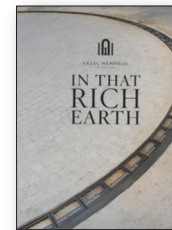


BOOK REVIEW:

In that rich earth

by Brad Manera with Craig Wilcox and Chris Clark

The Trustees of the Anzac Memorial Building: Hyde Park South, Sydney; 2020;
256 pp; ISBN 970646812663 (soft cover); RRP \$39.55



Opened on 24 November 1934, the Anzac Memorial stands proudly as one of New South Wales' most significant cultural and commemorative institutions, continuing in its original purpose as a war memorial and as a place of commemoration, remembrance, education and reflection.

The effects of the Great Depression limited the extent of the building. Notwithstanding, as part of the Commemoration of the Centenary of World War I, a federal grant enabled a major refurbishment and extension to the Memorial in 2018. The extension included a Hall of Service, the walls of which contain soil samples gathered from the towns around New South Wales from which Australians enlisted to serve in the Great War. On the floor of the Hall are samples of soil collected from 100 battlefields around the world over which Australians have walked, driven, or flown, sailed past, or dug in.

In the foreword, Australia's Governor-General notes: "To lose Australian lives on foreign soil creates a special bond with that soil. And given that most of our servicemen and women who died on operations are buried in foreign soil, that bond can take on a spiritual sense".

The book describes each of the battles from which the soil has been gathered in a double-page presentation. On one side, the battle is outlined, with linkages to participants from New South Wales; and a map shows the battle's location. The opposite page carries three or four photographs of the battle. Where a campaign comprised several battles, a larger-scale map places each battle in a temporal and geographic context.

The book has five major sections: colonial wars; the Great War; World War II; Australia in Asian wars; and peacekeeping and recent conflicts. Each section commences with a contextualisation of the social, political and military attitudes of the day.

The colonial wars section is written by Craig Wilcox; the Great War, World War II and Australia in Asia's wars by Brad Manera; and peacekeeping and recent conflicts by Chris Clark. The detail is absorbing without presenting the reader with a disjointed kaleidoscope of history.

The book opens with a description of the battle at Orakau, a decisive Maori defeat during the British invasion of the Waikato district in 1864. Before addressing the Boer War, Craig Wilcox describes the little-known participation by the New South Wales contingent in the disastrous Sudan War in 1885.

While Gallipoli and the Western Front battles of the Great War are quite well known, Brad Manera provides a personal dimension, including the less well-known battles in which Australians participated across the Sinai and Palestine. He handles the Second World War in the same

expert manner. In similar fashion, Brad presents Asia's wars, starting with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan, through the Korean War and the state of emergency in Malaya, to Vietnam.

In the peacekeeping and recent conflicts section, Chris Clark covers the wars in Iraq, peacekeeping operations in Rwanda and Cambodia, and the war in Afghanistan.

Understandably, given the nature of our history, the focus of the book is on land battles. The authors, however, have taken great care to ensure that air and naval forces are appropriately recognised for their own battles and for their contribution to and effect on the outcomes of the land battles in which they were involved.

The authors are eminently qualified to address their respective topics. Brad Manera is the Senior Historian/Curator of the Anzac Memorial and has held similar positions at the West Australian Museum, the National Museum of Australia and the Australian War Memorial. He is the author of *Your friend the enemy* (nextmedia, 2015); and co-author of *New South Wales and the Great War* (Longueville Media, 2016).

Craig Wilcox, former historian at the Australian War Memorial, is a fellow at the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies in London, and an honorary associate of the Centre for Historical Research at the National Museum of Australia. His books include: *Australia's Boer War: the war in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Oxford University Press, 2002); *Red coat dreaming: how colonial Australia embraced the British army* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); and *Badge, Boot, Button: the story of Australian uniforms* (National Library of Australia, 2017).

Chris Clark graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1972, and gained his PhD from the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, in 1991. He is the Royal Australian Air Force Historian and was formerly historian for post-1945 conflicts at the Australian War Memorial. He is the author of numerous books on military history.

The book is produced by the Anzac Memorial and the proceeds from sales are returned to the Memorial. The book, however, only covers the 100 battlefields which are represented on the floor of the Hall of Service, a representative sub-set only of the battlefields upon which New South Welshmen have fought over the last 160 years.

In That Rich Earth is beautifully presented with a wonderful collection of photographs, maps and posters. It will appeal to any reader interested in Australia's military history, regardless of their state of origin.

Bob Treloar