

## YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT - 58 TO THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY MUSEUM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



*Throughout 2021, the Virtual Visit series will be continuing to present interesting features from the collection and their background stories. The Australian Army Museum of Western Australia is now open four days per week, Wednesday through Friday plus Sunday. Current COVID19 protocols including contact tracing will apply.*

### Australian Trench Raiders – Western Front



On the night of 6 June 1916, 73 AIF soldiers took part in a raid on a German trench on the Western Front. The raid was Australia's first action in Europe. Its purpose was to obtain prisoners, intelligence, and weapons. Two Australians were killed and another 4 wounded while they were returning to Australian trenches. The soldiers were given 8 days leave in London where they were feted by the press who labelled them the Black Anzacs because they had blackened their faces with burnt cork for the raid.



The raid was deemed a success. The raiders had successfully crossed no man's land, killed 12 Germans, and taken another 3 for interrogation, gathered information on trench construction and collected weapons and many personal documents and items containing information about the enemy soldiers.

*Portion of Trench Raid diorama in Army Museum World War One Gallery*

As Officer in Charge of the Assault, **Captain Cecil Maitland Foss** was awarded a Military Cross, 2nd Lieutenant Gill and Corporal Tozer who on 2 nights led the attacking party through no man's land were awarded the Military Cross and Military Medal respectively. Private Church was awarded a Military Medal for gallantry. Of those four only Corporal Tozer, who later as Lieutenant Tozer won a Military Cross, survived the war.



Despite the fact that World War I was the first conflict to be fought by mechanized means, trench raiding was very similar to medieval warfare insofar as it was fought face-to-face with crude weaponry.

Trench raiders were lightly equipped for stealthy, unimpeded movement. Typically, raiding parties were armed with deadly homemade trench raiding clubs, bayonets, entrenching tools, trench knives, hammers, hatchets, pickaxe handles and brass knuckles.

The choice of weaponry was deliberate. The raiders' intention was to kill or capture people quietly, without drawing attention to their activities. Clearly, this would have been impossible if they had routinely used firearms during raids. Trench raiders were also armed with more modern weapons such as pistols, shotguns, submachine guns, and hand grenades, though these were only intended to be used in an emergency, if the enemy discovered their activities and raised the alarm

*Australian trench raider depicted in World War One Gallery. Since initial installation, the Rising Sun badges and unit identifiers have been removed for a more accurate representation.*

## Origins of Trench Raiding

During World War 1, as trench warfare evolved so did fighting tactics. British commanders thought it important for front line troops to dominate no man's land. The practice of raiding was viewed as a means of reinforcing the offensive spirit of troops in contact. The practice of raiding appealed to and was refined by Canadians and Australians in particular. The practice had a mixed reaction with the soldiers selected to participate. In spite of the bravery frequently displayed during raiding operations, the majority of ordinary soldiers had no great love for such attacks. As well as the immediate danger of the operation, there was certain to be enemy retaliation, as a consequence.

Post war German memoirs revealed the negative impact that trench raids and later silent incursion tactics had on their morale. In World War 2, aggressive patrolling and the domination of no man's land was an important element in the defence of Tobruk.

**A Confusing Book Title: *The Black Anzacs***

<https://booksonwaraustralia.com/digger-diarystories/1715-black-anzacs.html>

<http://blackanzacs.org.au/Page2withMenu.html>

<http://blog.wags.org.au/index.php/guest-bloggers/julie-martin/50-who-were-the-black-anzacs-probably-not-who-you-think>

## Foss Brothers Medal Groups



**Captain Cecil Maitland Foss MC, 28th Battalion**, of Babakin WA was one of three brothers killed in action.

Two months after the trench raid, he was wounded at Pozieres on 5 August and died on 11 August 1916 aged 25 years. Captain Foss had served for 18 months in Egypt, Gallipoli and France..

The medals and commemoratives of the three Foss brothers are displayed in the World War One Gallery at the Army Museum.

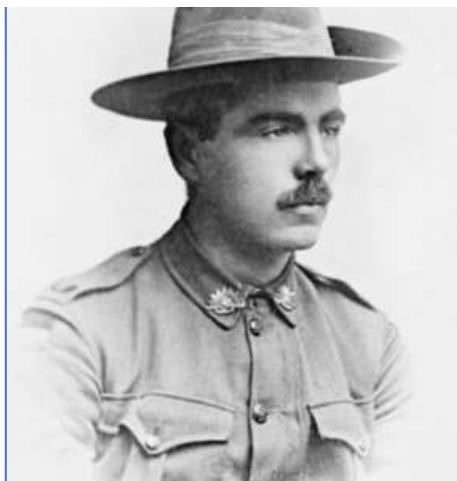
<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/227605>



**Second Lieutenant Henry Clinton Foss, 28th Battalion**. A farmer from Subiaco, WA prior to enlistment, 2nd Lt Foss embarked with the rank of Acting Corporal with C Company, 10th Light Horse Regiment on 17 February 1915. After promotion to Sergeant he was Mentioned in Despatches "for gallantry (when he) volunteered to bomb Turks from barricade on Kaiajik Aghala. (He) held on for 31 hours and repulsed 3 Turkish attacks on the barricade. Transferred to 28 Battalion he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. On 3 May 1917 he was killed in action, aged 29, and is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/204220>

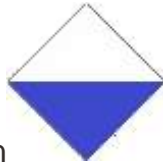
**5969 Corporal Ernest Cecil Battalion**. A farmer from to enlistment, Cpl Foss rank of Private with the 19th from Fremantle on HMAT August 1916. Subsequent to Corporal, he was killed in 1918, aged 33, and is the Villers-Bretonneux



**Foss, 11th Subiaco, WA prior embarked with the Reinforcements Miltiades on 7 his promotion to action on 3 June commemorated on Memorial.**

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/175850>

28 Battalion



11 Battalion



## LINKS FOR FURTHER ENJOYMENT

Visit the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia web site

<https://armymuseumwa.com.au/>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/60/twin-trenches>

AIF Project – Summary page for Cecil Maitland Foss

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=101880>

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=101882> – Ernest Cecil Foss

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=101883> – Henry Clinton Foss

<https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/gallery/34775> - Group photo with HC Foss

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1730543> Studio portrait

Studio portrait of Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt) Henry Clinton Foss, 28th Battalion. A farmer from Subiaco, WA prior to enlistment.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/H06595/>