



WORDS AND IMAGE MONICA MCINNES

On the track to Anzac Hill at the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park.

Light Horse legends

You don't need to go all the way to the battlefields of Gallipoli and the Western Front to connect with our WWI forebears.

“A Light Horseman never dies, he has just dismounted and gone to greener pastures” – and perhaps it is here where Australia's fallen Light Horsemen have come – the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park.

On commemorating 100 years since the fateful landing at Gallipoli, my husband and I have come to this unassuming and quiet patch of land to connect with the rich military history only an hour away from the hustle and bustle of Melbourne.


The 150 hectares of the present day Australian Light Horse Memorial Park was originally part of Seymour Camp and can be traced back to 1887. It was Victoria's largest Army base and not long after Australia's Federation in 1901 when the Australian Light Horse was formed.

When WWI broke, Lord Kitchener, who was appointed Secretary of State for War, quickly appointed Seymour Camp as a major training establishment for the Australian Imperial Forces. It was the site where many Australian men trained before being sent to the battlefields in Gallipoli, the Middle East and the Western Front. Soldiers from the Light Horse who fought in legendary battles like The Nek at Gallipoli, the Charge of Beersheba in the Sinai Desert and the Battle of Fromelles in France, trained here.

Throughout the park there are scattered relics of the Army Camp days. As all accommodation was under tents, the only structures were ablution blocks, cook houses, and administrative buildings. The foundations of 27 Camp hospital are still there. With a bit of imagination you can envision the purpose of the foundations that are all that remain, and picture the busy camp life that once existed here.

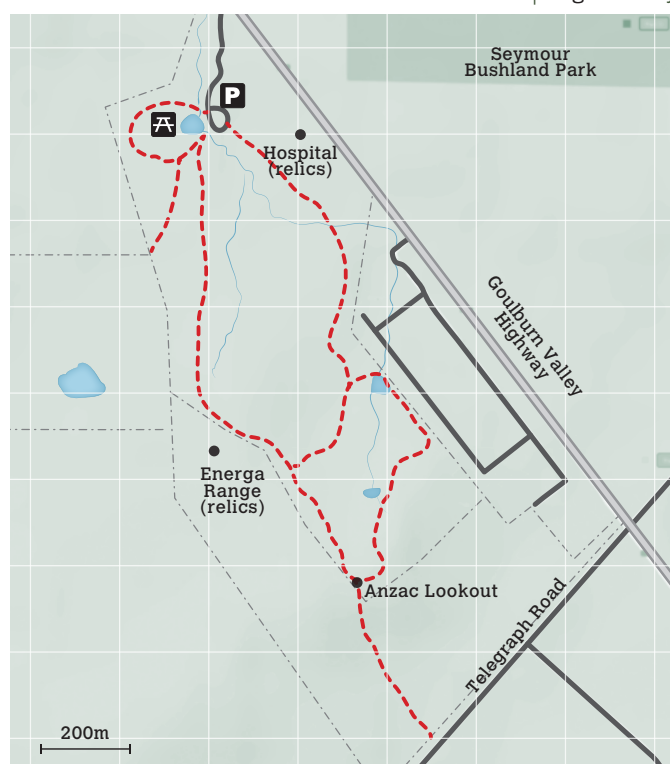
With storm clouds closing in, we took the short walk to Anzac Hill. It is about a 2km return trip on slightly undulating terrain and along the way we passed the remnants of cook houses and

the site of the anti tank range. At the top of Anzac Hill we were met with a panoramic vista overlooking the surrounding farms and properties. There is also a memorial here offering plenty more info on the park. We learned that WWII training was taken here too, and Australian heroes like Weary Dunlop and John Monash, among others, were based here before being sent to war.

As we took in the view and the overwhelming history of this quiet place the heavens opened, and instead of taking the round trip past showers, latrines, laundry and hospital ruins, we made our way double-time back the way we came. By the time we reached the car we were soaked through. And though a little cold and wet we were pleased to have made the journey to this historically important park knowing it may have been the last piece of Australia many Diggers saw before heading to the war. 

Walk notes LIGHTHOSE MEMORIAL PARK, VIC

Time: 3 hours | Degree: easy



NEED TO KNOW

The Australian Lighthorse Memorial Park is just outside of Seymour in central Victoria, about an hour's drive north of Melbourne. There is a clean drop toilet and dogs are welcome. For more info visit www.lighthorsepark.org.au.