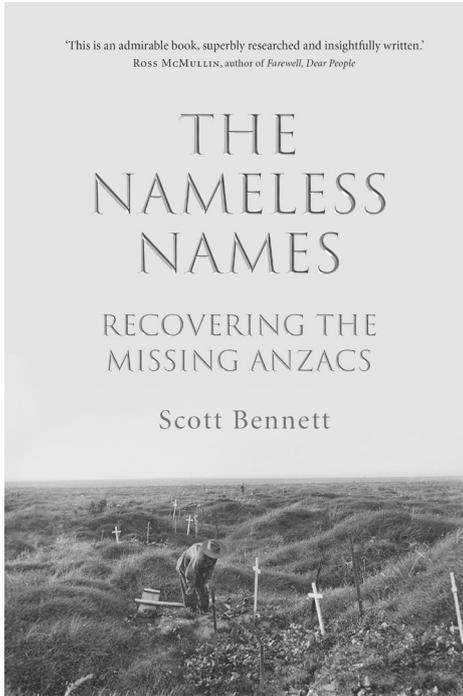


The Nameless Names

SCOTT BENNETT



BOOK DETAILS

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Scott Bennett was born in Bairnsdale, Victoria, in 1966, and holds an Executive Master of Business Administration from the Australian Graduate School of Management at the University of Sydney. Over the last ten years, he has worked for many of Australia's most recognised retail companies as a management consultant or an executive manager. In 2003, he visited the Great War battlefields in France and Belgium to retrace the steps of his great-uncles, who had fought there. The experience led him to question the many 'truths' that have developed around the Anzac legend. The result was the writing of *Pozières*, which re-examines the battle of Pozières and the Anzac legend.

Few Australians realise that of the 62,000 Anzac soldiers who died in the Great War, over one-third are still listed as 'missing'. With no marked graves, the only reminders of their sacrifice are the many names inscribed on ageing war memorials around the world.

Bennett deftly tells the story of such missing Anzacs through the personal experience of three sets of brothers — the Reids, Pflaums, and Allens — whose names he selected from the Memorials to the Missing. Bennett traces their paths from small, peaceful towns to three devastating battlefields of the Great War: Gallipoli, Fromelles, and Ypres. He reveals the carnage that led to their disappearance, and their family's subsequent grief and endless search for elusive facts.

Bennett's unflinching account addresses many painful questions. What circumstances resulted in the disappearance of so many soldiers? Why did the Australian government fail in its solemn pledge to recover the missing? Why were so many families left without answers about the fate of their loved ones — despite the dedicated efforts of Vera Deakin and her co-workers at the Australian Red Cross inquiry bureau, first in Cairo and then in London? Vera, a daughter of Australia's second prime minister, had had a privileged upbringing, and yet devoted herself tirelessly to seeking answers for the families of the missing.

The Nameless Names lays bare the emotional toll inflicted upon families, describing those caught between clinging to hope and letting go, those who felt compelled to journey to distant battlefields for answers, and those who shunned conventional religion and resorted to spiritualism for solace.

This moving book delicately reveals the human faces and the devastating stories behind the names listed on the stone memorials.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Was the grieving experience for families of dead soldiers any different to that of missing soldiers? If so, why?
2. The shelves of Australian bookshops and libraries swell with World War I books about heroism, grand victories, Victoria Cross recipients and famous

REVIEWS

‘This admirable book, superbly researched and insightfully written, illuminates the profound and enduring consequences for so many Australian families whose loved ones were among the missing in World War I.’

— ROSS MCMULLIN, AUTHOR OF *FAREWELL, DEAR PEOPLE*

generals. Why do we feel compelled, as a nation, to remember the war this way?

3. Why couldn't Pauline Reid accept that her husband, Mordaunt, was dead? What drove her four-year search?
4. Did the Australian government fail in its solemn pledge to recover the missing Anzacs? What could the government have done differently?
5. Why did Kath Chapman feel compelled to travel 10,000 miles to mourn at the grave of her beloved Theo Pflaum? What solace might it have offered her?
6. Why did families of the dead and missing gravitate away from traditional religion to spiritualism after World War I. What solace did spiritualism offer?
7. The Imperial War Graves Commission embarked on reputedly the largest building program since the pyramids to honour the empire's dead and missing. Was this imperial framework the most appropriate way to commemorate these soldiers?
8. In 2009, the Australian government recovered, and identified through DNA testing, many of the Fromelles missing. Professor Peter Stanley argued that no one seemed able or willing to explain why it was necessary to go to these lengths. 'Let's not fall for the story that the dead deserve to be identified or that relatives who didn't know them need "closure".' What is your view on Stanley's statement?
9. The Australian government recently invested \$100m into building an interpretative centre in the shadow of the Australian National Memorial near Villers-Bretonneux in France. Is this appropriate use of government funds?
10. Does a connection still exist between current generations and the missing?

