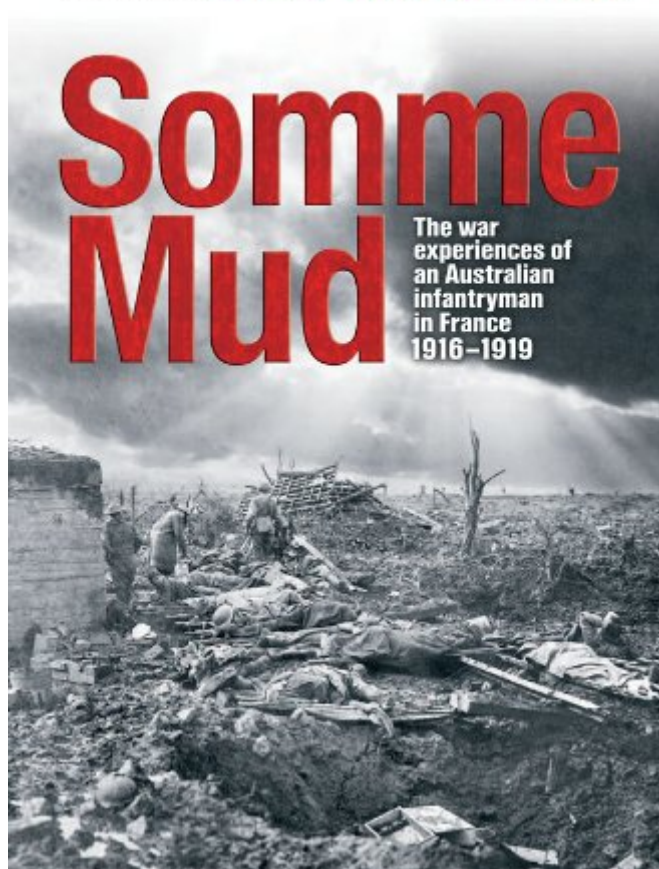


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# Somme Mud

'[Lynch] has left a mighty tribute to his mates, an epic of his generation, and a great gift to his country. I wish I had met him.' **Bill Gammage**

**E.P.F. LYNCH**  
Edited by **Will Davies**



## Synopsis

Written with dignity, candour and surprising wit, this soldier's story of the horror of the Western Front trenches is a testament to the power of the human spirit. It's the end of the 1916 winter and the conditions are almost unbelievable. We live in a world of Somme mud. We sleep in it, work in it, fight in it, wade in it and many of us die in it. We see it, feel it, eat it and curse it, but we can't escape it, not even by dying. Somme Mud tells of the devastating experiences of Edward Lynch, a young Australian private (18 when he enlisted) during the First World War when he served with the 45th battalion of the Australian Infantry Forces on the Western Front at the Somme, which saw the most bloody and costly fighting of the war. In just eight weeks, there were 23,000 Australian casualties. The original edition of twenty chapters, was written in pencil in twenty school exercise books in 1921, probably to help exorcise the horrendous experiences Private Lynch had witnessed during his three years at war from mid-1916 until his repatriation home in mid-1919. Lynch had been wounded three times, once seriously and spent over six months in hospital in England. Somme Mud is a precious find, a discovered treasure that vividly captures the magnitude of war through the day-to-day experiences of an ordinary infantryman. From his first day setting sail for France as the band played 'Boys of the Dardanelles' and the crowd proudly waved their fresh-faced boys off, to the harsh reality of the trenches of France and its pale-faced weary men, Lynch captures the essence and contradictions of war. Somme Mud is Australia's version of All Quiet on the Western Front. Told with dignity, candour and surprising wit, it is a testament to the power of the human spirit, a moving true story of humanity and friendship.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A lot of people say that this book doesn't have the correct articulation or depth of character, I'll address that in this review. There is speculation as to whether or not this is his personal memoirs, whether it was written in hindsight or from a journal. I honestly believe this book is from both a personal journal and from hindsight. The references, the chronological memory of battalions, units and dates of relief generally spells that this is part of his own journal, the depth of the before and after writing of action also reeks of journal entries or letters, the action themselves would probably be hindsight. The parts that show deep reflection in moments of action and confusion, are quite clearly hindsight added in. The lack of character depth and description in some parts of the book, make sense to me that this is his own experience, because throughout the book he mentions, several times, that in war it's a bad idea "to be one of the thinking type". So, the parts where it goes on about his friends and other unit members as though they are simply 2D characters, is primarily correct for someone who is witnessing the death of quite literally thousands, for them the less you knew about someone, the better. The same with some actions lack description, due to the nature of it, some things like that would not be easy to describe from your own memory. Honestly recommend this book (Also one called "A Fortunate Life" by Facer) as a genuine no bars held insight into early Australians at war.

The vast majority of my reads are narrative histories by people like Hart, Gilbert and Keenan, among many others. But, I have also read more memoirs than I can remember. This is one of the best. It is up there with Junger and much, much better than Sasson. My only regret is that many more people have not read this book. Lynch claims the book is about a friend of his who he names "Nulla", but it is clearly about him. It is positively amazing that this man could have fought in so many places and survived. He was at the Somme, Messines Ridge (Passchendaele), the 1918 counteroffensive and many other places. He is clearly a thinking man who gives graphic depiction of the horrors of war but without gory sensationalism. The deep and lasting comradeship that develops between Nulla and his mates (he is Australian) is touching. Also, the imagery of the environment

within which he functions is very well done. Buy this book if a soldier's tale is of any interest to you.

To read a blow by blow account of that, which we who came after think of as mere history, was, to say the least, a rude awakening. Oh God! Those poor souls that they should suffer such horror & hardship only to die in that frozen mud. I was transfixed by the descriptive passages, the turn of colloquial phrase, the vivid imagery & the emotion brought forth within the text. It transported me into the trenches of the Somme, 1916/17, to stand next to those braved & bloodied Australians as they struggled & suffered the depredations of WAR. Very well written & a monument to the men who suffered & fought through that horror called "The Great War" & later, WWI. TRULY an historical archive that should be read by all those who "Play" at war for fun.

EPF Lynch, though not a "literary gent" has an extraordinary facility for evocative description of this most horrendous of atrocities, World War 1. That this work lay like an undisclosed gem for so long is amazing. At a time when there are too many politicians making at times self-serving speeches about the horror of that War it is powerful stuff to hear a voice from the grave who was there in the mud. In the writing it reminded me of the wide-eyed but wholly engaged style of Bert Facey in "A Fortunate Life" though the writing is even better.

This book is clearly and engagingly written about events happening a century ago. In contrast to other books that merely recount dull sequences of events, reading this account brings these events to life. Three of my uncles shared these experiences and recalling their stories of these days the events recorded in this book from the view of the private soldier ring true. Let us pray, as they did, that nothing like this ever happens again!

Quite frankly, I find myself in a dilemma because I am not sure whether this book is History or Fictionalized History. Make no mistake; it is a great read and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I began to have doubts when Bill Gammage in the *Forward* compared the book favorably to Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front", which is a work of fiction based on actual experiences. If this book is History, why not compare it to Ernst Junger's "Storm of Steel". Note that Junger kept extensive diaries during the War. As far as I can tell, and I have spent a great deal of time looking, Lynch did not. Lynch writes his memoir in 20 exercise books in 1921. The elapsed time between the occurrence of events and the writing of those events is between 3 and 5 years. Lynch's account is so detailed as to preclude post-action remembrance. Dating to 1921. Either he kept a diary as Junger

did or he reported a conflation of characters and events. I very much believe that Lynch experienced what he wrote; however I find it difficult to believe that what he wrote is not fictionalized. If anyone has evidence to the contrary of what I have written, please feel free to speak. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and would feel much better if I knew that Edward kept a diary. Best regards, James

This is an excellent account of the trench war on the western front as seen through the eyes of an enlisted man. No grand strategies nor glory. Just the plight of a soldier and his mates as they struggle against the Germans and nature to total victory. The day to day activities of their lives fill in the gaps that books written from a higher vantage point tend to leave out. A great read for anyone interested in WW1. Would make a great movie.

Absolutely authentic & awesome book. Hard to put it down.

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