



Language, Australian Soldiers, and the First World War

During the First World War, Australian soldiers, in cultivating the identity of the larrikin digger, often celebrated the distinctive 'Aussie slanguage' that marked their informality, disdain for authority, and other supposedly inherent qualities of 'Australianness'. The slang of Australia soldiers, however, was often a vocabulary shared with the other Anglophone armies, as well as containing a variety of words borrowed from other languages and subsequently corrupted.

The story of Australian soldier slang of the First World War reveals more than a story of Australian nationalism. It also reveals much about the nature of Australians' experiences of, and attitudes towards, the people they encountered when they travelled overseas, as well as the shared experiences of military life and battle.

And there is more to the study of language and Australian soldiers during the First World War. Recently, scholars have called for a more thorough understanding of 'language experiences' in the context of war, an area that, despite the many books and papers written about war, remains largely ignored. This paper seeks to suggest some ways that we might begin to better understand diverse language experiences in the context of the First World War.



Dr Amanda Laugesen is a historian, lexicographer, and Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre. She has published a number of books and articles relating to the social and cultural history of war, including Diggerspeak: the Language of Australians at War (2005) and Boredom is the Enemy: the Intellectual and Imaginative Journeys of Australian Soldiers in the Great War and Beyond (2012). She has a book forthcoming in November 2014 entitled Furphies and Whizz-bangs: Anzac Slang from the Great War.

Details: Manning Clark House, 11 Tasmania Circle Forrest at 5:30pm, Monday, 21 July.

Admission \$10/\$7 concession and MCH Life Members, Paying MCH Members free.

Bookings info@manningclark.org.au or 02 6295 1808.

Light supper; please advise dietary requirements.