius and had under his command some of the most competent officers on the Western Front.

The Australian music groups going to Le Hamel are probably more interested in music than they are in wars and soldiers, but to know of the feats of General Monash and his Australian Corps at the Battle of Le Hamel, and the immense international respect and admiration they earned, cannot help but make us all feel proud to be Australians.

From the point of view of the Allies, March 1918 was the low point of the entire war and it was largely due to the great successes of the five Australian divisions at places like Dernancourt and Villers-Bretonneux that morale was lifted, not only of the Allied Army but also of the people throughout France and in England.

Within weeks of his triumph at Villers-Bretonneux, General Monash, then Commander of the First Australian Army Corps presented the Army Commander with a revolutionary plan to drive the Germans out of Picardy. Until then the British tanks had enjoyed only a very limited success and aircraft had only been used for observation purposes. In the weeks leading up to the battle, Monash started training his infantry to work side by side with tanks. To utterly confuse the enemy about the number of tanks he had under his command, he had several hundred well camouflaged dummy tanks constructed. He used more than 100 aircraft to drop ammunition exactly where it was needed – and this avoided the blocking of the roads and employment (and exhaustion) of hundreds of men carrying ammunition.



The Australian Memorial at Le Hamel

General Monash guaranteed the army commander that he would win the battle in 90 minutes – and he apologised when it took his corps 93 minutes to put the much larger and heavier gunned enemy to flight!

The concert the Australian groups perform each year in the big church in Le Hamel is an important event to which the locals very much look forward.

For more than 90 years there has been a close relationship between Fromelles and Australia. When in 2008 some 400 bodies of soldiers who were killed during the Battle of Fromelles (19 July 1916) were found, the discovery became headline news throughout the world. It has subsequently been established that these mass graves contained soldiers from a number of Allied countries – and some Germans too. Almost immediately after the discovery, it was decided to set up a national memorial in Fromelles and in January 2010 all the bodies were carefully reburied and each of the fallen soldiers was given his own individual grave.

On 19 July 2010 this National Memorial will be consecrated in an international ceremony and each year thereafter on the anniversary of the battle, formal memorial services will be held and associated with these services will be a concert in the town of Fromelles.



Eglise St Jean Baptiste



Poppies sit in front of a cross at the WWI memorial at Fromelles

Ypres (or Iepers) is a small northern Belgian city situated in a region called Flanders, close to the French border. As a result of the three monumental battles fought there in 1916, 1917 and 1918, it was almost completely demolished. Ypres itself was not the only casualty of the three battles; more than 500,000 soldiers—including thousands of Australians—were killed there. The memory of these battles and of the hideous loss of life is commemorated every evening in a service at the Menin Gate when local buglers and drummers remind the people of Ypres of the sacrifice made by those who fell defending the town and finally driving out the Germans.



Menin Gate

Ypres is a very beautiful city and the local chocolate makers are some of the best in Belgium.

The concert given by Australian groups is usually in the Town Square; and at the end of the performance they march the short distance to the Menin Gate, where the Last Post and Reveillé are sounded.



Arc de Triomphe

THE PERFORMANCE AT THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

In 1806 the Emperor Napoleon commanded that a memorial to the French soldiers who had been killed in battle should be built, and over a period of the next 30 years the world famous Arc de Triomphe was constructed. Since then it has been upgraded a number of times and now houses the Flame of Remembrance and the 'tombe du soldat inconnu' (tomb of the unknown soldier).

Every day at 6:30pm, a ceremony of remembrance takes place and there are always hundreds - and sometimes thousands - of people present to remember those who gave their lives for France and to hear the visiting band and/or choir.

We work closely with the official body conducting the memorial services so that Australian bands and choirs are able to take part in the ceremony—known as *Le Revivage de la Flamme* (the bringing to life again of the flame of remembrance).

It is customary for the senior person of the visiting band or choir concerned to bring a wreath and at the appropriate time lay it in a place of honour in front of the flame itself. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the visiting luminaries usually stay while the band play appropriate music for the assembled crowd.

The Arc de Triomphe is situated at the top of Paris' widest and most famous street, Les Champs Elysées, and when the visiting musical groups include a marching band, special arrangements are made for them to march behind all the flag bearers from the Champs Elysées to the Arc for the ceremony.



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



Marching down the Champs Elysées

Hôtel des Invalides



It was not until well into the Crimean War that the British Army really took care of its wounded soldiers anything like the French had done for generations. In 1670 Louis XIV built the magnificent hospital for wounded soldiers and for older war veterans to spend the rest of their lives. There was enough room in *Les Invalides* to sufficiently house more than 12,000 of them! Today, Les Invalides, as it is more popularly termed, contains the beautiful cathedral of *St. Louis des Invalides* and the very fine *Musée de l'Armée*, *one of the most extraordinary and exciting museums of its kind in the world.*

Also situated there are the offices of the organisations that look after the members of France's two prestigious orders of chivalry: Légion d'Honneur and Ordre National du Mérite.

Behind the Cathedral of St. Louis des Invalides is the vast gilded dome of the tomb of Napoleon. After strong representations were made over a long period of time to the British Government, King Louis-Philippe had Napoleon's body exhumed from his grave in Saint Helena and brought to Paris.



A magnificent tomb was constructed and in 1861 his body was laid to rest. The chapel in which the tomb of Napoleon was placed is adjacent to and just behind the Cathedral of St. Louis des Invalides. As well as being the chapel of the Legion d'Honneur, it is also used for orchestral performances.

Dome of Hôtel des Invalides

The tour arrangements will be under the directorship of Jackie Male, Director of Groups for Professional Conferences International (PCI/ATA) / Angas Travel (ATA) (the IATA Travel Agency handling all air travel and ground arrangements).

THE ROLE OF PCI/ATA

PCI/ATA maintains a close relationship with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) with whatever concerts and other engagements that DVA is conducting or managing. In all such situations, the role of PCI/ATA is to implement the instructions given by DVA.

THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY IN PARIS

The Australian Embassy in Paris is involved in all tours and the Cultural Attaché is the person with whom PCI/ATA is in direct contact. There is, to a certain extent, an overlapping between what DVA's representative in France handles and those things that are coordinated and controlled by the Embassy.

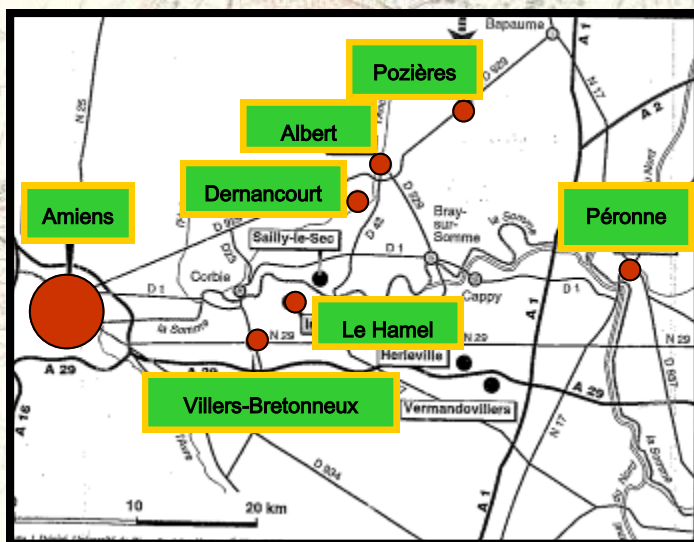
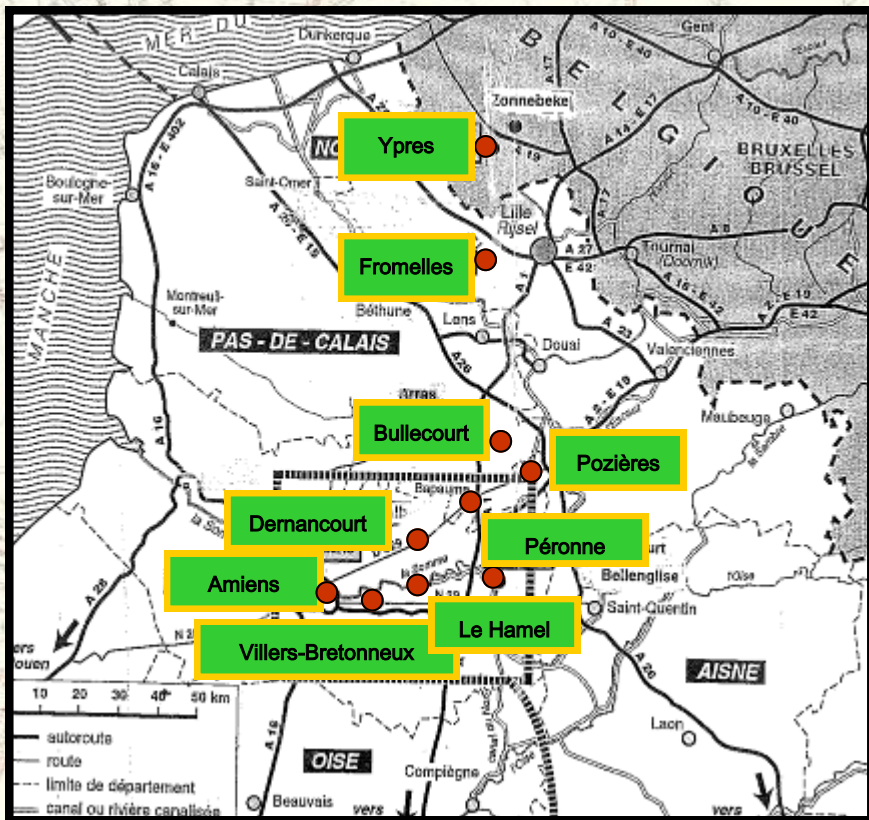
THE TOUR LEADER and ASSISTANT TOUR LEADERS

The Tour Leader (TL) is appointed by the band, orchestra or choir concerned. The role of the TL is to co-ordinate and manage the group. The TL will appoint Assistant Tour Leaders (ATL) more for their administrative ability rather than for their music and singing. It is a good idea for the TLs to involve the ATLs from the earliest planning stage.

THE ROLE OF PCI/ATA DURING THE PERIOD OF TIME OF THE TOUR

PCI/ATA's task is to make all of the arrangements (including scheduling concerts) and to provide the group with detailed instructions for every aspect of the formal tour.

It is possible for PCI/ATA to appoint a senior member of its office or other trained persons to act as a "tour director". The cost for this service is over and above the individual tour cost. A PCI/ATA tour director will have a sufficiently high standard of French to communicate with the local officials, the hotels or hostels, the coach company and any other party handling ground operations—that is, the logistics of a tour. This person will liaise with local authorities in case of any emergency. The tour leader is ultimately responsible for the group.





*World War I Service Medals
1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal*

Every year on ANZAC Day, memorial services are held and at the biggest of these at Villers-Bretonneux—the French and British pay their respects to their fallen brothers in arms from Australia.

PCI/ATA have been appointed as the Department of Veterans' Affairs' agent to invite nominations from orchestras, bands and choirs to be the official musical group for the annual ANZAC Day services in Villers-Bretonneux. If your group is interested in nominating to represent Australia in these commemorative services and would like further information, please contact Mrs Jackie Male at groups@angastravel.com.au

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