



Sir Edwin Lutyens and the Australian National Memorial

‘There is no spot on the whole of this tortured soil of France which is more associated with Australian history and the triumph of Australian soldiers, than Villers-Bretonneux.’ – General Sir John Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps

The Sir John Monash Centre, located just behind the [Australian National Memorial](#), continues Australia’s commitment to commemorating soldiers who served with courage and sacrifice in the First World War.

The location, Villers-Bretonneux, was the site of the First and Second Battles of Villers-Bretonneux, two Australian victories in the First World War when Australians recaptured the town from German occupation.

The second battle occurred on the second anniversary of the Australians’ landing at Gallipoli in April 1915. This date is observed in Australia as Anzac Day, ‘Anzac’ being the short-form of ‘Australian and New Zealand Army Corps’.

While the original Anzac battle in Gallipoli holds a special place in Australia’s history, the new Centre in France presents the subsequent chapter of Australians on the Western Front—where, they experienced their greatest achievements and heaviest losses.

Australia and the people of Villers-Bretonneux still have a special and enduring bond, stemming from a shared memory of liberation and post-war collaboration.

The new Centre builds on the original intent and design of the Memorial that was established in 1938 to honour more than 295,000 Australian soldiers who served on the Western Front and some 46,000 who gave their lives.

Work on the Australian National Memorial was postponed during the Great Depression but then continued under the design of a British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens.



Sir Edwin (1869-1944) specialised in large civil projects. He planned the Indian capital of New Delhi and designed the Cenotaph in London (1919-20).

His design for the Australian National Memorial consisted of a tower within the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery which included a Cross of Sacrifice, signifying the location of more than 40 war graves (2,144 total). The 31m tower is surrounded by walls and panels that list the names of more than 10,500 Australian soldiers missing in France.

The Memorial was extensively damaged during the Second World War and, although repairs were carried out, some scarring was retained and is still visible to visitors as a reminder of war. The Memorial is maintained by the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) on behalf of the [Office of Australian War Graves](#).

The Sir John Monash Centre and the Australian National Memorial are key sites on [the Australian Remembrance Trail along the Western Front](#). Every year more than 1.5 million Australians visit the Australian Remembrance Trail to learn about their country's First World War contribution, many retracing the footsteps of their forebears.

On 25 April each year, the Australian National Memorial is the site of an Anzac Day Dawn Service conducted by the Australian Government.