Expression of sorrow is best done through song. It is somehow more bearable to sing it than to have to say it, and certainly anyone who served in the Great War had some bad feelings to sing away. The soldiers’ emotional exhaustion could be slightly abated through the release of sentiment, of true feeling, through singing. It could put a sad song in your heart when you needed to cry and joy in your heart when you realised you had survived after all. Singing together whether while marching or while recovering afterwards built a sense of unit comradery and esprit. It was a rare day that did not end with some kind of sing along.

This collection of songs was chosen by Theresa Cronk, curator of music at the Australian War Memorial. My task was to record the songs.

Doing this taught me a lot about propaganda – as Peter Stanley called it, the ‘Art that has only one meaning’. Some of the songs were objectionable, but many were interesting, and I feel the attached files contain true sentiment. Why something is true is always very personal, and not objective, but for me these songs rang true.

All were either sung in battle, behind the lines or at home by Australians. This is the music of war, for better or worse.

For further details on songs and texts see the Australian War Memorial website. www.awm.gov.au