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The Enemy at the Gates: The 1918 Mystery Aeroplane Panic in Australia and New Zealand

Brett Holman

Objectively, Germany posed little direct threat to Australia and New Zealand during the Great War: it was, after all, on the opposite side of the planet. Subjectively, however, it was a different matter. In the public imagination, the two dominions were saturated with German spies, who were passing information back to the Fatherland, carrying out acts of sabotage and subverting the loyalty of 'British' Australians and New Zealanders through pacifist and socialist propaganda. This fear of the 'enemy within the gates', in historian Ernest Scott's phrase, is well known.¹ But the fear of the enemy at the gates, the fear of external attack, is not. While the spectre of a German invasion and occupation was frequently employed for propaganda purposes in both Australia and New Zealand during the war, it is not clear how many people saw this as a realistic threat.² Perhaps surprisingly, though, at least by the last year of the war, the main danger was perceived to come not on land or from the sea—at least not directly—but from the air. The little-known mystery aeroplane panic of 1918 is the most extreme example of this fear.³ The hundreds of reports received by the press and the authorities in Australia and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand, of otherwise unexplainable aircraft flying over widely separated parts of both countries were widely interpreted as being German in origin, operating from naval raiders off the coast or from secret bases inland. The reports were spurious, misperceptions or hoaxes, but both governments took them seriously; Australia, at least, undertook substantial defensive precautions as a result, turning what otherwise would have been a minor scare into a major panic.

This mystery aeroplane panic reveals a great deal about what people in both countries imagined Germany wanted to do to them and what it was capable of doing. It further suggests that Australians and New Zealanders had reached a new understanding of the war and of their place in it: the German threat was no longer merely internal, covert and potential, but external, overt and actual. This marked a new stage in what historian Michael McKernan has described as, in the Australian case, ‘manufacturing the war’:

Many Australians seemed to regret that the battles were fought at such a distance; they longed for direct experience and meaningful war work ... The Australians needed to manufacture threats and crises to make the war real and immediate; the claim that Australia was to be the ‘first prize’ of a victorious Germany was a product of this atmosphere.⁴

By the autumn of 1918, Australians and New Zealanders believed themselves to be under threat of imminent attack, subjectively sharing the experience, as they understood it, of not just their soldiers in battle, but also their allies in Europe, above all the British, who had been subjected to bombardment and blockade since 1914. In other words, Australians and New Zealanders were now manufacturing *total* war.

By definition, the war that was manufactured in this way must have been plausible to be effective, which is why it is so useful in reconstructing the subjective understanding of what war meant. It reflects what Australians and New Zealanders were learning, primarily, from the press: the type of war being manufactured changed over time, from a limited war to a total one, in which for the first time the home front became as important as the battle front.⁵

The initial wave of Germanophobia, riots and internments in 1914–15 can be traced in part to the lurid stories of the ‘rape of Belgium’, the first naval and aerial bombardments of Britain and the sinking of the *Lusitania*.⁶ The constant demand for recruits and the consequent moves towards conscription—successful in New Zealand in 1916, divisive failures in Australia in 1916 and 1917—demonstrated the new importance of the home front in supplying the front lines with men as well as materiel.⁷ By 1918 the revolutions in Russia had shown how essential it was to maintain civilian morale, and the Zeppelin and Gotha raids on London and Paris had shown how easy it now was to strike directly at the home front.⁸ Indeed, the advent of air raids on cities during the Great War is intimately bound up with the creation of such concepts as the

civilian, the home front and total war itself.⁹ As historian Joan Beaumont argues, ‘every dimension of Australian life in 1914–18 was affected by knowledge of what was happening in Gallipoli, France, Belgium and the Middle East’. By the last year of the war this knowledge had prepared people for the understanding that they themselves were fighting a total war.¹⁰ In other words, although they may not have experienced it directly yet, thanks to their imaginative understanding of what was happening overseas, Australians, and for that matter New Zealanders, were ready to manufacture total war.

Manufacturing total war was by no means unique to Australia and New Zealand.¹¹ Every home front had its enemies within and without the gates: spies, traitors and mystery aircraft were also imagined in times of crisis in Britain, Canada, South Africa and the United States, just to mention the other major English-speaking combatants.¹² Australia and New Zealand seem to be unusual, however, in experiencing such an intense panic so late in the war. This suggests a delayed response due to the factor of distance noted by McKernan. Being so far from Europe, Australasians felt relatively safe, and the objective lack of a German threat meant that the conditions for manufacturing total war were difficult to obtain. Not until 1918 did this change, as a result of new technological and strategic factors. The necessary plausibility was created by, first, the belated report that a German raider, SMS *Wolf*, had been active in southern waters in 1917, along with its seaplane; and, second, the shocking initial success of the German offensives of spring 1918, which threatened an Allied defeat on the Western Front for the first time since 1914. A third factor present in New Zealand was press reports of a new German gun that had bombarded Paris at very long range. The mystery aeroplane panic had both trans-Tasman similarities and differences, and requires both particular and general explanations. These in turn help us to understand the kind of total war that was manufactured by Australians and New Zealanders in 1918.

The Scare

Mystery aircraft were a phenomenon common to the air-minded societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when widespread excitement about the coming of flight was combined with equally widespread ignorance about how flying actually worked.¹³ Periodically during this ‘Scareship Age’, people imagined they saw machines flying in the sky where there were none, plausibly following the latest advances in aeronautical technology as portrayed in popular

culture.¹⁴ The origins ascribed to these mystery aircraft reflected faith in domestic ingenuity or, more often, fear of foreign mendacity. In Russian Poland in 1892, they were believed to be German balloons; in the United States in 1896 and 1897, airships built by local inventors; in Britain in 1909 and 1913, German Zeppelins; in Scandinavia in the 1930s, Soviet aeroplanes; in Europe in 1946, Soviet rockets.¹⁵ During the Great War, they were, almost inevitably, seen as enemy aircraft: Zeppelins again in Britain, and German aeroplanes in South Africa, Canada and the United States.¹⁶ Mystery airships were seen in both Australia and New Zealand in 1909; intriguingly, in the former they were most often believed to be domestic and friendly, in the latter foreign and hostile.¹⁷ Mystery aircraft sightings, then, were a product of general expectations that aviation would soon transform the nation and the world itself, conditioned by specific hopes and anxieties about who would control this transformation, and what it might ultimately lead to.

Aeroplanes of unknown origin had been seen from time to time in Australia since August 1914, despite the confinement of the nascent Australian Flying Corps to aerodromes near Melbourne and Sydney and the effective grounding of the few civilian aircraft due to the emergency.¹⁸ For example, in September 1914, a number of people at Swansea in New South Wales, saw an aeroplane ‘about 2000 feet high [610 meters][which] was travelling at a fairly high rate of speed and carried a very powerful searchlight in front of the machine ... a strong stream of light reached the earth’.¹⁹ Although at least one aviator of foreign birth was questioned in connection with these sightings, investigations by the military found little cause for concern.²⁰ This early scare, comprising about a dozen sightings in all, may have been connected to anxieties over the fate of the first Anzac convoy, then being readied for dispatch: German raiders were known to be at large, and the military situation in Europe looked grim, especially after the fall of Antwerp in October.²¹ With the war outlook in the spring of 1914 so uncertain, even bleak, it was perhaps not surprising that people might let their fears get the better of them. Afterwards, sightings became sporadic, with another small peak in the number of reports in early 1917.²² That same year New Zealand had its first mystery aeroplanes of the war, with sightings at Clutha, Parikanapa and Tauranga.²³



Figure 5.1: Location of mystery aeroplane sightings in New Zealand, 1918.

The mystery aeroplane scare of 1918 was far greater in intensity and extent than these earlier episodes, however, involving over two hundred sightings in Australia and New Zealand over a period of months. Although the scare began in New Zealand, the great majority of reports came from Australia. But the evidence from each country differs qualitatively as well as quantitatively, with the official archival record dominating in Australia and vaguer, often cryptic press accounts dominating in New Zealand, which constrains what can be known about either case.

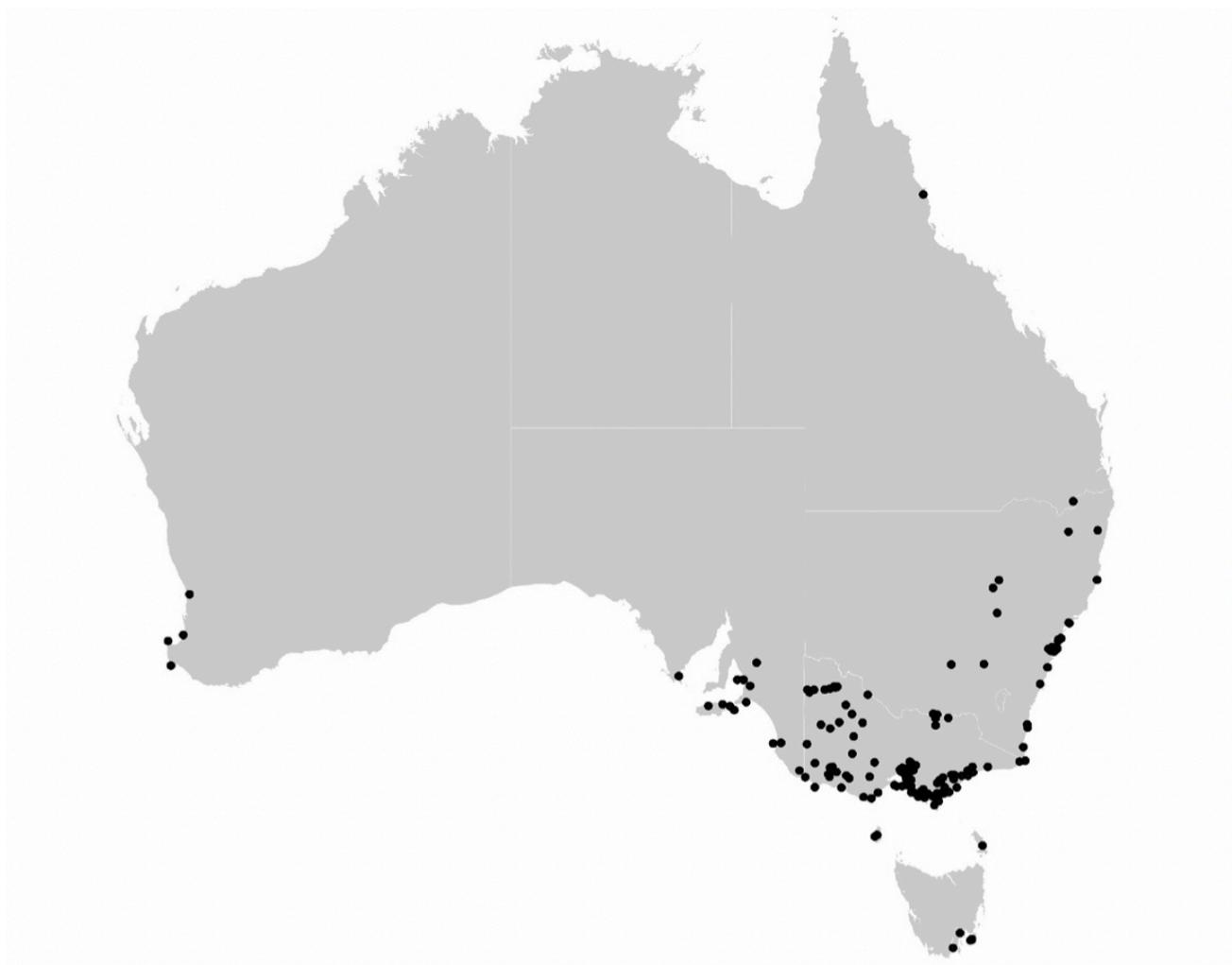


Figure 5.2: Location of mystery aeroplane sightings in Australia, 1918.

The scare began in New Zealand's South Island in early March, when a woman bathing at Tahuna 'saw two seaplanes quite distinctly' over Tasman Bay, 'flying together near the surface of the water'.²⁴ A few days later, several people in Christchurch watched 'What appeared to be an aeroplane with lights' fly to the southwest in the early evening.²⁵ A widely reported story, this time from the North Island, that an 'aeroplane had been seen during the day hovering over Taneatua' by three men on 26 March turned out to be either a hoax or a rumour, 'sent around by telephone to the inhabitants of the district'.²⁶ Perhaps due to the resulting scepticism, there were no further direct reports of mystery aeroplanes in the New Zealand press until the end of May, when sightings took place on the South Island near Greymouth and Hokitika.²⁷ In the latter case, 'an aeroplane could be seen circling around' some ships, also evidently mysterious, while 'Quite a number gathered on the sea beach to view the interesting sight'.²⁸

By this time, mystery aeroplanes were being reported from Australia as well. At Nyang in north-western Victoria, on the afternoon of 21 March, Police Constable J Wright 'saw two flying machines pass overhead. They were up an [*sic*] great height & appeared to be about twenty yards apart. I did not hear the noise of the machines. They proceeded in a Westerly direction & as the sky was particularly clear the machines were easily discernible'.²⁹ Similar reports soon began to trickle, then flood, in from other areas. The scare peaked around the end of April, when as many as ten aeroplanes were being reported in a single day. By the time reports started to thin out in July, around two hundred sightings of mystery aeroplanes had been reported to the press, the police or military intelligence. Most came from Victoria, but examples were recorded in every state. Witnesses included solicitors, merchant officers, returned soldiers, teachers, farmers and other, mostly male, members of the middle and working classes.³⁰ In April, a 'reliable woman' from Apsley in the Wimmera, Victoria, was 'quite satisfied in her own mind that the object [she saw] was an aeroplane; in May, a family at Research, near Melbourne, 'distinctly saw an aeroplane' with the aid of a telescope; in August, a former Australian Flying Corps lieutenant was 'confident' that he saw 'an artificial light ... attached to some air machine well under control' outside his home near Hexham in the Western District.³¹ The most striking report came from three men droving cattle near Macarthur, Victoria, who claimed to have seen an aeroplane land in the middle of the night in response to signal rockets fired from the ground. The pilot got out and met another man before taking off again.³² Sightings diminished in number after the middle of May, but a few continued to be reported right up until the end of the war in both countries. For example, an aeroplane was seen near Wanganui on the North Island of New Zealand on at least five separate occasions in late July and early August, while the minesweeper HMAS *Coogee* was still investigating a report that two aeroplanes had been seen from King Island in Bass Strait a week after the Armistice.³³

The press generally treated these reports seriously, as did the authorities. Police followed up locally to get more information, while military and naval intelligence in Melbourne collated the reports and attempted to work out what they meant. Although some instances of hoaxing or misperception were identified, on the whole the witnesses seemed sincere and reliable. If many had never seen an aeroplane before, and so might have been deceived by natural phenomena, some were returned soldiers who could be presumed to have some familiarity with aircraft. At least two witnesses were veterans of the Royal

Flying Corps, one, Lieutenant Charles Kingsford Smith, being a decorated fighter pilot and later a world-famous aviation pioneer.³⁴

What made these aeroplanes mysterious was that in most cases it was impossible to explain where they came from. There were very few aeroplanes in Australia in 1918, either in private or government hands. Only a handful were in use by the government, at the training schools at Point Cook near Melbourne and Richmond near Sydney, while the small number of civilian aviators at the beginning of the war had either enlisted or else curtailed their flying due to the difficulty and expense involved.³⁵ For example, the closest known aeroplanes to Nyang, the site of the first Australian sighting, were the civilian flying school at Ballarat, 370 kilometres away, and the army's flying school at Point Cook, 480 kilometres away. The former's Blériot aircraft had not flown since sustaining damage in South Australia the previous November, and none of the army machines 'had been flown beyond a radius of twenty miles [32 kilometres] from the aerodrome within in the last six months'.³⁶ Aircraft were even more scarce in New Zealand: the government was not yet involved in aviation, and there were only two civilian flying schools, at Sockburn near Christchurch, and Kohimarama near Auckland.³⁷ Again, their responsibility could usually be ruled out.³⁸

If the mystery aeroplanes weren't friendly, and if the sincerity and reliability of the witnesses wasn't in doubt, then the only explanation seemed to be that the aeroplanes were German. Reports of a mystery aeroplane off the coast prompted the *Wanganui Chronicle* to ask 'Is there an enemy raider?', while, after seeing 'A mysterious aeroplane' early one May morning, 'Anxious' of Brighton wrote to the Melbourne *Herald's* editor, asking 'if you thought this machine might be the German one that is about'.³⁹ That the mystery aeroplanes were so widely assumed to be German, despite the seeming remoteness of Australia and New Zealand from Europe, suggests that a new understanding of what war meant was beginning to emerge.

From Scare to Panic

Press commentary in both countries spoke in terms of a war scare, a well-known feature of the colonial period, although the reaction on the part of the authorities justifies use of the stronger term panic, a more extreme form of fear leading to some form of irrational behaviour.⁴⁰ The mystery aeroplane sightings were usually ascribed by the press to enemy reports that the *Wolf*, a German merchant

cruiser which had successfully preyed on Allied shipping in the Indian and Pacific Oceans in 1917, had carried a small reconnaissance seaplane which had flown, unnoticed, over Sydney.⁴¹ This claim appeared in the Australian press on 16 March 1918, just days before Constable Wright's encounter at Nyang.⁴² Made only after *Wolf* had returned to Germany, the claim was almost certainly untrue, since the seaplane in question was not in working condition at the time; but it led to immediate speculation by the Melbourne *Herald* that it explained a mystery aeroplane that had been seen over Gippsland in Victoria during the previous year's conscription campaign.⁴³ Worse, it raised the possibility that there might still be raiders in Australasian waters, with yet more seaplanes. As one police sergeant investigating an aeroplane seen in April at Terrigal on the New South Wales north coast suggested, 'The rumour that a seaplane was seen over Sydney in connection with the German raider "WOOLF" [*sic*] will be remembered and this is a likely locality for a seaplane to hover and locate ships in the harbour and elsewhere'.⁴⁴ According to the Auckland *Star*, it was only after 'the boast by an officer of a German raider that he had passed over Sydney in a seaplane' that 'the authorities in New Zealand have had to cope with quite an epidemic of reports about mysterious aeroplanes circling around the more remote parts of New Zealand'.⁴⁵ In fact, the first reports from New Zealand came before the Sydney overflight story broke, although they are simultaneous with the original, less spectacular revelation that *Wolf* possessed a seaplane in the first place, used to scout for victims.⁴⁶ The Christchurch *Press* referred to a 'raider scare' in Australia, which was said to be 'suffering an attack of nerves in the matter of raiders, and any old story is accepted and sent wildly circulating ... Certain definite signs of uneasiness in official circles, and certain things which cannot be hidden from the people, have given colour to the wildest of rumours'.⁴⁷ Most dramatically of all, on 23 April a number of major Australian newspapers ran an article headlined 'War in Australia', which informed readers that:

Within the past 48 hours information has come to hand which points to the probability that the realities of war will soon be brought before Australians in a most convincing fashion. Steps have been taken by the Defence authorities to cope with a situation which may at any moment assume grave proportions. More than this cannot be said for the present.⁴⁸

These contemporary diagnoses are plausible, if incomplete. The revelations concerning the activities of *Wolf*'s seaplane, particularly its supposed flight over

Sydney, were clearly the initial trigger for the scare. The progress of aviation during the war had been spectacular and its ultimate potential unknown.⁴⁹ In the first half of March alone, it was reported that a New South Wales gem merchant named Magnus Goldring had been killed in a German air raid on London; that in Paris, more than one hundred civilians had been killed in another raid, including six crushed in a panic in an underground station, and sixty-six, ‘chiefly women and children’, asphyxiated; and that a third of Venice’s houses had been destroyed by German Gotha bombers.⁵⁰ The London *Daily Mail* was quoted as accusing the ‘Austro-Germans’ of preferring ‘to make the world a wilderness rather than miss a chance of outraging civilisation’.⁵¹ None of this had been possible before the war, and naïve extrapolation of current trends into the future further heightened anxieties. Speculation about the possibility of what, after the war, would come to be called a knock-out blow from the air was becoming common, ‘that within a few hours of the declaration of war a dread, whirring noise will be heard approaching the big towns and military centres of the combatants, foretelling wholesale murder and destruction by aerial torpedoes’, for example.⁵²

But these events and ideas were not sufficient on their own to explain the transformation of the scare into a panic. The key to this was the new perception of vulnerability. Both countries lacked effective defences in 1918: the Australian Imperial Force and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force were overseas and consumed the vast bulk of available men of military age, with only assorted militia and volunteer units of dubious utility left behind; the Royal Australian Navy’s best ships were far away and the Australian Flying Corps had only a training presence at home; New Zealand had no military aviation at all and only one elderly cruiser, HMS *Philomel*, paid off in Wellington Harbour.⁵³ Unsurprisingly, then, the sudden revelation of a German threat left both countries assailed by a sudden sense of helplessness.

What did people think was going on? What did they think might happen? Press reports were rarely explicit, perhaps due to censorship, whether official or self-imposed.⁵⁴ But there is evidence in the form of the jokes newspapers told about the mystery aeroplanes, particularly in the ‘They Say’ or ‘Town Talk’ columns, unattributed mixtures of jokes, rumour and commentary. For example, they say: ‘That it is possible that a raider will visit New Zealand, let loose an air plane [*sic*], and drop bombs on Auckland City. If one should drop on [the department store] Laidlaw Leeds? Good-bye New Zealand’.⁵⁵ Or again: ‘Thousands of New

Zealanders have seen hostile aircraft in New Zealand air lately. It is sincerely hoped they will not drop bombs on any “indispensables” —referring to men exempted from conscription— ‘or even on Appeal Boards’.⁵⁶ That these statements were made for comedic effect means they cannot be taken as straightforward reportage of public opinion, but equally it is possible that they do reflect jokes that were being passed around orally. Either way, their humour depends upon a common awareness of the idea that, first, a German raider might be in New Zealand waters; second, that it might have an aeroplane on board; and third, that it might launch air raids on New Zealand’s cities. The reference to sightings made by thousands of people is also intriguing, given the relative lack of mystery aeroplane reports from New Zealand, though again it is difficult to know how seriously this was meant.

Another jocular account, couched in the form of a letter from a reader relating events at a quite possibly apocryphal afternoon tea in suburban Auckland, provides further details on what sort of rumours were at least considered plausible to readers:

One dear thing held the floor by virtue of the strength of her vocal chords, and she was talking about these strange aeroplanes nervous folk are seeing of nights. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘it’s true all right. Only last night Mrs. So-and-So saw one going over her house just after midnight. She called Mr. So-and-So, and he saw it, too, so there. And my husband knows Captain Dash in the Defence Office, and Captain Dash says there are aeroplanes about and if there’s any trouble at any time not to rush to the station to catch a train to get away from town, because they’re bound to try to drop bombs on the station, because they know every- one would go there.’⁵⁷

Whether or not this incident took place in reality, it is at least evidence for the idea that New Zealanders feared aerial bombardment. But it is also evidence for the idea that New Zealanders feared naval bombardment too, because the letter continued:

‘And then there are these big guns firing 100 miles [160 kilometres]. What’s to stop a raider coming in behind Rangitoto with one of these guns and firing a shell into our houses in Grafton Road? And they’re sending my husband into camp, so there would be no one left to fight them.’ I regret that at this stage I fainted outright, and heard no more.⁵⁸

As well as suggesting nervousness over the war draining away men of military age, this was a reference to another new threat to civilians: the so-called Paris Gun, which the German army had recently begun using to shell the French capital from a distance of 80 miles (129 kilometres).⁵⁹ Unlike Gotha bombers, the Paris Gun struck without warning. In one particularly shocking incident, eighty-eight parishioners were killed when a church was shelled on Good Friday, a story repeated with horror in the New Zealand press.⁶⁰

The use of humour enabled New Zealanders to imagine a physical attack upon their soil in a way that was not unduly disturbing. A cartoon in the *New Zealand Observer* depicted a church being bombarded, to the consternation of the congregation, but immediately defused any anxiety by using the idea to underline poor church attendance in New Zealand. This fear appears to have been confined to New Zealand, perhaps because most of the country would have been within range of such a gun, unlike Australia.

If the fear of long-range guns appears to have been confined to New Zealand, the fear of spies and even invasion appear to have been more prevalent in Australia. Accusations that enemy agents were somehow responsible were common. After reporting a mystery aeroplane seen by the station master at Maffra in Gippsland, Shire Secretary James French informed the government that:

For some time the residents of Seaspray on the Ninety- Mile Beach see bright lights westward of that place; supposed to be in the Carrajung Hills, and it was from here that [JW McLachlan, member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly], saw the raider ‘Wolf’ standing out for many hours one day ... It is quite evident that the material is carted into the bush and the planes are there fitted up. A friend of mine here met a lady from Healesville, who said she frequently noticed cars going up into the bush in that direction loaded up and returning empty.⁶¹

Another informant advised the minister for defence to investigate ‘a late Officer in the German Army, by the name of Schefferdecker’ who lived not far from Nyang, where the first Australian sighting took place.⁶² The startling initial success of the German (northern) spring offensives on the Western Front, which began in late March as the Australian sightings began to be reported, added to the sense of urgency.⁶³ On 13 April many newspapers published Field Marshal Douglas Haig’s famous ‘backs to the wall’ order to his men, imploring them to

‘fight on to the end’ in order to defend: ‘The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind alike’.⁶⁴ Significantly, this desperate news came just before a surge in mystery aeroplane reports. The possibility of defeat was now discussed openly, as when Augustus James, the New South Wales minister for education, warned at the end of April that ‘At any time we may hear of the British forces being broken’:

The safety of Australia depends on England. Where will Australia stand if England is beaten in this war? What would we be able to do in the event of an invasion by a foreign army? We have neither the rifles nor the trained men, nor have we a submarine or aeroplane capable of use in any attempt to drive off any enemy.⁶⁵

Indeed, the threat of bombing was now used to stimulate recruiting, with ‘March to Freedom’ snowball marches in rural New South Wales in the autumn being advertised through posters depicting, improbably, ‘Zeppelins over your town’.⁶⁶ The *Sydney Morning Herald* quoted British opinion to the effect that ‘there are no more civilians, in the sense of non-combatants. All are now recognised as taking their part in the war’.⁶⁷ That these fears were unwarranted, given the actual status of aviation technology and German strategic capabilities, is beside the point. After *Wolf* and the spring offensives, the mystery aeroplanes that had been seen from time to time earlier in the war now took on far greater significance, being interpreted as evidence that Germany was actively seeking to bring the kind of total war already familiar to Europeans, to the Australian and New Zealand home fronts.

The Panic

For their part, the Australian and New Zealand governments were both concerned about the possibility that the rumours were true, that German aircraft were in fact present in their skies. Direct evidence from New Zealand is scarce, but at the start of April John O’Donovan, the commissioner of the New Zealand Police, noted that:

Reports have come to hand from time to time that aeroplanes have been seen passing over certain parts of the Dominion, and it is certain that if the objects seen were really aeroplanes they did not belong to the aviation schools either at Auckland or Christchurch. Investigation has failed to

elicit sufficient information to decide definitely the nature of the objects seen.⁶⁸

He directed that ‘In case of a recurrence of similar reports, either as regard aeroplanes or other enemy rumours, members of the [Police] Force should telegraph at once to this office and to [the Naval Intelligence Centre, Wellington] and proceed to investigate promptly’.⁶⁹ This was reiterated in the press a few days later, when anyone seeing a mystery aeroplane was advised to ‘inform the nearest police or defence officer, avoiding any public mention, for fear that it comes under the scope of the numerous possible offences against [the] comprehensive War Regulations’.⁷⁰ In Australia, too, the authorities tried to allay any alarm, although their actions in fact gave credence to the rumours. News of aeroplane sightings was censored from about 23 April, the day that the press warned of ‘War in Australia’ and the day that the Minister for Defence, Senator George Pearce, publicly requested that ‘all information regarding the movements of aeroplanes should be given at once to the nearest military officer or the police’.⁷¹ Police in Victoria were given detailed instructions on how to determine the presence of an aeroplane: for example, one flying at a height of 2000 to 4000 feet [600 to 1200 metres] was said to sound ‘similar to [a] motor bike at [a] distance of [a] 1/2 mile [800 metres]’.⁷² Senator Pearce pointed out, ‘in reference to the various reports of aeroplanes having been seen in certain places in Victoria’, that ‘Any German or other enemy subject using an unmarked plane, or one with British markings, is subject to the penalty of a spy’: execution.⁷³

Somewhat contradictorily, Pearce also claimed that there was no need for Australians to be concerned. Privately, however, the sheer number of mystery aeroplane sightings—far more were reported directly to the authorities than to the press—persuaded Australian naval and military intelligence that a German presence in or near Australia was possible, even probable. A great deal of time and effort was expended on trying to work out what was going on; in one instance a Royal Flying Corps officer and a Victoria Police detective, himself of German extraction, spent two weeks travelling in western Victoria interviewing witnesses.⁷⁴ The Navy Office reported to the Admiralty in London that ‘Reports are being received daily of Aeroplanes seen in Victoria and South Australia ... King Island indicated as a possible base ... Aeroplanes may be in connection with some inland organisation’.⁷⁵ It hypothesised that ‘Accepting all the reports as correct, and assuming that some or all of the aircraft are from vessels at sea,

there must be at least four such vessels ... If the aircraft come from land bases, the number of bases must be at least four, and almost certainly several more than four'.⁷⁶ The Navy brought reserve vessels back into service to provide some coverage of the sea lanes, and the Army's Central Flying School at Point Cook detached all aircraft fit for combat to search of the Gippsland and southern New South Wales coasts for 'an enemy seaplane carrier with one or more seaplanes'.⁷⁷ Harbour defences were reactivated; merchant vessels were ordered to sail without navigation lights; and German internees at Trial Bay were moved to a more secure location, in case the enemy mounted a rescue mission.⁷⁸ There is little evidence to suggest any similar activities by the New Zealand government, which in any case had fewer resources at its disposal. However, the Defence Department's investigation into the sinking of the SS *Wimmera* off Cape Maria van Diemen on 26 June took into account a mystery aeroplane seen nearby by two Māori men six days later, suggestive of the presence of a German raider.⁷⁹ It seems likely, given the instructions to the public to report mystery aeroplanes to the authorities, that similar investigations to those carried out in Australia were undertaken, and at least some information about them was shared between the two countries.⁸⁰ But, unlike in Australia, substantial archival evidence of military interest in a possible raider threat to New Zealand either does not exist or has not yet been found.

Some drew lessons about the need to defend Australia and New Zealand against this new aerial threat in the next war. In a clear reference to the mystery aeroplane scare, the *New Zealand Observer* claimed that 'There are local signs from people who have never seen war, and have never lived on a frontier with shells of war, that they have got the "wind up"'.⁸¹ Despite this derisive tone, it acknowledged that 'It is said by those who understand the signs that the Pacific will yet become the battle ground (or sea) for humanity', and that New Zealanders needed to be prepared for this:

People living on frontiers always expect war, and insular people always affect to believe that islands are impregnable. There is no impregnability anywhere, for the rapidly developing sky battle machine has altered all that, and the enemy has even invaded England, if persistent air raids can be called invasion. What is possible in the method of attack on England is also possible as far as little New Zealand is concerned. Every ounce of war effort made by New Zealand has, of course, been in the direction of sending men out of the country, and not in preparation for the defence of this country — a defence, by the way, that will

have to be naval. In the future the discipline of the people will have to be of a sterner kind if New Zealand is to be held by New Zealanders, and by every known means the State should instil into the people a knowledge of the possibilities. Everyone should be told in the plainest terms that New Zealand is not to be immune from war ... New Zealanders will have to grit their teeth harder and make a better do of it if the country is to remain British, and look forward to a day when, with shells falling in Queen Street, the citizens calmly exclaim, ‘Why worry — “C’Est [*sic*] la guerre!’”⁸²

Across the Tasman, attention focused less on the need for the proper civilian spirit, and more on the need for an enhanced aerial defence capability. The *Clarence River Advocate* called for ‘a seaplane fleet’, since ‘Australia, with its vast distances, and its lack of warships, has yet to be guarded against chance raiders’.⁸³ *Land and Transport* detected in the ‘recent rumors [*sic*] of German seaplanes swarming over parts of the Australian coast’ the reason for the visit of a British aeronautical commission, as well as the Australian government’s recent interest in aircraft manufacture.⁸⁴ The link between mystery aeroplanes and defence was made even more explicitly by the Army chief of the general staff, Major-General JG Legge. At a secret conference with the nation’s most important newspaper editors, he warned of Australia’s helplessness before the threat of aerial bombardment:

These raiders are knocking about and some of them have sea planes. Supposing one came over Melbourne and said ‘I will drop bombs on your banks I will give you such and such a time to send your money down to a certain place on the beach. If you do not do that I will blow you to smithereens’. You have not got a single gun here to shoot at them and you would either have to have your public buildings knocked about or give them your money. That is the position at present.⁸⁵

That was on 18 April. The following day, Legge, in his capacity as commander of Australia’s military forces at home, ordered all available combat-ready aircraft—a grand total of two obsolescent trainers—to search for the German raiders or bases presumed to be the source of the mystery aeroplanes.⁸⁶ Before the month was out, however, he had submitted a proposal for a citizen air force of 200 aeroplanes and 12 airships to Cabinet. Normally this is interpreted as a response to the worsening military situation in France and the increasing likelihood that Australia might not be able to count on British help in the event of a future war with Japan.⁸⁷ But it seems likely that Legge’s proposal, which

led ultimately to the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force in 1921, was at the very least informed by the mystery aeroplane scare and Australia's inability to mount more than a token military response to it.⁸⁸

Conclusion

On 9 May 1918, the Navy Office in Melbourne cancelled orders for merchant vessels in Australian waters to travel without navigation lights, and sent the following cable to its counterparts in London and Wellington:

Majority of aircraft reports have proved to have no foundation. No definite proof of existence of aircraft obtained. Exhaustive enquiries have failed to trace any indication of raider or inland organisation. Many flights made by Military aircraft but nothing suspicious seen. Consider that news of initial reports in spreading caused people to anticipate aircraft thus stimulating imagination.⁸⁹

The Navy's conclusion as to the origin of the mystery aeroplane panic was correct, as far as it went. But it wasn't simply a matter of reading reports of sightings in the press or even hearing rumours about them from friends and family: other factors helped make the idea of German aeroplanes plausible in the autumn of 1918. News of *Wolf's* cruise the previous year demonstrated that Germany had both the intent and the capability to strike Australia and New Zealand at home; news of *Wolf's* seaplane and of the Paris Gun suggested that similar raiders in future would have the ability to attack civilians far inland. The startling success of the spring offensives in France showed that Germany was no longer content to remain passive and might seek to attack the British Empire elsewhere. Years of Germanophobia and, in Australia, the bitter conscription plebiscites of 1916 and 1917 made it easy to believe that a German attack from outside the gates would find support from an enemy within. Equally, the demands of the war effort in Europe and the Middle East meant there were very few forces left at home to defend Australia and New Zealand, as the increasingly desperate search for new recruits in the former, especially, made clear.⁹⁰ The German air raids on London and artillery bombardments of Paris demonstrated that there was no security behind the front lines, particularly since the home fronts were now so critical in supplying the war effort with soldiers and supplies. More generally, the prominence of aviation in the war and its rapid development suggested that there would be no immunity anywhere in the world from this new aerial menace.⁹¹ The coming of flight had collapsed

distance, as it had always promised to do, but the beckoning aerial future no longer seemed so wonderful.

The mystery aeroplane panic therefore reveals how Australians and New Zealanders understood war in early 1918. They had come to imaginatively refashion their societies as home fronts in a total war, both complicit in, and hence now themselves subject to, the ever-increasing destructiveness of the war.⁹² In this they were lagging behind those societies that were much closer to the front lines. The historian Jay Winter argues that ‘The mobilization of the imagination’ is a key facet of total war, since ‘Slaughter on a grand scale needs justification’.⁹³ While official propaganda plays a part in this process, much more important is ‘civil society itself’ and its ‘cultural campaign with two objectives: steeling the will of civilians to go on; and stifling dissent and thereby making it impossible to think of any alternative other than total victory and total defeat’.⁹⁴ The mystery aeroplane panic complicates this picture slightly. First, while the threat of aerial attack may have helped unite increasingly war-weary societies around the need to continue the fight, the panic also stimulated some demand for stronger home defences, particularly in Australia, which by implication would have drawn resources away from the battle front.⁹⁵ In this sense, by manufacturing total war in 1918 Australians and New Zealanders were beginning to imagine a different war from the one they had been fighting since 1914, one no longer focused solely on the expeditionary forces overseas but which was now coming home. Second, while the press in both countries provided the conditions required for the panic by supplying Australians and New Zealanders with a steady stream of war news, nobody actually told them that they were likely to see German aeroplanes. They drew that conclusion themselves. To a great extent, therefore, this particular mobilisation of the imagination was not just a product of civil society, but a subconscious, spontaneous and self-generated one, which took place within local contexts and then replicated on a national scale.

Coming so late in the war as it did, the Australasian mystery aeroplane panic of 1918 appears to have had few wider or lasting effects, apart from its possible role in inspiring the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force. Further research, particularly in private diaries and letters, might revise this picture. If the war had continued into 1919 or beyond, as was expected even as late as October 1918, the new mentality of total war might have had a more damaging effect on the Australian and New Zealand war efforts. But the question which

lingers is: did earlier panics in other countries play a similar part in the imaginative construction of home fronts and total war during the Great War, and if so what consequences did they have?

Notes

- 1 E Scott, *Australia During the War*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1941, pp. 105–67; M McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, Thomas Nelson Australia, West Melbourne, 1980, pp. 150–77; G Fischer, *Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Australia, 1914–1920*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1989.
- 2 J McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War: From Tarrawingee to Tangambalanga*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001, pp. 23, 31–2, 35, 143. Some evidence for invasion scares does exist. For example, in May 1917 many people in Barnawartha in north-eastern Victoria assumed that Australian soldiers who had arrived by train overnight were an occupying German force: *ibid.*, p. 81. Barnawartha is 274 kilometres from the sea.
- 3 The best account of the Australian panic is B Holman, ‘Dreaming War: Airmindedness and the Australian Mystery Aeroplane Scare of 1918’, *History Australia*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2013, pp. 180–201; but see also AW Jose, *The Royal Australian Navy, 1914–1918*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1941, pp. 364–5; C Coulthard–Clark, *McNamara VC: A Hero’s Dilemma*, Fairbairn, Air Power Studies Centre, 1997, pp. 52–7; R Guilliat and P Hohnen, *The Wolf: How One German Raider Terrorised Australia and the Southern Oceans in the First World War*, William Heinemann, North Sydney, 2009, p. 288. No equivalent accounts exist for the New Zealand panic.
- 4 McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p. 150. See also G Fischer, “‘Negative Integration’ and an Australian Road to Modernity: Interpreting the Australian Homefront Experience in World War I”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 26, iss. 104, 1995, pp. 452–76; Holman, ‘Dreaming War’.
- 5 R Chickering, ‘World War I and the Theory of Total War’, in R Chickering and S Förster (eds), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 35–53.
- 6 J Smart, “‘Poor Little Belgium’ and Australian Popular Support for War 1914–1915”, *War and Society*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1994, pp. 27–46; A Francis, *To be Truly British We Must be Anti-German’: New Zealand, Enemy Aliens and the Great War Experience, 1914–1919*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2012, pp. 90–103.
- 7 P Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1988; N Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–23*, vol. 2, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 2009, pp. 204–40.

- 8 B Holman, *The Next War in the Air: Britain's Fear of the Bomber, 1908–1941*, Ashgate, Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT, 2014, pp. 51–2.
- 9 A Alexander, 'The Genesis of the Civilian', *Leiden Journal of International Law*, vol. 20, iss. 2, 2007, pp. 359–76; SR Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012, pp. 64–5, 91–2; Holman, *The Next War in the Air*, pp. 25–7.
- 10 J Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2013, p. xvii.
- 11 Francis, 'To be Truly British We Must be Anti-German'.
- 12 C Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. 101–7; A Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 33–6; Francis, 'To be Truly British We Must be Anti-German', pp. 215–49; F MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1995, pp. 11–28.
- 13 On airmindedness, see JJ Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900–1950*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983; L Edmonds, 'How Australians were made Airminded', *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1993, pp. 183–206; for a critique see Holman, 'Dreaming War', pp. 180–4. Of course, this kind of dissonance is not unique to aviation but recurs again and again when new technologies are introduced: C Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1988; P Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, University of North Carolina Press, 1994; JD Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999.
- 14 Holman, 'Dreaming War', pp. 198–200.
- 15 'Espionage by Balloon', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 March 1892, p. 8; DM Jacobs, *The UFO Controversy in America*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IL and London, 1975, pp. 32–33; D Clarke, 'Scareships over Britain: the Airship Wave of 1909', *Fortean Studies*, vol. 6, 1999, pp. 39–63; M Swords et al., *UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry*, Anomalist Books, San Antonio TX and Charlottesville VA, 2012, pp. 12–29.
- 16 N Watson, *The Scareship Mystery: A Survey of Phantom Airship Scares 1909–1918*, Domra, Corby, UK, 2000, pp. 75–97; RE Bartholomew, 'The South African Monoplane Hysteria: an Evaluation of the Usefulness of Smelser's Theory of Hysterical Beliefs', *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1989, pp. 287–300; RE Bartholomew, 'Phantom German Air Raids on Canada: War Hysteria in Quebec

- and Ontario during the First World War', *Canadian Military History*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1998, pp. 29–36.
- 17 Holman, 'Dreaming War', p. 200; RE Bartholomew and B Dickeson, 'Expanding the Boundary of Moral Panics: the great New Zealand Zeppelin scare of 1909', *New Zealand Sociology*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1998, pp. 29–61; RS Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn: The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1993, pp. 76–7.
- 18 Scott, *Australia During the War*, p. 107; McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p. 159; Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, pp. 47–8.
- 19 National Archives of Australia (NAA): MP1049/1, 1918/066, Director of Military Intelligence, 'Report of Aeroplane at Towamba, NSW', 16 May 1917, p. 2.
- 20 NAA: MP367/1, 512/3/1319, 'Report by Detective Moore', 4 November 1914.
- 21 Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, p. 34; Smart, "'Poor Little Belgium" and Australian Popular Support for War 1914–1915', pp. 36–7.
- 22 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, 'Aeroplanes, Lights, etc', undated.
- 23 *Otago Daily Times*, 20 June 1918, p. 4; 'Local and General', *Bay of Plenty Times* (Tauranga, NZ), 4 January 1918, p. 2; *Poverty Bay Herald* (Gisborne, NZ), 2 July 1918, p. 4.
- 24 'Seaplanes over Tasman Bay', *Colonist* (Nelson Bay, NZ), 2 March 1918, p. 4.
- 25 'Mysterious Aerial Visitor', *Press* (Christchurch), 6 March 1918, p. 6; *Leestonian*, 'The Mysterious Light', *Press* (Christchurch), 8 March 1918, p. 7.
- 26 'Mysterious Aeroplane', *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland), 28 March 1918, p. 6; 'Local and General', *Evening Post* (Wellington, NZ), 5 April 1918, p. 6.
- 27 *Grey River Argus*, Greymouth, NZ, 30 May 1918, p. 2; 'General News', *Press* (Christchurch), 3 June 1918, p. 6.
- 28 'General News', *Press* (Christchurch), 3 June 1918, p. 6.
- 29 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, report, Constable J Wright, 22 March 1918.
- 30 Holman, 'Dreaming War', pp. 188–9.
- 31 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, report, Constable BW Woodbridge, 23 April 1918; *ibid.*, report, Constable F Walker, 5 May 1918; *ibid.*, statement, Lieutenant K Urquhart, 6 September 1918.
- 32 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, report, Constable GT Moyle, 19 April 1918.
- 33 'The Aeroplane Mystery', *Wanganui Chronicle*, 14 August 1918, p. 4.
- 34 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, report, Lieutenant C Kingsford Smith, 10 May 1918. See Holman, 'Dreaming War', p. 190.
- 35 M Molkentin, *Australia and the War in the Air*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2014, pp. 39–48; J Hopton, 'The 1915 Register of Civil Aircraft', *Man and Aerial Machines*, iss. 31, 1992, pp. 60–2.

- 36 D Martin and B Carey, *A Message From the Clouds: A Biography of Robert Graham Carey, Australian Pioneer Aviator*, Edith Francis Martin, Croydon, 2004, p. 31; 'Two Mysterious Aeroplanes', *Age*, Melbourne, 23 March 1918, p. 14.
- 37 JMS Ross, *New Zealand Air Force*, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1955, pp. 4–6.
- 38 'Mysterious Aerial Visitor', *Press* (Christchurch), 6 March 1918, p. 6
- 39 'Aeroplane off Wanganui', *Wanganui Chronicle*, 13 August 1918, 4; NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, letter, 'Anxious', 7 May 1918.
- 40 R Hyslop, 'War Scares in Australia in the 19th Century', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1976, pp. 23–44; G Barratt, *Russophobia in New Zealand 1838–1908*, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, NZ, 1981.
- 41 On *Wolf's* career, see Guilliatt and Hohnen, *The Wolf*.
- 42 'German Seaplane', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1918, p. 13.
- 43 'Was Hun Raider's Seaplane over Victorian Bushland?', *Herald* (Melbourne), 18 March 1918, p. 6. For the unserviceability of *Wolf's* seaplane in Australasian waters, see Jose, *The Royal Australian Navy*, p. 347; Coulthard–Clark, *McNamara VC*, p. 54.
- 44 NAA: MP1049/1 1918/066, Sergeant W Morris, 'Report of an Aeroplane seen in the Vicinity of Terrigal Haven, 23/3/1918', 3 April 1918.
- 45 'Aeroplane "Scares"', *Auckland Star*, 8 April 1918, p. 4. It was later suggested that the German press had also claimed that *Wolf's* seaplane had flown over Otago Harbour, but this appears to be spurious: 'Aeroplane off Wanganui', *Wanganui Chronicle*, 13 August 1918, p. 4.
- 46 'German Raiders', *Poverty Bay Herald* (Gisborne, NZ), 2 March 1918, p. 6.
- 47 'A Raider Scare', *Evening Post* (Wellington, NZ), 1 May 1918, p. 11.
- 48 'War in Australia', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 23 April 1918, p. 7.
- 49 Holman, 'Dreaming War', pp. 192–3.
- 50 'Night Air Raids on London and Paris', *Age* (Melbourne), 11 March 1918, p. 12; 'The Air Raids', *Ballarat Star* 14 March 1918, p. 1; 'Gothas are Destroying Venice', *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 March 1918, p. 4.
- 51 *Border Morning Mail* (Albury), 5 March 1918, p. 2.
- 52 'Torpedoes from the Skies', *Gundagai Times*, 29 March 1918, p. 6. On the knock-out blow theory generally, see Holman, *The Next War from the Air*.
- 53 Jose, *The Royal Australian Navy*, pp. 336–74; Molkentin, *Australia and the War in the Air*, pp. 36–8; P Cooke, 'The Poor Cousin: New Zealand's Home Defence', in J Crawford and I McGibbon, (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War*, Titirangi, NZ, Exisle Publishing, 2007, pp. 426–46.

- 54 K McCallum and P Putnis, 'Media Management in Wartime: the Impact of Censorship on Press–Government Relations in World War I Australia', *Media History*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2008, pp. 17–33.
- 55 'They Say', *New Zealand Observer* (Auckland), 30 March 1918, p. 7.
- 56 'They Say', *New Zealand Observer* (Auckland), 13 April 1918, p. 7.
- 57 'The Fretful Porcupine', *New Zealand Observer* (Auckland), 20 April 1918, p. 16.
- 58 *ibid.*
- 59 See Baker, *King and Country Call*.
- 60 'German Shell Strikes Crowded Paris Church', *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland), 1 April 1918, p. 5.
- 61 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, letter, J French, 24 April 1918.
- 62 *ibid.*, anonymous letter, 25 March 1918.
- 63 On the spring offensives generally, see D Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918*, Penguin, London, 2012, pp. 30–111.
- 64 'Haig's Order', *Daily News* (Perth), 13 April 1918, p. 2.
- 65 'North Sydney Boys' High School', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1918, p. 12.
- 66 Imperial War Museum (IWM): Art.IWM PST 12259, 'Zeppelins Over Your Town', William Brooks & Co., Sydney, no date [1918]. Thanks to Peter Taylor for this reference. See also IWM: Art.IWM PST 12258, 'The March to Freedom', Sydney, William Brooks & Co., no date [1918].
- 67 'Air Raid Victims', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 March 1918, p. 7.
- 68 Archives New Zealand (ANZ): AAAJ W4928/9, *New Zealand Police Gazette*, 3 April 1918, p. 208.
- 69 *ibid.*
- 70 'Aeroplane "Scares"', *Auckland Star*, 8 April 1918, p. 4
- 71 'Disquieting Rumours', *Argus* (Melbourne), 24 April 1918, p. 9.
- 72 *Victoria Police Gazette*, 16 May 1918, p. 265.
- 73 'Disquieting Rumours', *Argus* (Melbourne), 24 April 1918, p. 9.
- 74 Holman, 'Dreaming War', pp. 190–1, 196.
- 75 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, telegram, Navy Office, 27 April 1918.
- 76 *ibid.*, Directorate of Military Intelligence, General Staff, HB53, 'Aircraft, Lights and Objects Reported Seen in the Air', 28 April 1918, p. 12.
- 77 NAA: B197, 2021/1/168, FH McNamara, 'Report of OC, Air Reconnaissance, South Gippsland', 7 June 1918, p. 1; Jose, *The Royal Australian Navy*, pp. 373–4.
- 78 Scott, *Australia During the War*, pp. 122–3, 198.
- 79 ANZ: AAYT 8499 N20/6/11, telegram, J Johnston, 3 July 1918; *ibid.*, telegram, J Johnston, 4 July 1918. It turned out that the *Wimmera* had struck a mine laid by *Wolf* the previous year.

- 80 Note the Australian Naval Intelligence Statements collected in ANZ: ACHK 16601 G46/2, which unfortunately cease in December 1917.
- 81 'C'est la Guerre', *New Zealand Observer* (Auckland), 6 April 1918, p. 2.
- 82 *ibid.*, p. 2.
- 83 'Defeating the Raider', *Clarence River Advocate* (Maclean), 9 July 1918, p. 3.
- 84 'Aerial Fleets', *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston), 10 June 1918, p. 2.
- 85 NAA: MP367/1, 437/1/115, Part 1, 'Press Censorship Conference', 16–19 April 1918, p. 221.
- 86 NAA: B197, 2021/1/168, FH McNamara, 'Report of OC, Air Reconnaissance, South Gippsland', 7 June 1918, p. 1.
- 87 CD Coulthard–Clark, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1991, pp. 1–2; Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–23*, vol. 2, pp. 421–422.
- 88 Holman, 'Dreaming War', pp. 198–9; Molkentin, *Australia and the War in the Air*, pp. 36–7.
- 89 NAA: MP1049/1, 1918/066, telegram, Navy Office, 9 May 1918.
- 90 Australian enlistments reached their lowest point for the entire war, the final month aside, in March 1918: Scott, *Australia during the War*, pp. 871–2. New Zealand's reliance on conscription enabled it to maintain a more even flow of replacements to France, but the continuing heavy casualties had already forced it reduce its commitments and hence recruitment rate: JE Martin, 'Blueprint for the Future? "National Efficiency" and the First World War', in J Crawford and I McGibbon, (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War*, NZ, Exisle Publishing, Titirangi, 2007, p. 527.
- 91 Holman, *The Next War in the Air*.
- 92 A Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.
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- 94 *ibid.*, p. 201.
- 95 This was an argument rehearsed in Britain during the 1917 Gotha panic: see BD Powers, *Strategy Before Slide-rule: British Air Strategy 1914–1939*, Croom Helm, London, 1976, pp. 62–4; Holman, *The Next War in the Air*, pp. 229–30.