THE SERVICE, DEATH AND MEMORIALIZATION OF AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1916:
AN INTERPRETATION

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This thesis is presented for the Honours degree of History at Murdoch University, 2013. I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains, as its main content, work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution, including Murdoch.

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Thesis Title: The Service, Death and Memorialization of an Australian Soldier on the Western Front, 1916: an Interpretation

Author: Margaret J. Warburton

Year: 2013
ABSTRACT

Charles Snell left Western Australia to work in New South Wales and, while there, enlisted in the AIF to fight and die in the Great War. He was an ordinary soldier who served King and country by means of intense physical effort and who made the most of every situation. He and his family left an extensive written record of his service and death, and the family’s subsequent journey through grief. This record will be examined in the broader context of the Great War in order to illustrate the experience of the ‘other ranks’. It will challenge the notion that the narrative of the wartime experience of the ordinary soldier can only be told through the lens of horror and bloodshed. It will also demonstrate that the story of the work of the ordinary soldier has much to tell us about interactions within the military and cultural environments of the time. The thesis will examine the identity of the soldier, his war service, his wounding, death and burial and the process of memorialization. In so doing it will provide a portrait of the soldier, his family and his community and will disprove the statement that ‘averages are too colourless ... to represent concrete experience’.¹

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJS  Alfred James Snell, father
CAS  Caroline Amelia Snell, mother
C.S  Charles Snell
AIF  Australian Infantry Forces
AWM  Australian War Memorial
FAB  Field Artillery Battery
IWM  Imperial War Museum
KIA  Killed in action
NAA  National Archives of Australia
POB  Place of birth
RTA  Returned to Australia
TMB  Trench Mortar Battery
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following people to the present work: Professor Michael Durey for his belief in the project and for entrusting me with some of his vast knowledge of World War 1; Natalie, Sophie, Wesley and David for their belief in me and their timely questions; my mother, Nancy Snell, my grandfather, Alf Snell and my great aunt, Marjorie, for keeping the flame of memory burning and passing it to me; my great-grandparents, Carrie and Alfred who created and nurtured him; and to Charlie, for writing it all down – I hope I have done justice to your story.