THE MONTH OF APRIL 1917 was historically relevant for both Anzac and Canadian soldiers, and now is the time to correct the decades of British and American historians overlooking the heavy lifting that was done by Australia and Canada on the Western Front in the First World War.

Field Marshal (Honorary) Prince Charles rode at Vimy Ridge in France for the centenary of Canada's Gallipoli, namely the extraordinary Battle of Vimy Ridge, when four Canadian divisions captured the high ground of Vimy Ridge. Prince Charles was right to be there.

It was the leader of the First Division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), Sir Arthur Currie, who helped greatly in the holistic and meticulous planning that delivered success at Vimy Ridge. Currie had studied what went right and wrong at Verdun with the French and also believed in the protection of the soldier as much as possible, not using them as cannon fodder.

In many ways, ultimate CEF commander Currie was like Australian Imperial Force (AIF) commander Sir John Monash. Both were in businesses before the war that at times almost went broke, both were citizen soldiers in the militia and rose through the ranks — entirely on merit — to command national armies in the First World War.

Tim Fischer, ex deputy prime minister of Australia and Australian Army officer (1 RAR, Vietnam), is now a military history author.

Again both were outsiders as "colonials," challenged orders from higher authorities, were knighted by King George V in France and believed in meticulous, holistic and detailed planning.

In April 1917, the Canadians at Vimy Ridge proved that against the odds the “In one incredible day, the AIF and CEF punched through 16 kilometres of German lines”

Germans could be beaten, as long as the immediate objectives were defined and achievable with an eye to withstanding counter-attacks.

Then, in April 1918, the Australians blunted the huge lunge of the German Army under Operation MICHAEL, stopping them at Villers-Bretonneux in action described as some of the most valiant fighting of the war. Brigadier Harold ‘Pompey’ Elliott, General John Gellibrand, General Thomas Glasgow, Monash and the AIF soldiers stemmed the breakout and saved Armentières’ key railway junction from being captured. Had it fallen then most historians concede the Germans would have gone on to capture Paris and most of Continental Europe.

In July 1918, when Monash was finally given command of the Australian Corps, he meticulously conducted the Battle of Hamel, a victory planned to be obtained in 90 minutes and delivered in 90 minutes by 7,000 Aussies and 1,000 Yanks of the 33rd Infantry Division (Illinois). Alas, the headlines in the papers back home read: “British Success, Hamel captured!” This was due to the British headquarters of Field Marshal Douglas Haig controlling all despatches on that section of the Western Front.

AUSTRALIA AND CANADA

It was on August 8, 1918 that the Battle of Amiens was launched by Australia with Canada on the right flank as sought by Monash, the first big push by the Allies after months of stalemate.

In one incredible day, the AIF and CEF punched through 16 kilometres of German lines, capturing German gurs large and small, also thousands of POWs and reaching all objectives before sunset. It caused German General Erich Ludendorff to write: “This is the black day of the German Army.”

Finally the Allies had a major morale-boosting victory, delivered by Australia and Canada and of such significance that it led to the big final push and Armistice and victory outright on November 11, 1918.

Now go today to the Imperial War Museum (IWM) at Bedlam in London and see the small amount of mention (after representations) of Monash and Currie, the AIF and CEF in the new First World War Gallery. Whereas note British commander Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig has a panel in the Australian War Museum.

Cambridge University just a couple of years ago produced their three-volume comprehensive official history of the First World War, in which there was a small mention of Currie and zero mention of Monash — none at all.

Finally, go to Pershing Park in sight of the White House and look at the panel allocated to July 1918 — zero mention of the exemplar Battle of Hamel involving Australians in their first biggest stunt.

As Canadian citizen Donald MacLeod points out, there are many proper reasons why Australia and Canada should posthumously promote both Currie and Monash to the rank of field marshal this year, noting the Frenchman Ferdinand Foch was so promoted symbolically in July 1919, but also I have an improper reason:

It will bring a long-overdue focus to both Currie and Monash, to the victorious workload of the CEF and AIF at last, and it will sure as hell up the nostrils of many a current British general or field marshal — let us just do it.

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