YEAR OF AUSTRALIA IN PÉRONNE
- OFFICIAL PROGRAMME -

VILLE DE PÉRONNE

06/12/2017
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Australian troops protecting a crossroads in Péronne, September 1918.
Coll. AWM
Mont-Saint-Quentin, the key to Péronne

The action began a few months before the end of the war. Germany’s last great offensive, launched in the spring of 1918, had failed and its Army was exhausted. Beginning on 8 August 1918, across a front of 25 km, the Franco-British counteroffensive to clear the enemy from Picardy had been a success and would eventually led the Allies to the German Hindenburg line. At the end of August 1918, the last German bastion on the Somme was located at Mont Saint-Quentin, about 1.5 km north of the city of Péronne. Its strategic location provided the Germans with an ideal observation point as well as defending the western and northern approaches to Péronne. Major General Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps, believed that if the Allies could take Mont Saint-Quentin, the German defensive line on the Somme would become untenable and they would be forced to retreat east to the Hindenburg Line.

Monash proposed the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions (IVth British Army), although greatly understrength due to casualties suffered since the start of the Allied counteroffensive, attack Mont Saint-Quentin. The 3rd Division would secure the village of Clery and the Bouchavesnes Ridge on the left flank. The 2nd Division would take Mont-Saint-Quentin which would enable the 5th Division to clear the enemy from Peronne and the woods east of the city on the right flank.

On 29 - 30 August the 5th Brigade (2nd Division) comprising the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions captured the hills overlooking the Somme River. The 17th Battalion (on the right flank) was then tasked with attacking the village of Mont Saint-Quentin. The 20th Battalion (on the left flank) was ordered to seize the road to the north (Feuilliacourt), and the 19th Battalion was to secure the right flank of the attack by occupying the two parallel trenches that run down the south-western slope of Mont-Saint-Quentin. The 18th Battalion, in reserve, was to support the attacking battalions.
On the night of 31 August, the 5th Brigade crossed the Somme and after an artillery barrage that began at 5 am, attacked by charging across open ground towards Mont-Saint-Quentin from the northwest. With so few troops (an average of 330 men per battalion), the men were ordered to create as much noise as possible by shouting to convince the Germans they were a much larger force. Unusually, the men were also given a tot of rum before the attack; rum was normally distributed after attacking.

The Germans, thinking they were under attack by a numerically superior force, were quick to surrender. The 20th Battalion took the important Gottlieb trench with a bayonet charge. The Australians reached the summit and a large number of German soldiers were seen fleeing down the slopes of the hill. At 7am on August 31, the Australians occupied the village and the hill. However, because of their small number, their position was precarious. Later that day, The 2nd German Guards Division, an elite unit, counterattacked and ejected the Australians from the summit.

To the rear, the 19th Battalion crossed the Somme via the Cléry bridge. At the same time, the 3rd Division attacked the Bouchavesnes ridge in order to secure the open left flank of Mont-Saint-Quentin.

On 1 September the 6th Brigade (2nd Division) attacked for a second time and definitively took the summit of Mont-Saint-Quentin. The 14th Brigade (5th Division) captured the woods north of Péronne and after defeating a final enemy counter-attack, liberated a large part of Péronne. However, during the day the clearance of the north of the city was slowed by heavy enemy machine gun fire from the castle ramparts and the suburb of Bretagne.

On 2 September, the 7th Brigade (2nd Division) pushed beyond Mont-Saint-Quentin, the 15th Brigade (5th Division) secured the rest of Péronne and the 3rd Division secured Bouchavesnes Ridge. On the evening of 2 September, after two days of fierce fighting on the streets of the city, Péronne was in Australian hands; the village of Flamicourt was captured the next day.
The III\textsuperscript{rd} Third British Army and the Canadians attacked Cambrai at the same time as the Australian attack on Péronne. With the Canadian breakthrough near Bullecourt and the Somme defensive line lost to the Australians, the German General Ludendorff decided to withdraw from the Somme and retreat to the Hindenburgh Line, which would become the next objective for the Allies after the liberation of Péronne.

The battle of Mont-Saint-Quentin and Péronne resulted in a strategic, tactical and psychological victory for the Australian forces, and dealt a heavy blow to five German divisions, including the elite 2\textsuperscript{nd} Guards Division. Australian troops drove the enemy from one of its key bastions in France, taking 2,600 prisoners at a cost of 3,000 casualties.

The battle was won without the use of tanks nor the usual artillery creeping barrages, demonstrating that free manoeuvre, speed and flexibility could play a decisive role in capturing enemy positions on the Western Front.

The Australian soldiers finished their epic adventure in the Aisne, by the capture of the village of Montbrehain in November 1918. During the counter-offensive from August to October 1918, the Australian Imperial Force took approximately 30,000 prisoners of which 1,500 were captured at Mont-Saint-Quentin.

It was in the hell of the First World War, from the Dardanelles to the Somme, that Australia – a young nation - forged its identity. It paid a high price. Of an Australian population of about 5 million, 420,000 volunteers served during the Great War, including 330,000 overseas: nearly 70% of the engaged force were killed (60,000) or wounded / gassed (170,000). Between April and September 1918, 10,500 Australian soldiers were killed in action in the Somme.

53 Victoria Crosses, the highest award for gallantry in the British Empire, were awarded to Australians who fought in France. At the battle of Mont-Saint-Quentin, eight Victoria Crosses were awarded, more than for any other Australian action of the war. Unusually, two VCs were awarded on the same day to two Corporals of the same unit: Corporals Hall and Buckley of the 54\textsuperscript{th} Battalion (5\textsuperscript{th} Division) who participated in the combat to liberate Péronne.

In the days following the battles of Péronne and Mont-Saint-Quentin, the Australian Divisions organized a sports day for the units who had fought in the battle. This is why sport could not be overlooked in the planning for the Year of Australia and why a sporting element has been included alongside the cultural and commemoration events in the 2018 program.
2018 PROGRAM

Australian Sports Day in Péronne - September 1918
Coll. AWM - The Australians' final campaign in 1918
20 - 21 January 2018: Book Fair "Australia the guest of honour"
Mac Orlan Space, Municipal Library, 10 am-6pm. Free admission.

Australia will be the guest of honour at the 2018 Peronne Book Fair. Authors, publishers and illustrators linked by their works to Australia will be present. On the program: readings, shows, literary cafes, and workshops discovering Australian culture and literature or works based on Australia. There will also be book signings and plenty of opportunities to meet the authors.

Of particular note, in connection with the Australian theme, will be the presence of the following personalities: Myrlam Doïnet, author of Les animaux de Lou : N'aie pas peur, Petit Koala! (Editions Nathan), Elise Fontenaille N'Diaye, author of Un Koala dans la tête (Editions du Rouergue), Frédéric Marais, author of the comic Didgeridoo (Red Ants Editions), Benoît Charlat, author of Où je l'ai mis? (Editions Ecole des loisirs), Gilles Paris, author of Au pays des kangourous (Editions J'ai Lu), Michaël Mention, author of the Australian western Bienvenue à Cotton's Warwick (Editions Flammarion), Maud Mayeras, author of the novel LUX (Editions Anne Carrière), Deirdre Gilfedder for his essay L'Australie et la Grande Guerre (Editions Michel Houdiard), illustrator Philippe Nicloux for his comic Terra Australis (Editions Glénat), a true story of adventure about the arrival of the British in Australia, and finally the illustrator Damien Vanderstraeten for his comic Australian road movie Back to perdition (Editions Glénat).

On Thursday 18 and Friday 19 January, meetings will be organised in the village libraries of Chaulnes, Combles, Monchy-Lagache, Roisel, Ham and Rosières-en-Santerre, in partnership with the Pays Santerre Haute Somme. The authors and illustrators will also meet students from schools in the city of Péronne, from kindergarten to high school.

The Documentation Center at Collège Béranger will also be participating in the fair with creation of an exhibition by the students on the theme of Aboriginal art, presented at Espace Mac Orlan.

At the Fair you will also be able to discover the exhibition Le temps du rêve which retraces the life of a battalion of Australian soldiers during the Great War, from Gallipoli to the hell of the Somme. This exceptional exhibition was made from the comic strips of the comic book Le temps du rêve by Stéphane Antoni, Olivier Ormière and Virginie Blancher (Editions Delcourt).

On Saturday, January 20, the company La Nebuleuse will perform a show for kids called Petite Source, which tells through sand the story of a young aborigine and the first inhabitants of Australia. On Sunday, January 21, the author and linguist Patrick Caudal will recite Tjururrpa – Les voix du rêve, in which Aborigines sing and name the world around them.

The Fair will also give you the opportunity to express yourself artistically under the guidance of Frédéric Marais (comic Didgeridoo) by participating in his illustration workshop.

As a prelude to the 2018 Book Fair, Australia will be present at the Péronne Hospital on Sunday, January 14 when "Australian Readings" will be offered to the residents.

January 26, 2018: Australia Day

The City of Péronne will wear the colours of Australia on Australia Day. French and Australian flags will be flown in the streets and Australian animals will migrate to Péronne and the surrounding landscape.

February 24, 2018: Brass Band Concert
British style Brass Band music is very popular in Australia and is the subject of marching competitions between bands that are very popular with the public.

Brass ensembles without horns or trumpets, the instrumental formula of these brass bands makes it possible to approach a very vast repertoire, ranging from that of classical tunes to adaptations of compositions for symphony orchestras. The absence of cylindrical holes in the treble allows the musician to obtain a homogeneous and velvety overall sound able to reproduce the nuances of string sets.

Invited by the Guy Savary School of Music in Péronne, students from music schools located East of the Somme (80 students) will come together on 24 February to rehearse for a single day before performing a free concert for the public. Musical arrangements by Philippe Matthieu, Lubert Remi, Christophe Tamboise and Lionel Fache.

March 31 - April 1, 2018: Aboriginal music in Péronne (1)
Espace Patrick Dupond, free admission.

The Guy Savary School of Music welcomes musician Freddy Berthonnau, a specialist in didgeridoo, harmonica and overtone singing: passionate about Aboriginal musical culture, he is the creator of the Festival Le Rêve de l’Aborigène (Les Deux-Sèvres).

For this first weekend program: creation of an Australian musical tale, based on Aboriginal culture, by the teachers and students of the school under the direction of Freddy Berthonnau.

April 7 - 8, 2018: Aboriginal music in Péronne (2)
Espace Patrick Dupond, free admission.

Second weekend program: a conference on Aboriginal music and a bamboo didgeridoo workshop – both led by Freddy Berthonnau,

April 14 - 15, 2018: Salon Colours and Flavours of Australia
Espace Mac Orlan, free entrance 10 am-6 pm.

Gastronomic and local produce fair selling Australian products, the opportunity to taste specialties, culinary contests and “Australian” menus at restaurants in the city.

The professional high school of the Sacred Heart of Péronne will be a privileged partner for the event, preparing an “Australian” menu each day within its own school restaurant; the school will continue the Australian theme during demonstrations and cooking workshops during the fair.

April 20, 2018: 1918 Peronnais for Australia
SIVOS Stadium, rue Saint-Denis. Free entry.

A few days before Anzac Day 2018, the people of the City of Péronne will pay tribute to Australia and the men of the 1st Australian Imperial Force. On a large outdoor area, 1918 people will form a human chain and create a giant image symbolising the friendship the people of Péronne feel towards the people of Australia.
All residents, associations and schools in Péronne will be invited to participate in the unique and spectacular event that will be one of the highlights of 2018. Aerial shots will be made by the Picardie company Aéro'Dom, a project partner, to capture the event.

To give additional scope to this project, the management of the project has been entrusted by the City to the Lycée des Métiers Pierre Mendès-France, in order to enhance the skills of its teachers and students. The high school will be able to rely on the technical, human, financial and security resources of the City of Péronne.

Alongside the municipal services, MM. Jimmy Deberges and Gérard Roche will coordinate the preparation of the event. The Communauté de communes de Haute-Somme will make the SIVOS stadium available for the event. Maître Eric Kétels, bailiff at Péronne, will even help to count the participants. Objective: 1918 people on the ground on April 20th!

April 25, 2018: Discover field hockey
City Stadium or Municipal Gymnasium - Free Admission

For the centenary commemoration of Anzac Day, local children from Péronne will attend the Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux, accompanied by two members of the Kookaburras – the Australian men’s field hockey team.

In the afternoon, children from local clubs and associations and, their parents, will be introduced to field hockey by participating in a clinic run by the two Australian professionals.

April 25 - May 30, 2018: Art’borigène Exhibition
Alfred-Danicourt Museum (bilingual French / English exhibition). Monday to Friday, from 14h to 17h. Exceptional opening on Saturday, May 19 from 6pm to 10pm for the European Night of Museums. Free admission.

The Alfred-Danicourt Museum will host an exhibition in the town hall by the Picardian artist Anne Carlier, painter and visual artist who for more than 20 years has produced works inspired by Aboriginal art, on the theme of dreams and using vegetable matter as her primary material. The exhibition will open on the evening of Anzac Day 2018.

During the week preceding the exhibition, the artist, commissioned by the museum, will visit primary schools in Péronne and conduct workshops based on the discovery of Aboriginal art. The works created by the students during these workshops will be exhibited on 19th May during the European Night of the Museums.

April 28 - 29, 2018: Australia in "Playmobil"
Mac Orlan Space. 10h - 18h Entrance fee 1 €.

The City of Péronne has invited one of the largest collectors of Playmobil in Europe: Jean-Michel Leuillier to the Mac Orlan Space. Thanks to his talent, young and old will be able to discover a giant exhibition (250 m2) made exclusively from the materials and figurines of the famous German brand and with the theme of discovering the Australian continent: its fauna, its flora, its geography and his history.
May 19, 2018: European Night of Museums with Australian rhythms
Alfred-Danicourt Museum, 18h-22h, free admission.
As an extension of Anne Carlier’s Art’borigène exhibition, the Alfred-Danicourt Museum will host, in partnership with the Guy Savary School of Music, an evening dedicated to Aboriginal music with the presentation of the Australian musical tale created in Péronne, and didgeridoo demonstrations from instruments created in April by students.

Exhibition of the works created by the primary school students during workshops on the discovery of aboriginal art led by the artist Anne Carlier.

June 16, 2018: Football World Cup in Russia
Location to be specified

Public broadcast of the France-Australia match.

June 16 - September 16, 2018: Exhibition We were Australian in Péronne
Alfred-Danicourt Museum, free entrance. (bilingual exhibition French / English)

The Alfred-Danicourt Museum will host an exhibition of photographs from the Australian War Memorial retracing the steps of Australian soldiers around Péronne and Mont-Saint-Quentin in 1918. Written testimonies from Australian soldiers will form part of the exhibition and will enable the audience to understand the Digger’s experience in 1918: the war’s violence, daily life, relationship with civilians, death and returning home to Australia.

June 23-24, 2018: Dance Concert Tribute to Australia
Mac Orlan Space. Saturday June 23 8:00 PM / Sunday June 24 3:00 PM. Admission: 6 €. Free for children under 12 years old.

From February to June 2018, students from the Peronne school of dance will have the opportunity to participate in choreograph workshops with the Australian dancer Kylie Walters. The students will then perform an adaptation of the Australian musical Priscilla Queen of the Desert (Priscilla Folle du Desert) during annual dance concert hosted by the city of Péronne.

The Guy Savary School of Music will perform musical pieces based on Australian themes they have developed throughout the year during the concert.

July 1, 2018: Australian tunes musical ballad
CAM pond, walk.

The teachers and students of the Guy Savary School of Music will pay homage to Australian music: its composers, traditional music and the influences that have shaped it, while walking around the pond.

July 7, 2018: Australian Sports and Remembrance Day
Municipal Stadium Boinet, schedule to be confirmed. Free admission.
After the capture of Mont-Saint-Quentin and the liberation of Péronne in September 1918, the Australian military authorities celebrated the victory by organising a sporting event in Péronne for all the units who had fought there. 100 years later, to pay tribute to Australia and all its sportsmen killed in battle between 1914 and 1918, the City of Péronne will organise an Australian sports day dedicated to Australian sports.

The day will be devoted to the discovery of traditional Australian sports with clinics and demonstrations for children, sports associations and the public.

The municipal stadium will host an exhibition match of Australian Rules Football with players from the English Australian Rules Football League using its international version (18 players): the players will wear be jumpers from 1914 and will pay tribute to the fallen sportsman before the start of the game. A traditional kangaroo skin football will be specially created and will bring the commemorative spirit of the Centenary to Péronne.

The match will be filmed and broadcast free of charge via Youtube, and there will be French and English commentary during the game. During the week leading up to the sports day, schools and Children’s clubs will be introduced to Australian sports by demonstrations and the showing of videos.

In the purest Australian tradition, after the match there will be a barbecue with Australian produce, and a free concert by the Australian group Belle Roscoe.

**September 1, 2018: walk for Cecil Healy**

Walking tour Péronne-Assevillers, free participation (300 people maximum).
Meet at the church of Assevillers at 12:30. Then bus transport to the starting point at Mont-Saint-Quentin at 13:00.

In partnership with the municipality of Assevillers, the City of Péronne will host a walk in memory of the Australian swimmer Cecil Healy, Olympic medalist in 1912.

A walk of 12.5 km will be jointly organised by the two municipalities with the help of several local walking associations (Marcheurs Péronnais, Marche Randonnée Chaulnoise, etc.). The walk will follow the route taken by the Australian soldiers during the capture of Mont-Saint-Quentin and Péronne in August-September 1918, and will end at the Assevillers military cemetery where Cecil Healy is buried.

At Assevillers, after a short commemorative ceremony, the inauguration of a monument and a joint exhibition prepared by the Alfred-Danicourt Museum and Assevillers, the day will finish with a concert.

**September 2, 2018: centenary of the liberation of Péronne**

Espace Mac Orlan, Australian Memorial of Mont-Saint-Quentin.

From 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm, a free concert (program to be confirmed) will be held in or in front of Mac Orlan Space. At the end of the concert, attendees will be invited to move in procession to the site of the official ceremony organised in partnership with the French and Australian authorities.

NB: During the day and until 3 pm, the community of communes of Haute-Somme will host a sporting challenge in memory of the Australian Olympic swimmer killed in 1918: Cecil Healy.

**September 13, 2018: Australia on the screen**

Municipal Cinema Picardy and College Béranger.
From November 2017 to June 2018, all year 9 students at the Collège Béranger in Péronne will work with their English teachers on the theme of Australia on screen (cinematographic works, actors, directors, cartoons). They will prepare a bilingual French-English exhibition to be unveiled on September 13, 2018 at the municipal cinema.

On the same day, year 10 students from the College Beranger will meet the French adventurer Solange Suard, who has travelled throughout Australia and has met many of its inhabitants even from the most remote corners of the country. A documentary will be shown at the cinema based on photographs taken by Ms Suard: two sessions will be reserved for the students during the day, and a session will be open to the public in the evening.

**October 2018: Allied memorial concert**
The choirs of the Chapel of Hainaut. Saint-Jean-Baptiste Church of Péronne.

Accompanied by an organ, 16 French, British, American, and New Zealand singers will perform a hymnal concert. The program will consist of works from twentieth century composers from the allied countries, together with the major work *Requiem* by the French composer Maurice Duruflé in the version written for choir and organ.

Composers on the program include Colin Brumby (Australia), Katherine Dienes (New Zealand), Edie Hill (United States), Eleanor Daley (Canada) and Benjamin Britten (United Kingdom).

**November 11, 2018: program to be confirmed.**
POINTS OF CONTACT – AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY - PARIS:
centenary.commemoration@dfat.gov.au

POINTS OF CONTACT – CITY OF PÉRONNE:

DHEYGERS Thérèse, Mayor t.dheygers@ville-peronne.fr

DOSSU Christiane, Councillor c.dossu@orange.fr

DEMEY Pascal, Services Manager p.demey@ville-peronne.fr

CARON Domitille, Media Manager d.caron@ville-peronne.fr

DE SOUSA David, Cultural Liaison Manager d.desousa@ville-peronne.fr

BISSIAU Johan, Australian Sports Advisor 2018 j.bissiau@ville-peronne.fr

CONTACT LYCÉE Pierre Mendès-France:

DEBERGUES Jimmy, Director Professional and Technological Formations jimmy.debergues@ac-amiens.fr

CONTACT Collège ET Lycée du Sacré-Cœur:

DEILLON Martine, Director secretariat@sacre.coeur-peronne.net.

CONTACT Collège Béranger:

BOZEC Sylvie, Deputy principal sylvie.bozec@ac-amiens.fr
AND TO DISCOVER IN PÉRONNE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR ...

**Australian Memorial Town Walk - Words of War**

A walking tour (six stations) through the streets of the city to discover key sites associated with the Australian presence in Péronne in 1918. Each station has photographs and quotes from Australian Diggers.

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**Memorial walk of Mont-Saint-Quentin**

**Neighborhood of old Mont-Saint-Quentin.**

Discover, in the heart of nature, the Australian Memorial Trail through Mont-Saint-Quentin. A walking trail of six stations, which follows the fighting around Péronne in August and September 1918.

"**Australian" gallery at the Historial of the Great War**

Historial of the Great War, Place André Audinot.

The capture of Mont-Saint-Quentin and the liberation of the Péronne involved elements of three Australian divisions in 1918. Thanks to a new “Australian” gallery created in the old guard rooms of the castle, understand the importance of the battle and follow the fighting that led to the fall of the last German bastion on the Somme.