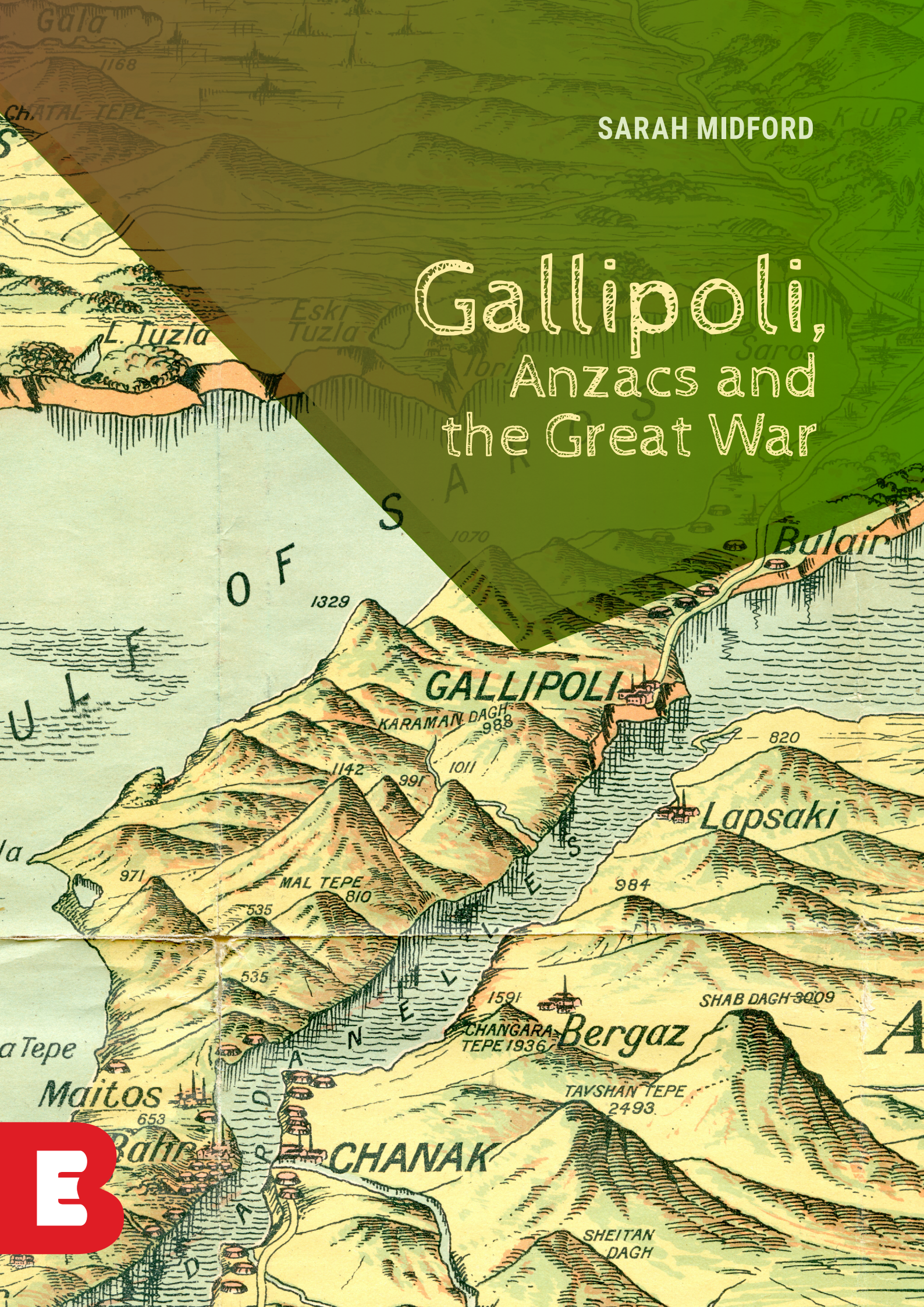


SARAH MIDFORD

# Gallipoli, Anzacs and the Great War







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SARAHMIDFORD

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Sarah Midford** is a Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University. She teaches Classics, Australian Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies and in 2016 received an **Australian Award for University Teaching** for online curriculum design. Sarah's **PhD**, from the University of Melbourne, examined ways in which classical narratives were drawn upon

when composing the Australian Anzac narrative. Her research focuses on the cultural impact of war in history, literature and commemorative processes throughout history, and draws connections between the ancient and modern worlds. She is particularly interested in how Australian national identity has been constructed using classical ideas, texts and aesthetics.



# Introduction





# Introduction

**T**he Gallipoli Campaign was fought during World War I (the Great War) from 1914 to 1918. This chapter introduces the reader to the Gallipoli Campaign, the geographical importance of the Dardanelles, and the mythical and historical importance of the Gallipoli landscape. Knowing more about where the World War I campaign occurred, the ancient myths from the region, and the long history of the area provides a solid foundation for studying Gallipoli, the Anzacs and World War I.

## Gallipoli Campaign

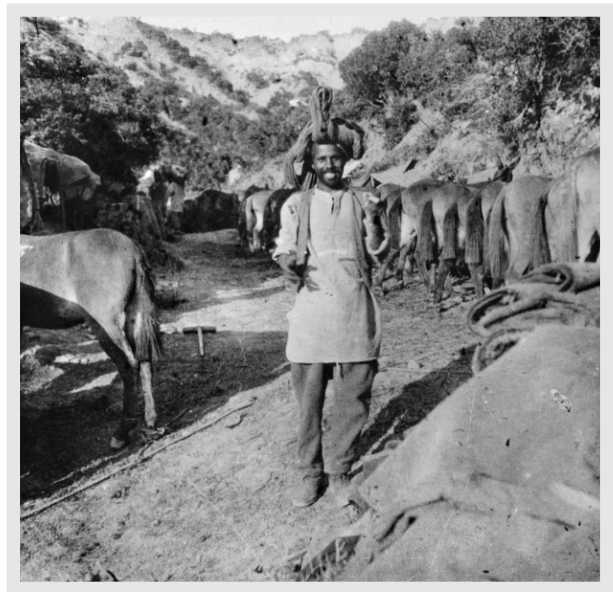
The Allied forces landed on the Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915, an event commemorated each year in Australia and New Zealand on Anzac Day. The campaign lasted 9 months. The Anzacs and those that served at Anzac Cove were all evacuated by 20 December 1915, and the forces that served further south at Cape Helles were evacuated by 9 January 1916.

Forces from multiple nations fought on Gallipoli. More Ottoman soldiers fought and died on the peninsula than from anywhere else. As many as 250 000 Turks fought during the Gallipoli Campaign, although, because many Ottoman service records are lost, this figure is an estimate. At the time, the Turks were part of the Ottoman Empire, which was allied with Germany. Germany and its allies fought as the Central Power. German forces were also present on the peninsula, but, again, figures are inaccurate and the number of German soldiers on Gallipoli is unknown. The German general Otto Viktor Karl Liman von Sanders commanded the Ottoman forces on Gallipoli.

*More Ottoman soldiers fought and died on the peninsula than from anywhere else. Most fighters and casualties from the Allied forces were British and French.*

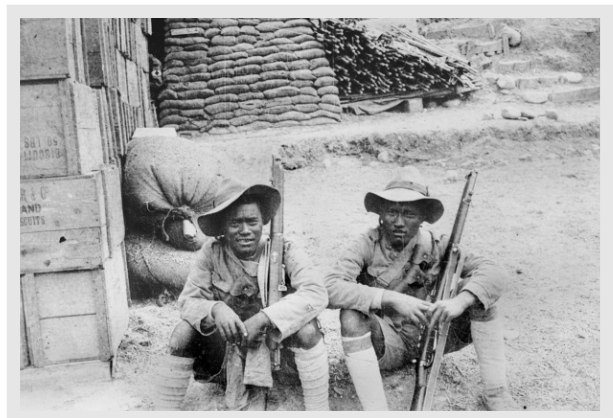
The Allied forces comprised armies from Australia, Britain, France, India, Ireland, Newfoundland (which later became part of Canada) and New Zealand. The approximate numbers of casualties from each Allied nation were as follows:

- Australia: 8700
- Britain: 26 000
- France: >10 000
- India: 1700
- Ireland: 3000
- Newfoundland: 50
- New Zealand: 2700.



Gallipoli, ca May 1915. An Indian standing in the horse and mule lines in a gully off Anzac Beach. Note the Indian's turban. This is half a stereo image; the full image is held at P02649.012.

SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#), donor JL Tedder; used under [PDM 1.0](#)



Gallipoli, 1915. Two unidentified Gurkha riflemen sitting at an Australian Army Service Corps dump. The wooden crates stacked beside them probably contain ammunition.

SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#); used under [PDM 1.0](#)





Turkish soldiers in a covered shelter at Kanle Sirt.  
Copied from *Gallipoli: Bedeutung und Verlauf der Kämpfe 1915* by Von Kannengiesser Pascha.

SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#); used under [PDM 1.0](#)



Gallipoli, August 1915. Bodies of dead Turkish soldiers lying in a shallow trench 3 days after their attack on Australian positions at Lone Pine.

SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#); used under [PDM 1.0](#)

More British and French forces fought, and were injured and killed, on the Gallipoli peninsula than from any other Allied nation.

The Gallipoli Campaign remains an important event in Australia's and New Zealand's history. The campaign has similar significance for the modern Turkish nation, which formed after the Turkish War of Independence at the end of World War I. It is important to remember that the Turkish soldiers fighting as part of the Ottoman Empire were defending their homeland from an invading force, so their perspective on the Gallipoli Campaign is quite different to that of the Allied nations involved.

The Anzac soldiers mainly fought around Anzac Cove (Ari Burnu), on the ridgeline between where the Lone Pine and Chunuk Bair memorials are now located. The Allies occupied the slopes to the west of the frontline, down towards the Aegean coast. The Ottomans occupied the eastern slopes across the peninsula to the shores of the Dardanelles. The position of each force dictated their access to fresh food and water. The Allies had little to no access to fresh water, with supplies being shipped in from nearby Greek islands and from as far away as Malta. The Anzacs ate mostly canned food, but the Ottoman soldiers had access to villages that provided them with flour to make fresh bread, as well as eggs and cheese.

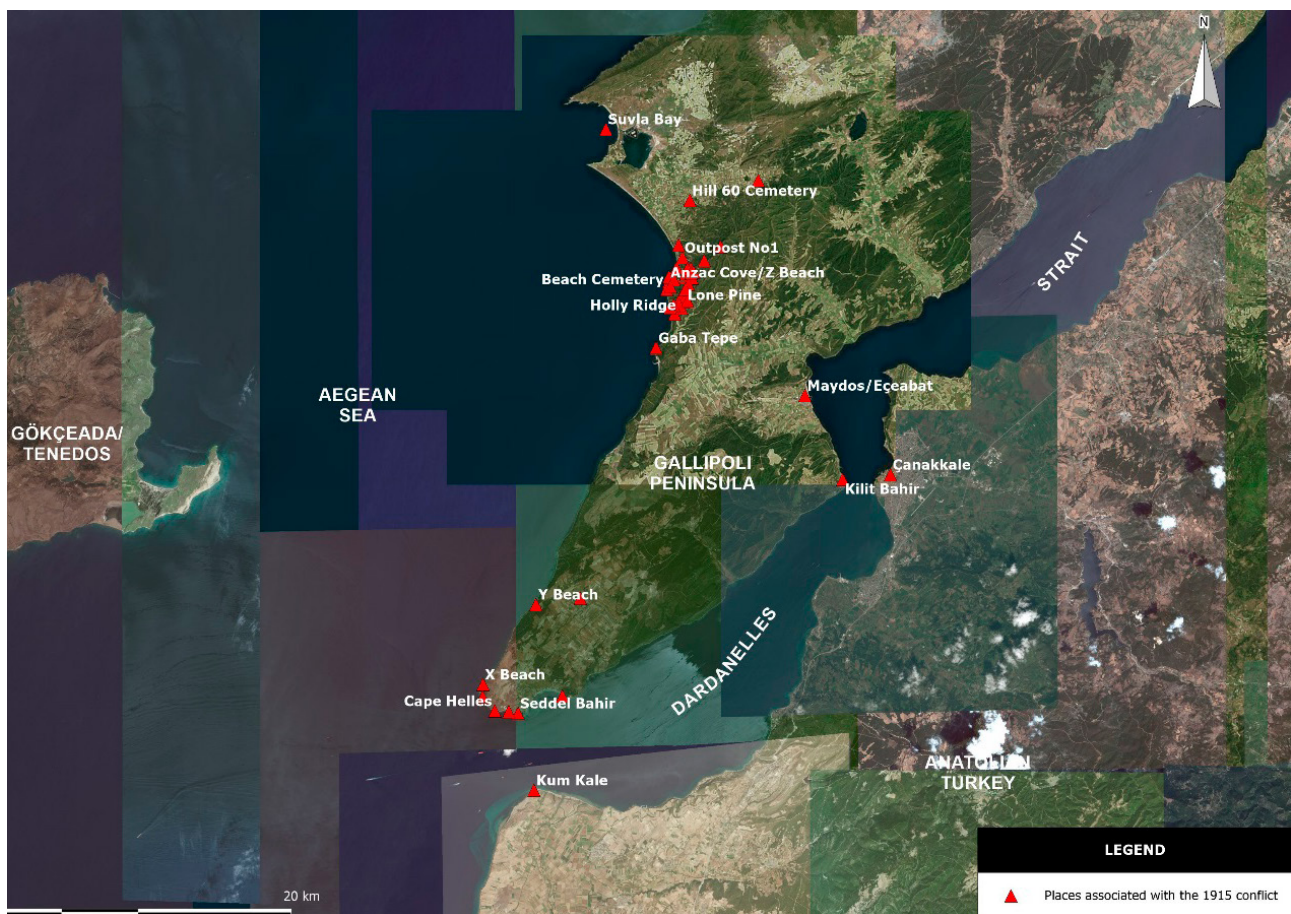
In addition to the fighting at Anzac Cove, there were battlefields at the tip of the peninsula – at Cape Helles. Predominantly French and British soldiers fought at Cape Helles, but Australian, New Zealand and Irish soldiers were also deployed in the region.

*The Anzacs ate mostly canned food, but the Ottoman soldiers had access to villages that provided them with flour to make fresh bread, as well as eggs and cheese.*

Today, numerous cemeteries and memorials occur all along the Gallipoli peninsula. Most Allied memorials are situated around Anzac Cove and along the ridgeline to the north, where most of the fighting occurred; fewer Allied memorials are at Cape Helles. The Turkish Memorial to the Martyrs (soldiers who died fighting) is located at Cape Helles. It is tall enough to be easily seen from the Asian shores of the Dardanelles.

Because of the number of soldiers who died on the Gallipoli peninsula, it has become a site of pilgrimage, particularly for people from Australia,





The Gallipoli Peninsula and the Dardanelles from Virtual Earth, used with permission from Michelle Negus Cleary.

New Zealand and Turkey. The peninsula is important to other nations as well, but the Gallipoli Campaign does not have such an important place in their national history. As a result, fewer people from other nations travel to Gallipoli to pay their respects to the dead.

## The Dardanelles and the Gallipoli peninsula

Gallipoli is on the eastern edge of Europe – to the east of Greece and to the south of Istanbul. The Mediterranean Sea lies to the south of Gallipoli, the Aegean Sea to the west and the Black Sea to the northeast. These bodies of water are all important because they facilitate trade and communication between the Asian, European and African continents. The Dardanelles, which runs between the Gallipoli peninsula and mainland Turkey, is a central channel that connects all 3 seas, and therefore all 3 continents.

The strategic location of the Dardanelles made this waterway an attractive target for the Allies.

The Allies believed that capturing the Gallipoli peninsula would enable them to control the Dardanelles, and therefore provide a safe passage for Allied watercraft between Russia and North Africa.

Early in World War I, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was deployed on the Eastern Front. The Russian navy had vessels in the Black Sea that needed to be deployed further west. However, to manoeuvre them, they needed to pass through Constantinople and through Bosphorus Strait, which separates the European and Asian continents. Once through the Bosphorus, the navy could enter the Sea of Marmara, continue through the Dardanelles into the Aegean Sea, and then sail into the Mediterranean Sea and beyond.

A further objective of the Eastern Front was to move forces through Eastern Europe towards the Central Power's armies fighting on the Western Front, so that they could 'come up behind' them. Doing so would have divided Germany's forces, which would be forced to defend themselves on both the Eastern and Western fronts.



However, the Anzacs and other Allied forces were not successful in their objective to conquer the Gallipoli peninsula. They never captured Istanbul or diverted the attention of Germany's army from the Western Front. The Gallipoli Campaign was a failure.

*The Anzacs and other Allied forces were not successful in their objective to conquer the Gallipoli peninsula.*

## Trojan War and the Gallipoli peninsula

The Dardanelles have always been an extremely important waterway, even before World War I. The strait forms a natural border between the east (Asia) and the west (Europe). The Gallipoli peninsula – part of Europe – lies on the western shore of the Dardanelles. To the east of Gallipoli is Anadolu, or mainland Turkey, which is on the Asian continent.

As well as a physical boundary between Asia and Europe, the Dardanelles have been characterised as a figurative boundary in myth, ancient history and literature for thousands of years.

Just to the southeast of the southernmost tip of the Gallipoli peninsula, on the Asian continent, is the ancient ruin known as Troy – the location of the 10-year-long Trojan War between the Achaeans (an allied force of Greeks) and the Trojans. Troy is only about 30 kilometres 'as the crow flies' from Anzac Cove. It is not possible to see Troy from Anzac Cove, but it can be seen from Cape Helles. During World War I, some soldiers claimed that they could see Troy from the ridgeline on the Gallipoli peninsula. Whether they could see it or not is less important than the fact that they were looking for the ancient city and believed they could see it.

If the Trojan War did occur, it would have been during the 12th century before the common era (BCE). Several centuries later, in the 8th century BCE, Homer is credited with writing the *Iliad*, which is an epic poem about a few weeks at the end of the Trojan War. Homer purportedly compiled the *Iliad* from a collection of oral stories that had been crafted by many, many different poets and singers during the intervening centuries. The *Iliad* is literature, not history; in it, Homer tells the story of gods, their semi-divine offspring and mortals fighting together.

*Homer's Iliad is an epic poem about a few weeks at the end of the 10-year-long Trojan War, which was fought between the Achaeans (an allied force of Greeks) and the Trojans.*

We do not know whether Homer was a real person. Beyond knowing that the authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is credited to Homer, we have very little knowledge of the man. These works he is said to have composed, however, were extremely important texts to the ancient Greeks, and have become extremely important texts to western civilisation.

The Allied soldiers knew that they were in the same landscape that was said to have hosted the Trojan War. The Trojan War was not fought on the Gallipoli peninsula, but it was fought in the general region, and the opportunity to fight where the great heroes of the ancient epic had become the subject of stories still being read 3000 years later was too great an opportunity for some men to miss. Journalists and historians picked up on the proximity of Gallipoli to Troy, and the region's mythical past was drawn upon in Australian stories and histories. This connected the experience of the modern soldier to that of ancient warriors such as Achilles, Odysseus and Hector. In doing so, Australian and New Zealand history became linked to Europe's.

*The Trojan War was not fought on the Gallipoli peninsula, but it was fought in the general region. Many Allied soldiers were excited to travel there, because of its fame.*

A number of parallels between the Trojan War and the Gallipoli Campaign are apparent. First, both wars involved armies from many places that were assembled into a single force. The Achaeans came from numerous Hellenic states to fight at Troy, and the Allied forces came from across the globe to fight on Gallipoli. The Allies and the Achaeans were both invaders in the region, and were both fighting wars that came to a stalemate before an ingenious conclusion.

Second, the endurance of the fighting forces is similar. Both the Allies and the Achaeans were unable to gain territory or ground. Time was the focus of endurance during the Trojan War, but on

Gallipoli it was the harsh conditions, lack of food and water, intense fighting and unceasing gunfire that needed to be endured.

*Several parallels between the Trojan War and the Gallipoli Campaign are apparent.*

Finally, in both wars, a Trojan Horse was deployed. The Allied Trojan Horse (as it has come to be known) was a military manoeuvre involving a ship (collier), the *River Clyde*, being run aground on 25 April 1915. The *River Clyde* could carry up to 2000 men. The idea was that those on the ship would launch a surprise attack against the Ottoman forces, gaining territory very quickly. However, the operation was unsuccessful, and was eventually terminated because a large number of the mainly Irish soldiers were wounded or killed.

The parallels continue beyond World War I, as the Anzac narrative has become increasingly legendary. Just as the *Iliad* tells the stories of soldiers who became heroes, the stories of the Anzac soldiers are heroic. In both cases, the countrymen of the soldiers read stories about the deeds of warriors who fought in a war that occurred many years ago. The main difference between Anzac heroes and Homer's heroes is that the Trojan and Greek heroes were often demigods. The word 'hero' has changed its meaning over the centuries; in the 20th century, it denoted exemplary, mortal men – not demigods.

## Earlier myths and legends from the Dardanelles region

The Trojan War is not the first mythical narrative from the region around the Dardanelles.

### Helle and Phrixus

*One of the earliest myths from the region is that of Helle and Phrixus, which led to the tale of Jason, his Argonauts and the Golden Fleece.*

Helle and Phrixus were twins who had to flee from their home in Boeotia (central Greece) because their stepmother, Ino, was trying to kill them. They escaped on a flying golden ram sent by their

biological mother Nephele, and headed east across the Gallipoli peninsula in search of safety. However, as they were flying across the southernmost point of the peninsula, Helle fell off the ram into the water. Where she is said to have landed is now known as Cape Helles. Phrixus continued east and landed in Colchis (the modern Republic of Georgia). After finding safety, Phrixus sacrificed the ram and gave its golden fleece to King Aeëtes, who prized it so highly that he placed a dragon that never slept to guard it. Years later, the Golden Fleece became the object of desire for Jason and his Argonauts, who journeyed from Greece to steal it from the eastern kingdom.

*Other stories from the area include that of Hero and Leander, and the Persian king Xerxes.*

### Hero and Leander

Another myth from the Dardanelles is that of Hero and Leander. This story is a lot like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* – a love story about a couple who were separated, but found a way to be together despite the odds. The lovers were divided by the Dardanelles. Leander lived on the Asian side of the water in Abydos, and Hero lived on the European side in a town called Sestos. Each night, Leander would swim across the strait to be with Hero. To guide her lover, Hero would light a lamp as a beacon. However, one night the lamp blew out, and Leander lost his way. He eventually succumbed to strong currents and died. When Hero saw Leander's body washed up on the beach, she was so distraught that she threw herself from her tower so she could be with him in death.

This myth was still very powerful in the 19th century. In 1810, Lord Byron decided he wanted to undertake Leander's swim. It took Byron 2 attempts, but he managed to swim across the strait, breathing life back into the ancient love story. Now, at the end of August each year, ships are stopped from traversing the Dardanelles for a few hours, and swimmers wishing to undertake Leander's and Byron's journey can do so, keeping the myth alive today.

### King Xerxes

The next story from the region moves into the realm of history. The Persian king Xerxes crossed



the Dardanelles in 480 BCE as he marched his armies into Greece. However, marching an army across a waterway is not easy, and Xerxes had to try several methods before he was successful.

Initially, Xerxes had bridges built, but the current was too strong, and they collapsed into the water. This is said to have made Xerxes very angry. He took out his rage on the Dardanelles by whipping the water and branding it with hot irons. Xerxes was trying to conquer the Greeks, so it is important to consider that Greek sources tell these stories to vilify the Persian king and characterise him as irrational.

After his display of anger, Xerxes came up with an ingenious plan to build a pontoon bridge from boats. In all, 360 boats were lashed together and anchored to the Asian and European shores of the Dardanelles, forming a bridge that the Persian army could simply walk across. Although his whipping of the Dardanelles may not have tamed them, Xerxes did manage to tame the water long enough to achieve his objective and successfully invade Europe.

## Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar

In 334 BCE, Alexander the Great crossed the Dardanelles, heading east to Persia. He sent his armies across the narrowest point of the waterway, between Sestos and Abydos. However, he decided to take a different route to visit the tomb of Protesilaus at Cape Helles, where he made a sacrifice to the gods. Protesilaus was the first warrior to die in the Trojan War, and Alexander visited his tomb as a mark of respect for a fellow soldier. This gesture was also designed to ward against a similar fate when Alexander and his armies walked into Asia to fight, as Protesilaus had done before him.

*Alexander the Great crossed the Dardanelles in 334 BCE.*

It became common to visit the Dardanelles before embarking on wars in the east. The Roman military commander Julius Caesar and his nephew Augustus, the first Roman emperor, both visited Troy as they travelled east. Caesar and Augustus claimed that the goddess Venus was their ancestor through the Trojan prince Aeneas, who fled Troy as it burned. After Troy fell, Aeneas journeyed through Carthage in North Africa and into Italy, where he

settled. Romulus and Remus came from Aeneas's settlement; thus, through Aeneas, Rome was founded. When Roman emperors travelled to Troy, they were paying respect to their ancestors and connecting with their cultural heritage.

## Gallipoli as an annual pilgrimage for Australians and New Zealanders

Alexander and Caesar set an important precedent for travel to the region. These military men journeyed to Troy and the Gallipoli peninsula to pay their respects to those who had died in wars and were important to their people. Today, those who travel to Gallipoli to commemorate the soldiers who died fighting during World War I are making a pilgrimage to a site of cultural importance for them and their people.

*The continuing Australian and New Zealand pilgrimage to the Dardanelles connects the deeds of the Anzac soldiers during World War I to those of the Greeks and Trojans who fought in the mythical Trojan War.*

The likeness of the soldiers and events of the 2 wars, fought 3000 years apart, is emphasised by Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. In a tribute to the Anzacs who died, Hamilton wrote:

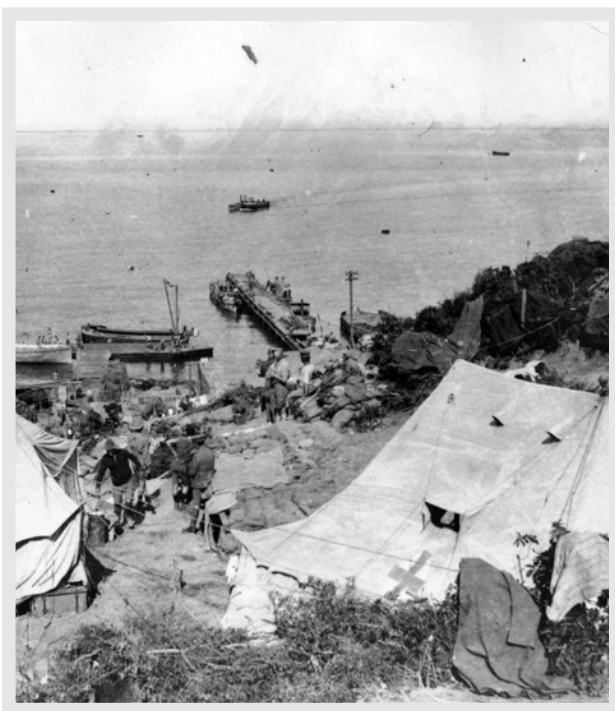
*You will hardly fade away until the sun fades out of the sky and the earth sinks into the universal blackness. For already you form part of that great tradition of the Dardanelles which began with Hector and Achilles. In another few thousand years the two stories will have blended into one, and whether when 'the iron roaring went up to the vault of heaven through the unharvested sky', as Homer tells us, it was the spear of Achilles or whether it was a 100 pound shell from Asiatic Annie won't make much odds to the Almighty.*

Part of Hamilton's statement is a quote from Homer's *Iliad*, through which he implies that the main difference between the Trojan War and World War I was the weaponry used. Hamilton makes the connection between the two conflicts even more

explicit in a speech delivered in 1935 at a London Anzac Day service:

*A book called the Iliad, containing what we would nowadays call 'Despatches from the Siege of Troy', a campaign almost duplicate to ours, although it took place 3,000 years ago. Instead of a wooden horse, we made use of a steel ship [HMT River Clyde], that's about the extent of the difference. Anyone who fought at the Dardanelles in 1915 and reads the Iliad will at once see history repeating itself. In another thousand years the two legends will have blended and passages from the historians will be expounded in the schools as beautiful images of wicked happenings long ago ... For those who died there will never be forgotten.*

Homer's epic was such an important myth in this landscape that it was employed to tell the story of a contemporary war. The magnitude of death and suffering in World War I left many not knowing how to express their grief and horror. Employing stories from the past allowed stories of the contemporary war to take on a mythical quality and elevated the importance of current events.



Anzac Cove, 1915.

SOURCE: State Library of South Australia [PRG 280/1/12/231]; used under PDM 1.0

## Antiquities and cemeteries on Gallipoli

As the soldiers dug trenches on Gallipoli, they found antiquities. Much of what was found was encountered during routine digging, and there is little or scant evidence of what was found and where it now is.

There are some records of Australians finding antiquities in the earth on Gallipoli. In his diary, an Australian engineer, Sergeant Lawrence, wrote:

*There's nothing exciting to report as to my shift on the tunnels. As we drive through, we come across all sorts of earth, etc. In places we run through great deposits of pottery rather red and of a very fine texture. It seems to be one of the one class of work; mostly it takes the form of slabs and seems to be a kind of covering for the dead. I intend to get a little piece if I can.*

The manner in which this is written gives the impression that there is nothing exciting about finding antiquities while digging, implying that it was a common occurrence.

However, there was one instance when soldiers diverted their attention from the fighting to conduct a proper archaeological excavation. General headquarters authorised an archaeological excavation, between July and December 1915, by members of the French School at Athens, at a site known as Elaious near the battlefields at Cape Helles. The team of excavators recorded a necropolis (burial site), uncovering a number of marble tombs.

After the war concluded, new cemeteries needed to be built to accommodate all those who died during the Gallipoli Campaign. Much effort was directed to preserving the Gallipoli landscape and constructing memorials and cemeteries. In 1919, CEW Bean led the Australian Historical Mission back to Gallipoli – a team of soldiers and civilians who were charged with recording what was left of the battlefields. The landscape was photographed and painted in the hope that a better general understanding of the campaign could be achieved.

*In 1919, CEW Bean led the Australian Historical Mission back to Gallipoli – a team of soldiers and civilians who were charged with recording what was left of the battlefields.*



While on Gallipoli, Bean and his colleagues came across artefacts, earthwork features (trenches and tunnels) and human remains. The team catalogued and reported their findings, assisted by Zeki Bey – a Turkish officer who had fought on Gallipoli – who offered a Turkish perspective of the campaign.

While the Australian Historical Mission was undertaking its survey of the battlefields, the War Graves Registration Unit (now known as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) was administering the construction of cemeteries across the peninsula. Bean and his team observed their work, and reported to the Australian Government on the progress of memorial and cemetery construction.

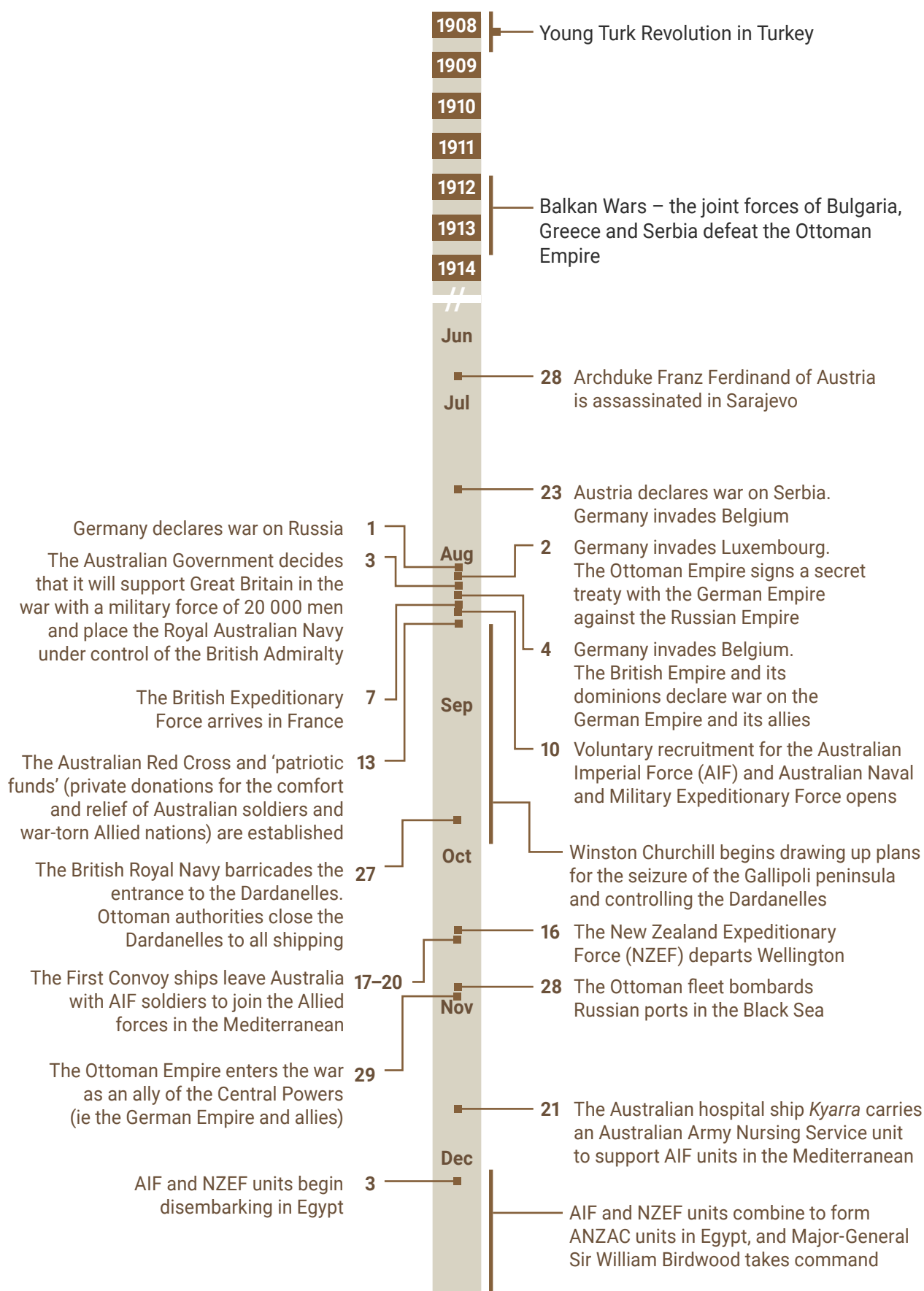
Between 1919 and 2010, the Gallipoli battlefields were never surveyed systematically. In 2010, however, a team of Turkish, New Zealand and Australian archaeologists, historians and classicists surveyed the battlefields as part of the Joint Historical and Archaeological Survey of the Gallipoli peninsula, funded by the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs. Non-invasive techniques recorded what is left of the battlefield. The team mapped artefacts and earthwork features using a differential global positioning system (DGPS), and wrote a report about the state of preservation of each feature.



A view of Anzac Cove as it appeared in February, 1919. Debris in the foreground includes barbed wire and two water cans. Photograph taken on the Gallipoli Peninsula under the direction of Captain C E W Bean of The Australian Historical Mission, during the months of February and March, 1919.

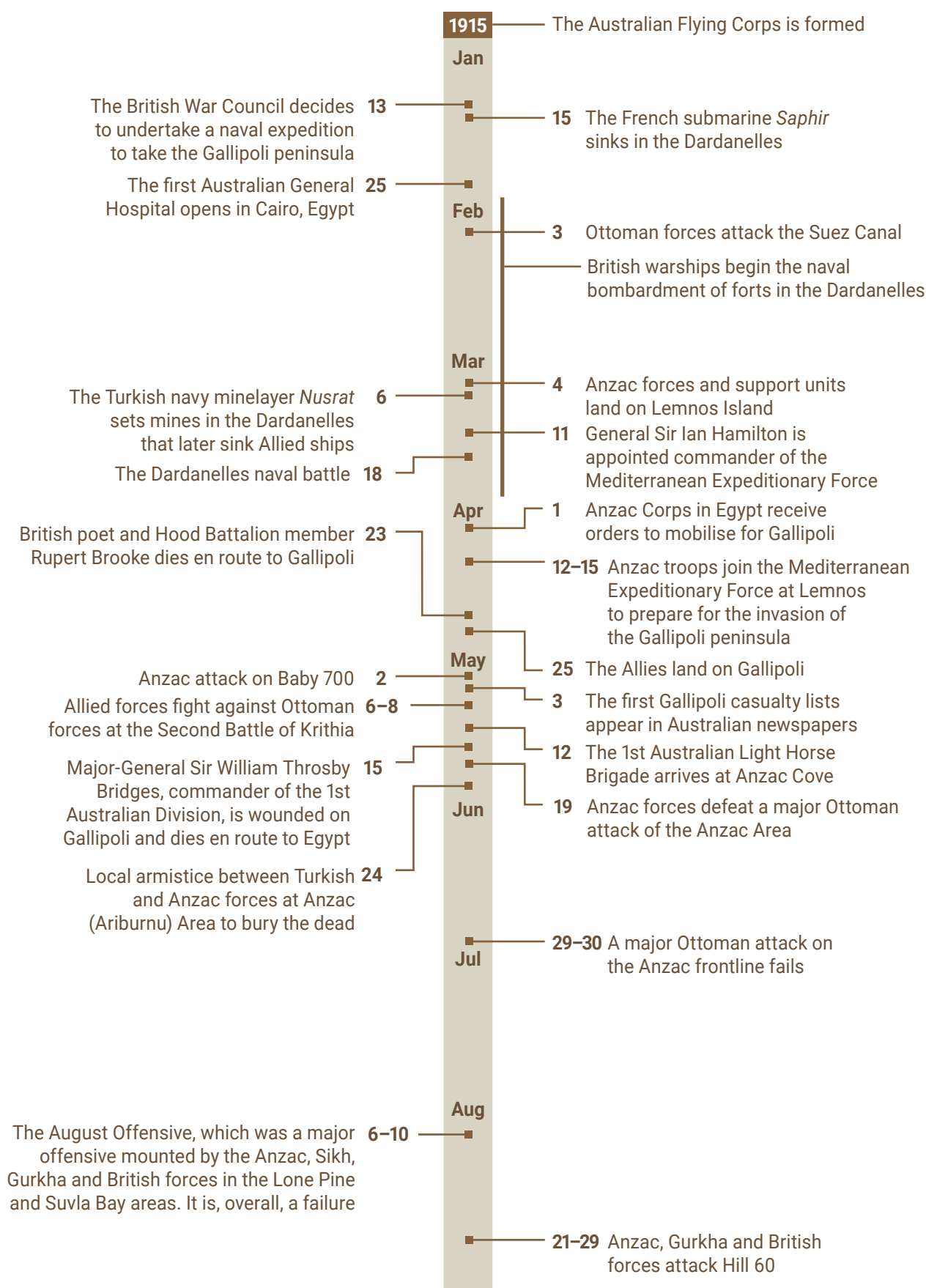
SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#); used under [PDM 1.0](#)

## Timeline: Gallipoli, the Anzacs and the world wars

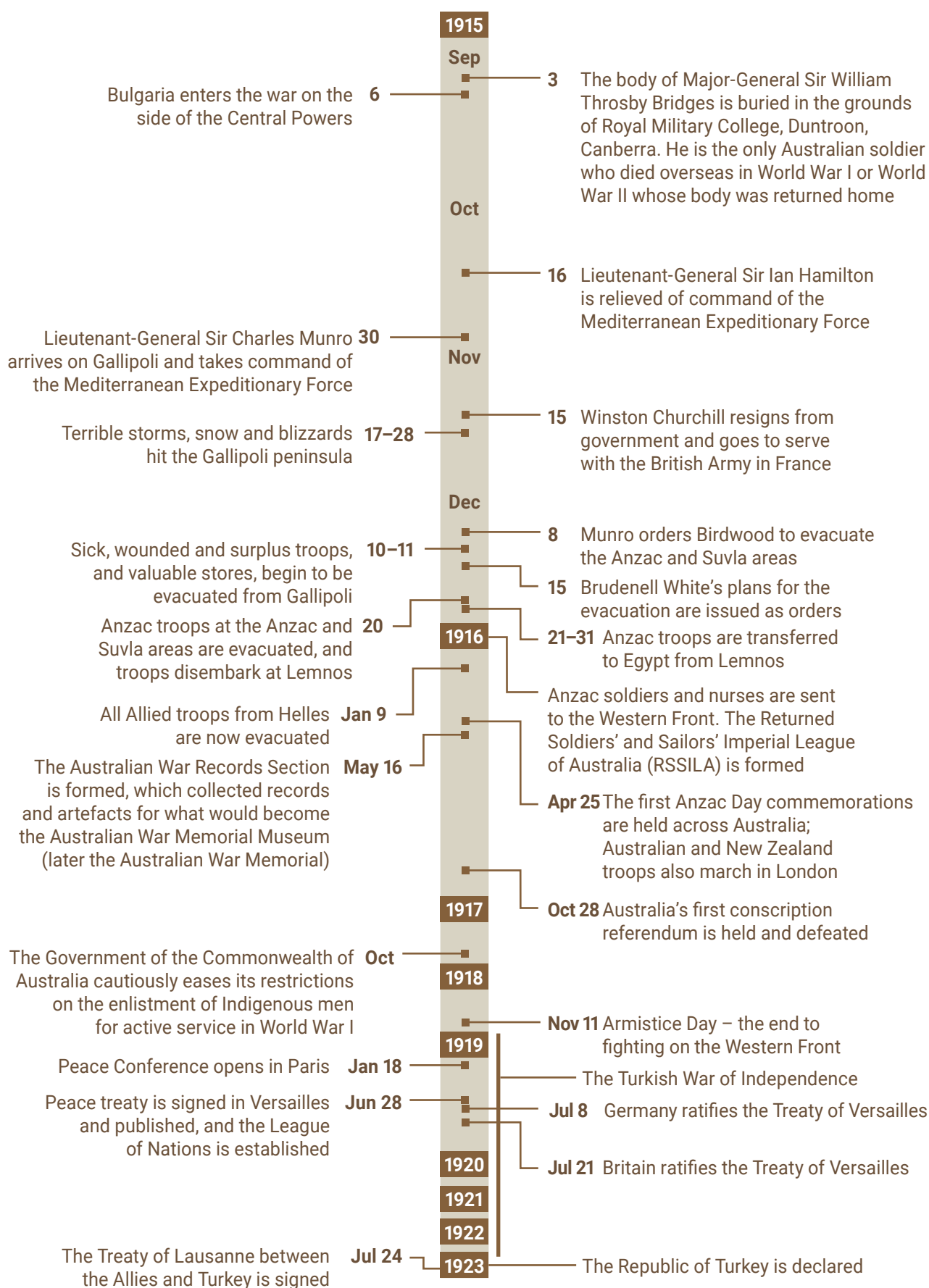




## Timeline: Gallipoli, the Anzacs and the world wars

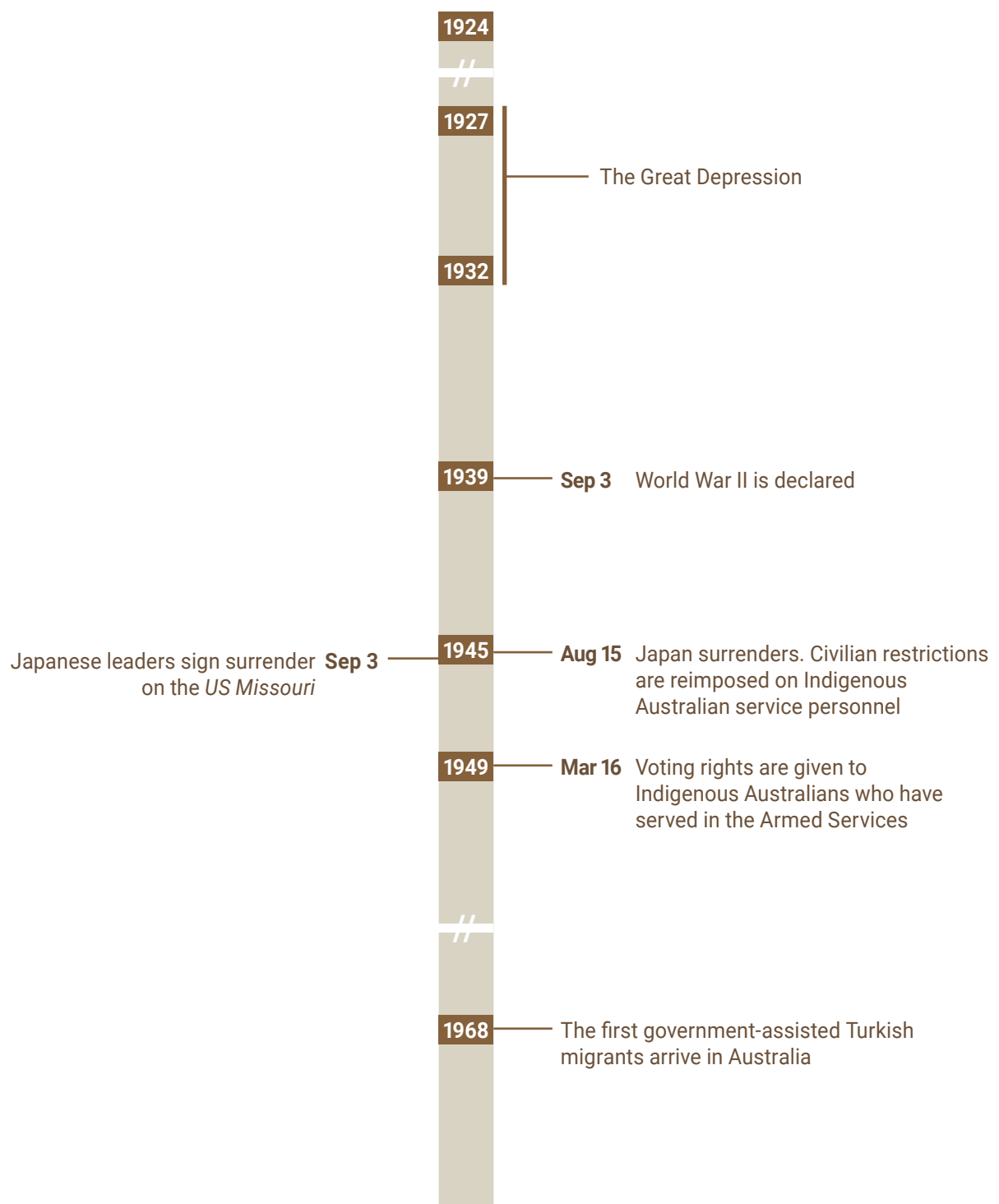


# Timeline: Gallipoli, the Anzacs and the world wars





## Timeline: Gallipoli, the Anzacs and the world wars



## Gallipoli, the beautiful city



By Chris Mackie (Professor of Greek Studies, La Trobe University) and first published on [The Conversation](#) on 1 August 2014, 6.51 am AEST (used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#))

### Disclosure statement

Chris Mackie does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

If you do a historical study of the Gallipoli battlefields, or even if you are just a passing visitor to the sites, one of the first things to strike you is all the different names.

At the Anzac battlefield many of the names that are most familiar to us were coined by the soldiers in 1915, and they help to tell their story of the conflict – Quinn’s Post, Walker’s Ridge, Russell’s Top, Lone Pine, the Sphinx, and so forth.

The Turks, of course, have their own names for those landmarks, and in some cases these help to reveal their sufferings in the war (Quinn’s Post is Bomba Sirt [“Bomb Spur”], and Lone Pine is Kanli Sirt [“Bloody Ridge”]). In some cases the allies

used the Turkish names for specific features of the landscape, and these are now part of the English vocabulary of the campaign – names such as Kum Kale, Ari Burnu, Gaba Tepe, Seddulbahir and Chunuk Bair.

Another layer of complexity in the use of names in the region is that Greek-speaking peoples lived here from early antiquity - probably from some time in the 7th century BCE. The Dardanelles waterway (ie. the Hellespont) was seen by the Greeks as a natural boundary between their world and that of the Barbarians, especially the Persians, and so the region has a crucial symbolic role to play in notions of Greek self-identity.

## Naming Gallipoli

The Greek presence on Gallipoli was not just an ancient phenomenon. They continued to live there right through into the modern era, until just before the first world war.

Two censuses undertaken just before the war show that Winston Churchill’s 1915 assault was on a place where the Greek language had been more widely spoken than the Turkish.



Strange as it may seem, many participants at Gallipoli took the time out to ponder the beauty of the landscape.

Фото: [‘Porto Vecchio Gallipoli’](#) by Mattia Notari; used under [PDM 2.0](#)



Reminders of the presence of the Greek community can still be seen in occasional physical remains of their lives there, and in some of the names that were used of landmarks in the region. The name Krithia, for instance, in the south of the peninsula (now called Alcitepe), which was totally destroyed in the campaign, comes from the ancient Greek “kri” (meaning barley), which presumably was the characteristic crop, even in antiquity.

Madytos (or Maidos), now called Eceabat, was another well-known Greek village, known for its brick-making. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs-supported **Historical and Archaeological survey of the Gallipoli battlefield**, of which I am a part, has found evidence of the Greek presence on the peninsula, including bricks from Madytos made prior to the war.

Some of the names used by the allies, therefore, are derived in one way or another from ancient Greek - including Helles, and Dardanelles and Gallipoli. Cape Helles is cognate with the name Hellespont (sea of Helle), which appears all through the Iliad (although there is no reference in Homer to the charming myth of Helle falling into the sea from the

golden fleece, which explains for the Greeks how the Hellespont received its name).

The name Dardanelles is obviously a modern coinage going back ultimately to references to Dardanus in the Iliad. Dardanus is the son of Zeus and the first king of the city when it was located on Mount Ida. He is briefly referred to by Aeneas in Book 20 of the Iliad, and he is an important background figure in the saga of Troy.

The name Gallipoli comes from the Greek “Kallipolis”, which means beautiful city or beautiful town. Strictly speaking, it refers to the city further up the peninsula across the waterway from Lampsachus, or, as it’s now known, Lapseki.

There were lots of Kallipolises in antiquity, including one further south on the west coast of Turkey near Kos, and one in South Italy. The founders of these cities obviously wanted to identify them as beautiful from the beginning, hence the name.

The Turks to this day retain the original Greek name in their modern name Gelibolu.



Trench warfare at Gallipoli.

SOURCE: State Library of South Australia; used under [CC BY 4.0](#)

## The beauty of Gallipoli

When you use the word “Gallipoli”, or “Gelibolu”, you are not only speaking ancient Greek – after a fashion; you are unconsciously evoking the idea of physical beauty (Kalli-). Originally, it was the Greek town itself that was meant to be beautiful, but because of its size as the largest modern settlement, the name Gallipoli came to identify (in English) the whole peninsula.

The idea of beauty that is embedded into the name of the town also has its application to the peninsula as a whole. Even in antiquity the peninsula had a reputation for its beauty. Xenophon described it as “beautiful” (kalê, as in Kallipolis) and “prosperous” (eudaimôn). The Athenians, and others, saw the region early on for its excellent agricultural potential, and they used it accordingly.

An appreciation of the beauty of Gallipoli – the peninsula – was not confined to antiquity. It has an important part to play in some accounts of the campaign in 1915.

Strange as it may seem, many participants at Gallipoli took the time out to ponder the beauty

of the landscape. This seems to have been particularly true of the Australian response to the Gallipoli landscape. As one Australian Gallipoli historian, P.A. Pederson, puts it:

*the beauty and strange serenity of the Peninsula, even during the most bitter fighting, were paradoxes which struck many who served in the Dardanelles. Few men tired of watching the magnificent sunsets.*

## The view from the trenches

One of the most striking things about the published diary of the campaign by the Australian sapper **Cyril Lawrence** is the repeated reference to the beauty of the setting, first Egypt, then the Greek islands, then Gallipoli.

When his hard work on the trenches began at Gallipoli, Lawrence usually tended to confine his comments to the lovely summer weather; “the sunset was simply glorious; jingo it was fine” (May 28); “glorious morning” (June 8); “today is just glorious again. It has ever since we landed here been perfect” (July 1).



Australian soldiers at Gallipoli.

SOURCE: State Library of South Australia; used under [CC BY 4.0](#)



Later on he writes about “another glorious day. Surely this place, once popularised, would be a great rival to Nice or Cannes. It’s magnificent”.

Lawrence himself was a sapper in an engineering unit, and spent much of his time digging underground. His was a very difficult lot, but he appreciated the landscape around him, as did many others of the Australians. In their letters home and in their diaries, many men made similar comments.

The correspondent **Charles Bean**, who had done Classics at Oxford and became the official Australian historian of the war, was certainly one person who appreciated the austere beauty of the Gallipoli landscape. Indeed, it seems to have had an impact on his whole perception of the campaign.

When he went back to Turkey in 1919, after the western front, Bean saw the peninsula from his ship at a distance, and he wrote of his delight in seeing its hills: “they were the hills of the Dardanelles, and at that moment I, for one, was poignantly homesick for them”.

In some ways this is quite a remarkable thing to say for a place that saw an allied defeat, and was the setting for so much death and misery. Nonetheless, the Mediterranean setting of the campaign – the blue water, the sunrises and sunsets, the islands and the beaches, the old villages, the foliage, the hills and ravines – all these made their impression on the men at the time.

And they all played their part in the way that the campaign would be remembered in the period afterward – or so it seems to me.

My own view is that the beauty of the Dardanelles landscape, and the ancient context of the campaign – especially the fact that Troy is across the waterway – have fed into the myth-making aspect of the Gallipoli story in Australia.

The imagination of some Classicists at Gallipoli, especially some British writers, was given full expression by Troy’s proximity.

In his diary entry of May 3 1915, John Gillam contemplated the fighting around him at Helles in the context of the Trojan war across the waterway:



Scenes from the Iliad in the tablinum of the house of Vetutius Placidus in Pompeii.

SOURCE: Ken and Nyetta; used under CC BY-NC 2.0



*at night as the moon rises to the full, the picture is perfect. The coast of Asia – that land of mystery and romance, with the plains of Troy in the background, immortalised for ever by the sweet singers of ancient Greece. One can almost picture those god – like heroes of the past halting in those titanic fights which their shades perhaps wage nightly in the old battlefields of Troy, halting to gaze in wonder and amazement on the strange spectacle unfolded before them – modern war, that is, and all its attendant horrors.*

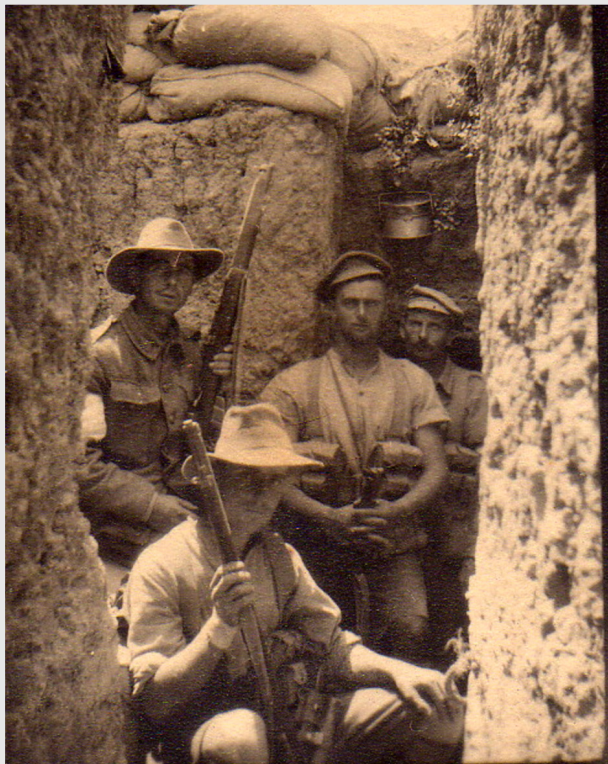
*Hector, Achilles and Agamemnon in their golden harness – their old enmities forgotten – must surely gaze in astonishment on the warlike deeds and methods of another age than theirs.*

## Homer's Gallipoli

The idea of a war taking place in a beautiful setting, of course, has its mythical parallel in Greek epic accounts of the struggle for Troy. In the Iliad the beauty of the natural landscape around Troy, not to mention the city itself, serves as a fundamental background to the horrors that take place on the battlefield.

The heroic landscape is fittingly beautiful.

So the rivers at Troy are lovely, fine horses graze on the beautiful fields, the city itself is rich, sacred,



Australian soldiers in trenches on Gallipoli, 1915.

PHOTO by Ellen Thompson; used under PDM 1.0

and beautiful. Mount Ida is lofty and beautiful and with abundant timber – the appropriate location for Zeus, the king of the gods, to spend much of his time in the poem.

The Greek epic poets tended to idealise the world of their warriors, such that it was quite distinct from the everyday world of their audiences. Everything tends to be larger, better, and more beautiful than within the poet's own world.

The Iliad ends before the final acts in the life of the city are played out, but the loveliness of the physical setting at Troy plays its part in anticipating the terrible loss to be endured by the defeated. And in the case of the Trojans, they lose everything.

## A national epic

In the 20th century in Australia Gallipoli became the nearest thing to a national epic. It became a special conflict around which many people could rally to express their national identity, not unlike the way that the Greeks rallied around the story of Troy, or the Persian wars, or Alexander's eastern conquests.

British writers such as **John Masefield** and **Compton Mackenzie** even compared the Australian men with heroes from old poetry – and they did so with considerable hyperbole.

In the case of Homer he was not just a good poet. The Iliad manages to capture the essence of what it means to be Greek. The great issues of human existence are its subject – life and death and family and community – and the action is played out in a beautiful and exotic setting in a war against a foreign adversary.

We may be thankful there were no epic poets around about in Australia to tell the tale of Gallipoli. But epics can be formed without the need for poets skilled in formulaic verse structures. The creation of a national epic in the modern context is a social phenomenon, not so much a poetic one.

It is not determined by a single hand, or by a group of good poets, but by a much broader collective impulse. And in the case of Gallipoli the mechanisms and genres of modern society played their parts in the process – literature and historiography, art and architecture, film, political discourse.

The result has been that Gallipoli's place in the psyche of modern Australia is nothing short of astonishing. If you explore this phenomenon of epic formation against a background of



comparative epic poetry from many countries, it becomes clear that it is an ancient process manifesting itself within a modern social context.

The other side of this process of epic formation in the case of Gallipoli was that people were inclined to turn away from the western front, for all its unrelenting horror. It is hard to grasp, intellectually or psychologically, the extent of the losses on both sides in France and Belgium.

If the perceived physical setting of Gallipoli was well-suited for a national epic of heroism and suffering, and courage in the face of adversity, the western front was seen as far too real and far too confronting.

No sea to cross, no beaches or hills to scamper up, little in the way of a tactical struggle. No stark heights and ravines to confront. No Aegean sun beating down. No exotic Troy just across the waterway. No obvious beauty in the landscape. Just the reality of terrible and scarcely imaginable slaughter on the grey, flat plains.

## Distortions of the classical prism

We classicists are sometimes accused of seeing the modern world through a kind of classical prism, so that modern events are made to conform to ancient ideas and patterns. The accusation is not at all unreasonable, especially in my case.

The Greek writers and mythmakers have a lot to say about war. Some of the most imaginative treatments of the subject of war come from ancient Greece. It is through war narratives that the Greeks tended to investigate the world through the Trojan war, the Persian wars, the Peloponnesian war, and so forth.

They don't confine their narratives to the fighting itself, of course. But rather, they always have one eye on the broader human implications of it all.

Why do we fight wars? What happens to human society when we do? How is it that we perpetrate terrible acts on one another? What are the consequences for the people who do so?

It is very revealing about Greek attitudes to this subject that in their pantheon of gods they had two gods of war, not just one. These two gods represent different, though not mutually exclusive, aspects of warfare.

First there is the beautiful Athena, daughter of Zeus, born from her father's head, the goddess of courage and heroism, wisdom and strategy. In Homer she combines the idealised attributes of

the male in human society – especially beauty, courage and heroism – together with the ideal female aspects of beauty, loyalty and wisdom.

The other war god is Ares, a son of Zeus and Hera. He is god of the blood and the guts and the cruelty of war. In the Iliad he is defeated by a human warrior, Diomedes, together with Athena's help. After he is defeated he scurries back to Olympus, only to receive abuse from his father Zeus.

It says a lot about the Greek attitude to war that Ares is humiliated in both Homeric poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey. To the Greek mind, Athena could represent something good about war, which people could aspire to and admire. Her presence and her identity signify that there can be major social benefit from courage and steadfastness and wisdom in war.

Athenian mythology even made Athena a divine participant in the battle against the Persians at Marathon. The glory of that battle, so few against so many, could be attributed to her support. But Ares, in his main function, was the terrible face of human suffering in war.

## Gazing at the beauty of Gallipoli

We don't have gods of war today, but heroism and courage and strategy still operate alongside the gruesome realities of the killing and the wounding. The process of epic formation and heroisation almost always privileges the former over the latter.

An epic such as Homer's Iliad is not grounded in the actual horrors that occur in the war, despite the fact that these take place all around. Rather, it is grounded in the perceived higher levels of military conduct within it – the courage and the passion, the determination and the renown.

The process by which history is turned into myth, or into epic, usually involves us fixing our gaze upon Athena, rather than looking Ares full in the face. And this has been the experience with Gallipoli in Australia. When we ask ourselves why Gallipoli is the subject of so much myth-making, rather than the western front, it is worth bearing the dichotomy of Athena and Ares in mind.

The characteristic beauty and nature of the landscape of the Dardanelles, and the adjacent world of Homer's Troy, both feed into the narrative in an irresistible kind of way as a fitting place for heroic conduct.



# 1 Chapter 1: History of Gallipoli and the region





# 1 History of Gallipoli and the region

**T**he Dardanelles have been fought over for thousands of years, because they form a natural boundary between Europe and Asia. When the Anzacs landed on Gallipoli, they were entering a landscape that was full of mythical and historical narratives that date back at least 3000 years. This chapter outlines the historical and mythological context of the Gallipoli landscape. It introduces the ancient myth and history of the region, and provides a brief history of the Ottoman Empire, against which the Allies fought on Gallipoli in 1915.

## Troy and the Trojan War

### The ancient city

There is some doubt that the ancient city of Troy, famous for the Trojan War, ever existed. The archaeological site that we know as Troy is on the western coast of Turkey near the Gallipoli peninsula and was part of a network of cities in the region. Nearby Greek islands include Tenedos, Imbros, Lesbos and Lemnos. The nearby Gallipoli peninsula was home to about 12 cities, including Sestos. On the Asian mainland was the city of Abydos and, further south, Mount Ida. At the foot of Mount Ida, Dardanus (the son of Zeus and grandson of Atlas through his mother Electra) founded a city, which he named after himself. The Trojans were descended from Dardanus and his great-grandson Ilus, who chose to move closer to the sea to found the city of Ilium (Troy).

Mount Ida was sacred to the Trojans. It was verdant and fertile, and a rich source of natural resources, including wood and water. All the rivers that brought fresh water to Troy came from Mount Ida, and the wood that the Trojans used for cremations was sourced from the mountain, making it important to the lives and deaths of the Trojans.

## Chapter questions

To comprehensively understand the significance of the Dardanelles landscape, compose answers to the following questions:

1. Are there any themes that you can identify in the myths set in the Dardanelles landscape?
2. In your opinion, what are some of the most important themes in the *Iliad*?
3. What is the geographical importance of the Dardanelles?
4. Why have so many memorable wars occurred in this region?
5. Why have the Gallipoli peninsula and Troy been the sites of pilgrimage for so long?
6. Do you think the memory of the Gallipoli Campaign would have endured as long as it has if it hadn't been fought so close to where the Trojan War occurred?

To comprehensively understand the history of the Ottoman Empire, compose answers to the following questions:

1. For how long was the Ottoman Empire in existence?
2. What peoples and territories were ruled by the Ottomans?
3. What factors led to the battles in Turkey and on the Eastern Front?
4. Why did the Ottoman Empire get involved in the Great War?
5. Why were Australians and New Zealanders fighting the Ottomans?
6. How did the Republic of Turkey come about?

Mount Ida was also a mythical place from where the Greek gods would watch the Trojan War. In fact, the Judgement of Paris, which instigated the Trojan War, took place on Mount Ida. Paris, a Trojan prince, was charged with the task of deciding which of the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite was the most beautiful – the 'fairest' receiving a golden apple. Each goddess attempted to bribe Paris for the prize. Hera offered Paris rulership over Europe and Asia, and Athena offered him military prowess and wisdom. But Aphrodite convinced Paris to name her the fairest by offering him the most beautiful woman in the world.



Map of the Troad, including the site of Troy.

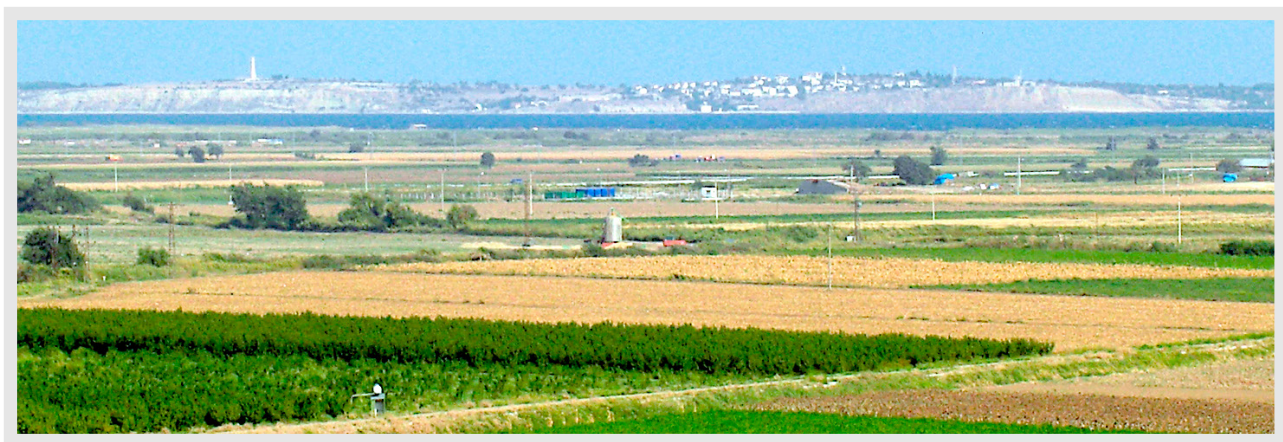
SOURCE: Dbachmann at English Wikipedia

However, this woman, Helen of Sparta, was already married, and to a king with the means to retrieve her. When Paris accepted his gift and Helen was taken from her husband Menelaus, he assembled forces from a number of Hellenic (Greek) states to invade Troy, resulting in the Trojan War. This is why Helen is described as ‘the face that launched a thousand ships’.

*Homer's Iliad tells the story of approximately 40 days at the end of the Trojan War, and is about the clash between east and west.*

Written in the 8th century, the *Iliad* is a poem of approximately 16 000 lines written in hexameter. It tells the story of approximately 40 days at the end of the Trojan War, and is about the clash between east and west. The boundary between Asia and Europe in this region is marked by the Dardanelles. Troy is on the Asian side, but just across the water the European Gallipoli peninsula is clearly visible. Ancient Greeks thought of the Trojans as Asian, so when they invaded Troy as part of a panhellenic expedition, the first ‘world’ war was waged between Europeans and Asians. Ancient authors, including Homer and the Roman poet Virgil, characterise the Trojans as very different from the Greeks. The Greeks would routinely insult the Trojans with disparaging remarks about their Asian-ness.

Today, Troy is located approximately 5 kilometres from the shores of the Dardanelles, but, in antiquity, the beaches would have been much closer to the walls of Troy. Over time, the rivers that flow from Mount Ida have deposited sediment on the plains as they traverse the land and empty into the strait. This sediment has built up, and the waterline is now further from the ancient city. The Dardanelles was a deep waterway, which facilitated seafaring and therefore trade. In antiquity, the land around Troy was very fertile and produced many crops. Agricultural production in the region continues today. Although the Trojans would not have recognised the tomato crops that proliferate in the region today, the production of grapes and olives continues.



The Gallipoli peninsula across the plains of Troy and the Dardanelles. Taken from the ancient Temple of Athena, Troy.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission



*Today, Troy is located approximately 5 kilometres from the shores of the Dardanelles, but, in antiquity, the beaches would have been much closer to the walls of Troy.*

The beaches are a feature of stories about Troy and the Trojan War because the shoreline was so much closer to the city's walls in antiquity. The ships that sailed the Greek armies to Troy would have been clearly visible from the high walls of Troy, as would the Greek camps and battlefields located between the walls and the water.

## The Trojan Horse

The 10-year-long Trojan War was famously ended when Achaean soldiers were smuggled into the city in a giant wooden horse. This horse was supposedly a parting gift from the invaders, who claimed to have left Troy in defeat before sailing back to their homelands. However, the Greeks had not retreated. They had only moved their ships out of sight with skeleton crews, leaving most of their soldiers to invade the city. The soldiers were concealed in a military siege engine colloquially known as the 'Trojan Horse'. The Trojans, thinking they were victorious and deciding that the gift was safe, wheeled the horse into the city through the impenetrable gates that had kept them safe for so many years. They then celebrated their victory and went to bed full of food and drink. As they slept, the Greeks crept from the horse, and the Trojans woke in the night to find their city on fire, the Greek soldiers slaughtering anyone in their way. Troy was razed to the ground, the Trojans were defeated and the Greeks were victorious.

The walls of Troy were said to have been built by the gods. This meant that they could not be breached or knocked down. Odysseus, knowing that the Achaeans' success lay in entering Troy, came up with the ingenious plan to hide men inside the giant wooden horse.

Use of the Trojan Horse to break a 10-year-long stalemate is significant because it represents the use of intellect rather than force in successful warfare. Odysseus was famed for his cunning and ingenuity. In contrast, the great warrior Achilles was famed for his wrathfulness. The spear of Achilles did not end the Trojan War; the invention of Odysseus outwitted the opponent and led to an Achaean victory.

The symbol of a horse defeating the Trojans is also significant, because horses were sacred to the Trojan people. The Trojans originally came from the city of Dardanus. Erichthonius, who succeeded his father Dardanus, was said to own 3000 horses. The expense of owning a horse was substantial, so owning so many was a clear indication of his position and affluence. Erichthonius was succeeded by his son Tros (father of Ganymede). Zeus fell in love with Ganymede and stole him from Tros, immortalising the boy so he could serve as cupbearer to the gods on Mount Olympus. Tros, who was understandably upset at the loss of his son, was compensated with a gift of immortal horses. Through their connection to Dardanus and his descendants, the Trojan people had a long history with horses, which were central to their identity. The destruction of Troy by a sacred symbol of the Trojan people adds a level of complexity to the devastation of the ancient city and genocide of the Trojan people.

*Use of the Trojan Horse to break a 10-year-long stalemate is significant because it represents the use of intellect rather than force in successful warfare.*

The story of the Trojan Horse is not actually told in the *Iliad*. It is most comprehensively told in book 2 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, composed in the late 1st century BCE (7 centuries after the *Iliad* was written). In Virgil's version of the myth, Troy is burned to the ground. Fire is emphasised throughout his retelling. As fire consumes the city, the life that had once filled the citadel is extinguished. This recalls the funerals of heroes cremated earlier in the narrative: just as heroes were cremated to honour their end, the burning of the city represents its cremation. Homer ends the *Iliad* with the cremation of one of the greatest heroes of the Trojan War, Prince Hector, which foreshadows the demise and immolation of the city.

## The archaeological site

Since he was a child, Heinrich Schliemann (1822–90) had been fascinated with Homer, Troy and the Trojan War. He claimed that, as a boy, he desired nothing more than to find the remains of the ancient city. Schliemann was a gifted linguist and spoke many languages fluently, including ancient Greek, which he spoke with his wife

Sophia. Archaeology was a new pursuit when Schliemann began to look for the ancient city described in Homer's *Iliad*, and mostly undertaken by amateurs.

*This site is generally agreed as the site of ancient Troy. As it has been excavated, a number of different 'strata' (levels) have been uncovered. Each level is a layer of the city from a different historical period.*

The archaeological site we know today as Troy was not the only city in contention as the home of Hector and Paris. Pınarbaşı, to the southeast of Troy, was excavated in 1795 by Jean-Baptiste LeChevalier, who believed it to be ancient Troy. Schliemann did not accept that this was Troy and, in April 1870, started exploring a hill known as Hisarlik with the English amateur archaeologist Frank Calvert. In 1871, the first season of excavations commenced. Schliemann carved a deep trench through the hill, destroying evidence of younger settlements, and dug through approximately 4000 years of civilisation before he reached the level that included what he called the 'Treasure of Priam'. This large deposit of ancient artefacts – including gold jewellery, bronze weaponry and household items made of metal – is unlikely to have been a single find. It is more likely

that the objects were brought together, possibly even from other archaeological sites, for dramatic effect.

This site is generally agreed as the site of ancient Troy. As it has been excavated, a number of different 'strata' (levels) have been uncovered. Each level is a layer of the city from a different historical period – the lower the stratum, the earlier the layer of the city. Priam's treasure was discovered at the Troy II level, which dates to approximately 2250 BCE. The Trojan War that we know from Homer's *Iliad* occurred in approximately 1250 BCE, and therefore the treasure discovered by Schliemann cannot have belonged to Priam. The level of Troy that corresponds with the approximate dates of the Trojan War is Troy VII (alternatively known as Troy VIIa). This is a Late Bronze Age level (ca 1300–1180 BCE) that was destroyed in 1180 BCE, possibly by an invasion.

## History or myth?

*Whether Homer was real or not, the stories attributed to him are influential, even 3000 years after their compilation. The Iliad and the Odyssey were central to Greek and Roman culture, and, because of the importance of ancient Greek and Roman culture to western cultural heritage, these works remain important today.*

The Trojan War exists somewhere between history and myth. There is evidence that Troy was destroyed around the same time as the war was supposed to be fought and that this period was politically turbulent. The city was in a strategic position, on the shores of the Dardanelles strait. This meant that the people of Troy had power over the waterway, which would in turn give them influence over trade in the region. During the Late Bronze Age, there is evidence that the Trojans were stockpiling goods and that settlements outside the city walls were deserted, but also that the city had a strong economy. This may indicate that there were external threats to the city, but that Troy remained an important locus of trade in the area.

The stories about Troy that we have today were composed much later than the 12th century BCE. Homer's *Iliad* was written in the 8th century BCE.



Walls of Troy.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission



It was not exclusively composed by Homer, but was a compilation of many stories sung by many poets over centuries. The task of pulling together the stories that made up the *Iliad* would have been monumental, and many believe it could not have been achieved by a single person. However, Homer is credited with the task, even though it is not certain whether he was even a real person. If Homer existed, and was a poet who sang the version of the Trojan War narrative that has come to be known as the *Iliad*, then he is unlikely to have been skilled in writing, which was a rare skill restricted to the most elite classes.

Whether Homer was real or not, the stories attributed to him are influential, even 3000 years after their compilation. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were central to Greek and Roman culture, and, because of the importance of ancient Greek and Roman culture to western cultural heritage, these works remain important today.

The endurance of the *Iliad* can be attributed to the universality of the human experience as represented by Homer. The presence of the gods in the *Iliad* ensures that the narrative is considered mythical today, although it is unlikely that this would have detracted from the authenticity of the story for ancient Greeks, who did not have the same distinction between myth and history as we do today. Mythical or not, the war narrative explores the human condition under extreme circumstances and, in so doing, reveals to the reader what it means to be mortal. It does not just explore the best of humanity, but also the worst, and how both can be brought about by the same extreme conditions. These themes remain relevant in the modern world, which has not ceased to wage war and still needs to understand how to work through its consequences.

Whether the Trojan War happened or not, Troy and the surrounding landscape are significant, and places where both the best and worst of humanity have been witnessed. Any historical conflict that occurred in the region in antiquity was much smaller than the *Iliad* records, but that doesn't mean that the Trojan War didn't happen, just that the story has grown and changed, and taken on new meaning with time.

## Gallipoli's ancient history



Interview with an expert: **History of Gallipoli before 1915** – Professor Christopher Mackie and Matt Smith

**MS:** Matt Smith

**CM:** Christopher Mackie

**MS:** This is Chris Mackie, Professor of Greek Studies and expert on all things Classics at La Trobe University, and the area he's talking about is in modern Turkey. It became a significant historical site, not just to Turkey, but to Australians as well: the site of the Gallipoli Campaign during World War I.

**CM:** I suppose one of my interests is the particular aspects of the landscape that feed into the mythmaking. I'm thinking very much as a Homerist here, because Homer is always talking about the Trojan War as a heroic battle fought in a beautiful landscape: these young men give up their lives; in many ways, that's a core part of the Gallipoli narrative.

Gallipoli is a promontory I suppose, or a peninsula as we usually call it. The area of concern for us in the ancient site stretches from Suvla in the north down through Anzac to Cape Helles in the south. The name Gallipoli in ancient Greek means 'beautiful city', and the area is still a very, very beautiful landscape but quite diverse



Gallipoli peninsula from space.

SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons

**MS:** To a lot of Australians, the story of Gallipoli starts with the First World War, but Gallipoli is an old land and its position means that it's always been of strategic importance.

**CM:** Everybody wants to be in control of the waterway that is adjacent to it, called the Dardanelles, which basically connects the Mediterranean with Russia and Ukraine.

**MS:** In modern times, it's known as the site of the Battle of Gallipoli during World War I in which Australian, New Zealand, British and French troops stormed the beachfront and fought against Turkish forces. But Gallipoli has long been seen as the edge of Europe; it's in close proximity to the famous city of Troy, and its literary origins reach all the way back to Homer and the *Iliad*.

**CM:** It's very interesting that if we go back to the *Iliad* about 700 BCE [before the common era] the only reference to the Gallipoli peninsula is to a city called Sestos, which is kind of in the middle of the

Dardanelles. That allows us to say that the Gallipoli peninsula goes as far back in western European history as we can go in terms of the literary sources. Now what kind of place was Sestos in 700 BCE? It probably wasn't a Greek city at all because it was an ally of the Trojans in the war against the Greeks. That's about the only reference of any significance to the Gallipoli peninsula we have.

**MS:** So you've got a continuous timeline for more than 2000 years of people living on the Gallipoli peninsula. Building their cities, living their lives, raising their crops and, as people tend to do, fighting and dying for it, long before the start of the First World War.

**CM:** That whole region, the west of Turkey, was what we might call part of ancient Greece, and the Greek-speaking peoples moved up into the Gallipoli peninsula from the south from about 650 BCE and established a number of cities on the Gallipoli peninsula. The Athenians, in particular, had a major role to play in the development of the Gallipoli



'Sestos in Europa' by Dapper Olfert, 1688.

SOURCE: [Wikimedia Commons](#), used under Public Domain Mark 1.0



peninsula in antiquity. And we can be thankful for that because we've got quite good literary records of what Athens was doing and what they thought of Gallipoli.

**MS:** As the main route between Europe and Asia, the Gallipoli peninsula had a lot of trade and strategic importance, so a number of Greek cities were established upon it.

**CM:** There were quite a few cities; we know the names of about 12 or 13. Some of them were significant cities like Sestos; we call them cities, that's just the Greek word 'polis', which might be a very big city like Athens, or a very small city – it might just be a few hundred people, but we know of quite a number of settlements from the literary evidence.

**MS:** The Greeks stayed in the region until just before the Gallipoli Campaign, but they didn't have it to themselves.

**CM:** Obviously, the Turks by that stage had moved into the region, and prior to the Gallipoli Campaign the Gallipoli peninsula was shared by Greeks and Turks who seemed, as far as I can tell, to get on pretty well for the most part.

**MS:** Getting along well for the most part maybe understates it a bit. Say, for example, there was an earthquake in 1354 and one of the Greek cities named Gallipoli had to be abandoned. The Turks took advantage of this and quickly reoccupied the city, which made it, at that point, the first Ottoman position in Europe and the staging point for their expansion across the Balkans. As I say, a lot of history covered in that time.

**CM:** Unfortunately, archaeology hasn't had a significant role on the Gallipoli peninsula in the 20th century because it was perceived as an area of strategic importance, not as an area of archaeological importance.

**MS:** This focus has changed in recent years, and there is now quite a lot of archaeological activity going on, on the Gallipoli peninsula, and it was even starting to change during the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915. Take, for example, what the French did.

**CM:** One of the most astonishing episodes in my view, of the Gallipoli Campaign, was undertaken by the French in the middle of 1915. You'll appreciate that when soldiers of whatever nationality were digging trenches, they would come upon ancient material. What happened with the French though is that they conducted an excavation – an official excavation at Helles, which is down at the tip of the peninsula looking across at Troy, and they came upon ancient material. The city was called Elaiou, it was the Necropolis at Elaiou, which takes its name from the olive tree. This was an important city that Greek historians like Thucydides and Herodotus talk about.

There was a major sea battle fought there in the Peloponnesian War, for instance, and so they decided that they would conduct a proper excavation.

**MS:** The French thought to write a pretty extensive report on their excavations, and so for the record they dug up 56 tombs and in these they found 38 sarcophagi, as well as other material. The French thought that doing this excavation was a matter of national importance. In their report to the French Academy, they wrote, and I quote, 'the general headquarters of the expeditionary force, true to an already age old tradition, thought it important for the good name of French science to play a part, despite the limits imposed by the circumstances, in the study of the ancient remains that our soldiers' picks had uncovered during military endeavours'. General headquarters therefore ordered excavations whose desired scope was unfortunately restricted by the necessities of war.

**CM:** And that remains one of the more remarkable episodes in the history of archaeology, in my view. Can you imagine conducting a formal official archaeological excavation? And bear in mind the French forces lost somewhere between 10 000 and 15 000 men. It is a quite remarkable episode in French history.

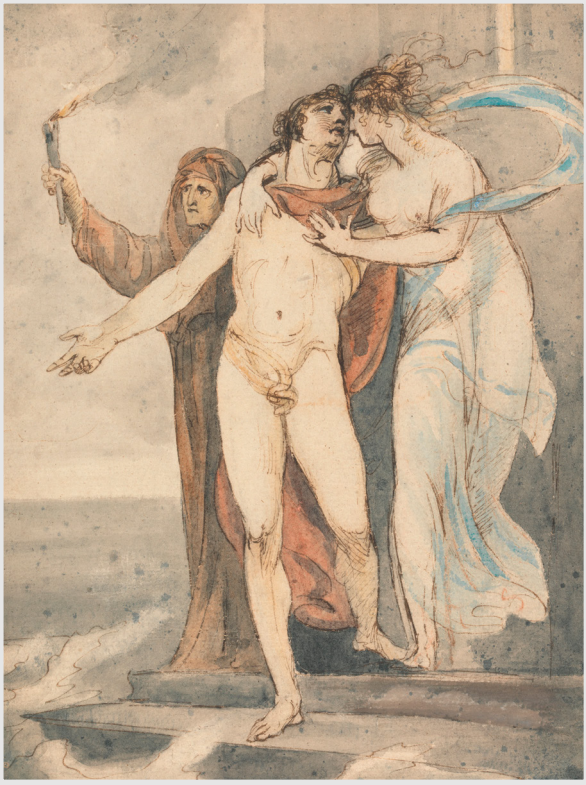
**MS:** I love that they did it, but you've got to question their priorities that this is going on and yet ...

**CM:** Yeah, and the report talks about that, that they didn't want to let too many men be involved and that's why they only allowed 4 men be involved (actually doing the work), because it would have created a bad look. To conduct an actual formal excavation even with just a few men was a bit of a dangerous look – but in the shadow of World War II the French Academy took great pride in what the French had done there and said, 'they never forgot what was important in the world just because there's a war going on'.

**MS:** So that's one example of antiquities rearing their heads during a war context. There's one more I'd like to cover, and this one took place during the construction of the Lone Pine Monument.

**CM:** Lone Pine is a memorial set up after the war; essentially it's a cemetery. It's been of interest to me for some years that a diarist called Cyril Lawrence wrote about coming upon Roman material or ancient material, adjacent to Lone Pine. He was part of an engineering unit that would dig the trenches and the saps and so forth, and Lawrence talks about coming upon ancient material.

**MS:** One of Lawrence's diary entries reads as follows, and this was written on June 22 1915: 'There is nothing exciting to report as to my shift on the tunnels. As we drive through we come across all sort



'Leander taking leave of Hero before swimming back across the Hellespont' by William Hamilton.

SOURCE: [Wikimedia Commons](#), used under Public Domain Mark 1.0

of earth etc. In places we run through great deposits of pottery buried as low as 20 feet. This is very fine stuff and is in excellent state of preservation. Rather red and of a very fine texture, it seems to be of the one class of work. We came across a huge sort of basin made out of this the other night. It must have been about six feet in diameter and shaped thus ...'

**CM:** And he makes a note and he draws a sketch.

**MS:** 'It was about five inches deep and would be about one and a half inches thick. Mostly it takes the form of slabs and seems to be a kind of covering for the dead. I intend to get a little piece of it, if I can.' We don't know if he did get a little piece, but it's safe to say that, if he wanted to, he could have.

**CM:** Lawrence came upon this material at B3 Tunnel just near Lone Pine. I found another source which indicated that when they were building the cenotaph at Lone Pine they came upon Roman material indicating that there was some kind of Roman settlement there in ancient times, and I was part of a team doing a surface survey of the Anzac battlefield recently, and we found quite a bit of material around where B3 was and on the Lone Pine Commemoration Site itself.

**MS:** The material found in the B3 Tunnel and on nearby Lone Pine indicates that the Romans were in the area and possibly built a fort.

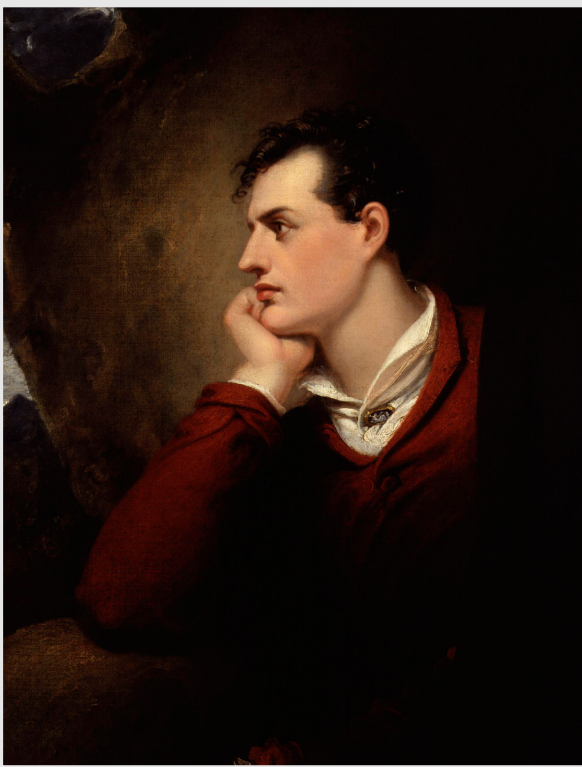
**CM:** And I think we can say without any doubt, if anyone is going to Lone Pine, that they are also on a site that was a Roman settlement, a Roman fort, a Roman camp. When you go there you can see why there would have been a Roman presence there because you can look from Lone Pine all the way down the peninsula; it's a major strategic location.

**MS:** The final story that we have of the history of the Gallipoli peninsula today is based around the English Poet, Lord Byron.

**CM:** Byron was a great admirer of Hellenic culture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, he took a well-publicised trip, which included Troy and the Gallipoli peninsula. Probably in this part of the world he is most famous for his swim across the Dardanelles.

**MS:** Byron did this swim in 1810 and he recorded it in his poem 'Don Juan', which was published 11 years later in 1821.

**CM:** In fact, if you go there today on 30 August you can take part in a swim between Gallipoli and the Asian side that kind of commemorates Byron's swim, partly in honour of the myth of Hero and Leander, which is like an ancient Romeo and Juliet story. Leander swam from the Asian side to the European side to be with his love, and then he'd turn around and swim back, a very fit guy!



'George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron' by Richard Westall.

SOURCE: [Wikimedia Commons](#), used under Public Domain Mark 1.0



**MS:** Byron's writings became hugely popular, to the extent that, years later when soldiers were deployed in the Gallipoli Campaign, they took with them copies of Byron's writing and a romantic notion of the event they were embarking on.

**CM:** The interesting thing is, you scroll forward 95 years, Gallipoli 1915, and the world hadn't changed that much. You get a lot of fairly well known English poets like Rupert Brooke, who take a leaf out of Byron's book and write about Gallipoli as if they are going to Troy. The two become connected in the minds of these English aristocrats because they had spent all their time in their youth reading Homer and studying classics. Next minute they get sent off to the Dardanelles to fight and you're getting all this English Romanticism. As somebody who works on Homer's *Iliad* a lot, I found that quite a fascinating response to where they were going.

## Fall of the Ottoman Empire



Interview with an expert: **The fall of the Ottoman Empire** – Associate Professor Adrian Jones and Matt Smith

**MS:** Matt Smith

**AJ:** Adrian Jones

**MS:** Here to discuss this distinctive story of World War I is Adrian Jones, Associate Professor of History at La Trobe University. While the Ottomans might have successfully defended the Gallipoli peninsula, they were ultimately on the losing side of the war, which saw the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the eventual rise of the independent country of Turkey.

**AJ:** The First World War is the great graveyard of multinational empires, and the Ottoman Empire was one of perhaps 3 key multinational, very longstanding empires in Europe, which all came crashing down in 1918. People often think of the Ottoman Empire as kind of Turkish, but it was a multinational empire, and the way in which you defined yourself as an Ottoman wasn't by saying that you were Turkish even if you were Turkish, because many of the people of the Ottoman Empire were from the Balkans, they were Greeks, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Arabs and were from all parts of Anatolia and North Africa. It's a multinational mixing pot, this great imperial power.

**MS:** So how far back did it extend then? When can you definitively say was the start of the Ottoman Empire?

**AJ:** Well, probably the start of the great era of the Ottoman Empire is 1453 when the Ottomans captured

the great Roman city of Constantinople, but it's actually older than that.

**MS:** Istanbul was Constantinople.

**AJ:** Yeah. The Ottomans in fact called the city Constantinople, they didn't use the word 'Istanbul' very often; it means – it's a kind of pejorative word, meaning 'full of people'. When Mehmed the Conqueror takes the great Roman city in 1453, he takes with it the kind of mantle of the Roman Empire, and you can see him and his successors really puffing up about that. And then they add to that the mantle of the caliphs in the early part of the 16th century so that they are now the acknowledged rulers of the whole Islamic world, a contested concept. This is a really powerful, important multinational empire.

**MS:** So how did they get involved in World War I?

**AJ:** They basically chose to enter the war. The Ottoman Empire had been under a lot of pressure since the early part of the 18th century. Basically, the experience in the Ottoman provinces, particularly in Europe, was of losing territory: Hungary and parts of Serbia. By the time of the First World War crisis, the Ottomans had had a revolution (in 1908) and a bunch of young radical military officers had taken power. They still had the Sultan in place but he was a figurehead. They were determined to rebuild the strength of the empire, and they saw the way to do that was to ally themselves with Germany. If you go to the Hippodrome, you will see a kind of bandstand rotunda that Friedrich Wilhelm gave them as a symbol of the great friendship between the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire. For example, it's the Germans who helped them strengthen the defences of the Dardanelles, so they entered the First World War with their eyes open to rebuild the empire that they had lost. Of course the result is they lose everything. Blood or glory, you know? Death or glory.

**MS:** So did they share any ideals with the Germans at all or was it more so an opportunity?

**AJ:** I think they certainly did share some ideals. They were interested in learning from the German Empire, with its spectacular military successes in the 19th century, how to strengthen the Ottoman force. The Germans had helped build the famous Baghdad railway, so there was a lot of admiration. But that's true right across Europe; many people in England were full of admiration for German engineering, German military. It just so happens that they ended up on the opposite sides. It's still true today: British and French capitalism. They humiliated them in the 19th century, put them under fiscal controls, dominated their trade; they were resentful of that. The Russian Empire was driving out people of Islamic faith from the Caucasus, so these people were all coming in. So some of the leaders of the young

Turks, among whom was Atatürk, was a guy called Zeki Bey; these were guys who were born in Greece, their formative experience is that they have been a refugee. They want to rebuild Ottoman military power, but the great achievement of Atatürk is to abandon the imperial dream and build a national Turkish republic.

**MS:** So with the Ottoman decision to enter the war, what was the provocation or the thinking behind putting an invasion force in Gallipoli?

**AJ:** The experience of the first year of the war was stalemate. Britain launches for the first time a major continental land army. We haven't seen a British army, as distinct from a navy, operating in the continent since Marlborough and the Duke of Wellington. Briefly in Napoleonic times, but even then the larger part of the fighting was often Prussians. Britain is a naval power. So they launch an army and they join with the French and the experience by the end of the first 3, 4, 5 months of war is stalemate, they've dug in, and there's a line of trenches all the way through to Belgium. There's hundreds of miles of trenches: there's stalemate. So the reason why they have a Gallipoli Campaign is that Churchill persuades both the British and the French War Cabinet that they have to open another front. They draw troops away from the Western Front to attack what he sees as the weakest part of the alliance, that's the Ottoman Empire. He says, 'If we can smash our way through the Dardanelles', the narrow opening which opens onto the Sea of Marmara, 'if we can smash our way through there, we can reach the Russian Empire and help them and we can change the tide of the war'. And so very quickly they decide that the Australian and New Zealand troops who are coming will be deployed there. They take them off the boat in Egypt, they don't know where they're going, but the decision has been made and the Ottomans were going to be easily beaten.

**MS:** A soft target.

**AJ:** Because they can't even beat the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Greeks. But, in fact, the Germans had helped and the young Turks themselves had strengthened their defences. They were expecting an attack. Churchill was the first Lord of the Admiralty at that time, so he's the kind of navy minister, and he was convinced that they could do this job by naval power, which was Britain's specialty. So basically they decided on a full naval attack on the Dardanelles. Churchill was convinced that they could defeat the Fjords by naval power alone. In hindsight, we know that they failed.

**MS:** So the next step then I suppose is to land the troops, isn't it?

**AJ:** Yeah, so the next step is to do like what we would call a 'marine operation' where you land troops onto the coast, get them assembled coming in behind the Fjords so that the Fjords cannot be provisioned, and then you can deal with it. Now in retrospect we know that if they'd done both at once, a naval attack and a land attack, they possibly would have succeeded.

**MS:** So from the Ottoman perspective then, Gallipoli would have been a great success for them? They saw off the enemy?

**AJ:** Oh absolutely. It's very interesting to see the way they frame the memory of it. The great moment, when it was clear that this colossal naval fleet was defeated and had sailed away losing submarines and battleships, was cast as a sign of the strength and vitality of the Ottoman Empire. In particular, they celebrate the role of the ordinary soldier, and there's a symbol of that, the so-called Mehmetçik. The Mehmetçik is a story of this really strong, courageous soldier who is operating this big gun and he has to carry these huge shells, and he picks one up, puts it in the barrel when all his comrades have been killed, and this becomes a symbol. There's a famous statue of the Turkish people, the Mehmeds, the Mr Everyman, and this is a figure who then creates the War of Independence.

**MS:** How is the Gallipoli Campaign connected to the Turkish War of Independence?

**AJ:** If you go on the Gallipoli peninsula now, you're struck by the fact that most of the memorials are quite late, and the first memorials are to the naval battles. That was the most important thing. Their Martyrs Day isn't for the defeat of the Land Army in December 1915. Their Holy Day, the kind of Republican Day, is the 18th of March when they had clearly defeated the two most powerful navies in the world. They were really proud of that, and ordinary shore battery men had done that. We talk about the First World War, which goes from 1914 to 1918, but in Central and Eastern Europe, with the collapse of these multinational empires, the war actually goes longer than that. We need to see what happens on the Gallipoli front as a classic imperialist gambit; it made sense to try and open up support (from the Allied point of view) to the Russian Empire and knock the weakest ally out of the war, but there was a lot of cynicism associated with that. The Turks had never been part of a colonial world. Turks had never been dominated. You know, for hundreds of years Europe had been scared witless of them, but what happens in the First World War? They decide, between Britain and France, that they will dismember the Ottoman Empire; France will have what we call Syria, and Italy was offered a slice of what we would call the 'southern Mediterranean coast' to come into the war in 1915–16. The Greeks are offered a slice of Anatolia.



So this is cynical, and so cynical was it that even the same parts of Anatolia were offered to different powers in order to get them both in the war. At the end of the war, the Turks were defeated. They were not defeated on Gallipoli, they won there. In 1915, there's a success, but it's really their only success in the war. After the success in 1915 in the Dardanelles, the Allies open new fronts in Salonica (in Macedonia). They also open a front in the Middle East with Australian troops who were very effective, and you have an Arab revolt. Basically, the Arabs look at the way the wind is blowing and decide to back the British and the French against the Ottomans, much to Ottoman disgust actually. The war is won really in Western Europe, and also in the Arab lands. The Russians have been a disappointment and left the war in 1917.

At the end of the war comes surrender, and the Allied fleet does what it could not do in 1915: it sails past the Dardanelles forts and occupies Constantinople. A new Sultan is installed; he's very compliant. What everybody is looking at who lives in Anatolia and in Istanbul is the imminent colonisation and carve-up of Anatolia: the British will have Constantinople, the French this bit, the Italians that bit. The Greeks have already launched an army to take their bit, which is the stimulus for Atatürk to emerge as a key political leader. Playing on his success in 1915, he says, 'we're not looking to rebuild the empire but we're looking to build a strong Turkish national state'. By defying his Sultan, forming a new legal parliament and raising an army, he gets enormous support from ordinary people in Anatolia.

**MS:** So from the ashes of World War I ...

**AJ:** Yes, so comes the republic. And you see that's where I think there are strong parallels between a kind of left Australian national sensibility that evolved out of the First World War experience.

**MS:** Is Gallipoli Australia's victory or Turkey's victory then? Have we misappropriated their victory?

**AJ:** Yes, that's a good question about Turkey's victory – well it's clearly Turkey's victory.

**MS:** Clearly, Turkey's victory.

**AJ:** The Gallipoli Campaign is Turkey's victory; the First World War as a whole is a terrible defeat for the Ottoman Empire, but 1915 is one of the great glories of Ottoman success: it's a great victory. It's interesting to think about this in memorials; we know for example, that when the Allies left the Gallipoli peninsula the Turkish troops built a memorial out of shells at the top of the peninsula. When Charles Bean went back at the end of the war, the Australian troops who came with him found a memorial of shells in a tower erected by the ordinary Turkish soldiers and knocked it down in 1918. The Allied troops

were shocked to see that the war graves where the soldiers had hastily dug a grave for their mates, that they were desecrated. The wounds were still really raw at the end of the war but they were also being shown around the battlefield. Zeki Bey, who was a refugee from Macedonia, commanded the Ottoman troops who resisted the Lone Pine attack in 1915. It's Zeki Bey who's commanding the troops on the other side, and he had commanded troops in Atatürk's counter-offensive in May. He was the guy showing Bean around the battlefield and showing him great civility, and it's interesting because at that moment an Allied fleet is occupying Constantinople; they are going to carve up the Anatolian peninsula. He's looking at a repetition of his childhood in Macedonia (he's lost that, is he losing Constantinople now?), and he's showing the Australian troops around the battlefield, helping them to understand the battles of 1915. It's a really poignant moment. We think the war stops in 1918, but it certainly didn't.

**MS:** It's surprising then, the way that Australia remembers the Gallipoli Campaign, you would think we won, you would think that our story is the only story worth telling. There's probably a lot of people who would be very surprised that there were French and British people there, and that Turkey won.

**AJ:** Indeed, and there's a number of levels, and in a sense there's a parallel there because Turks think the same: they won obviously, and we lost, but they think of it in terms of a Turkish republican national outcome. If we think about the defenders on the Ottoman shore – that is, on the Dardanelles shore – there were many Arabs in Atatürk's army. When the Anzacs land, many of those defenders were actually Arabs. Atatürk we know was worried about whether they would fight for the Ottoman state, but there are these ironies that after the war a national story gets told.

## FURTHER INVESTIGATION

### Gallipoli's rich history of conflict started well before 1915

By Chris Mackie (Professor of Greek Studies, La Trobe University) and first published on **The Conversation** on 6 April 2015, 8.50 am AEST (used under **CC BY-ND 4.0**)

#### Disclosure statement

Chris Mackie has received funding from the Department of Veterans' Affairs for research work on the Gallipoli Peninsula (Joint Historical and Archaeological Survey, 2010-2014).

There are few geographical areas that have seen as much military action as the Gallipoli region, the site of the Anzac landings in 1915. The conflicts in the region include some of the most renowned wars from Greek antiquity.

Some Australian historians of Gallipoli see the study of the broader cultural history of the region as a bit of an irritation. They feel that it detracts from the focus on the Anzacs and the remembrance of what they did. But, it is just the opposite – it enhances the story of the campaign and situates it in a notably rich cultural context.

### A history of Gallipoli



The site of **Troy** on the Asian side, which looks across at Cape Helles, tends to dominate the cultural history of the region. Likewise, Homer, the poet of the Iliad, dominates Western literature like no other single individual.

The presence of Troy just across the waterway did not go unnoticed by those soldiers who had a scholarly engagement with the Classics in the pre-war years, such as Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Compton Mackenzie, John Masefield and Sir Ian Hamilton. Many British soldiers, like Robert Graves, from the great private schools and universities took Classical texts with them to the Western Front. But those destined for Gallipoli understandably felt that they had a special connection with antiquity.

Poet Rupert Brooke could scarcely conceal his delight that he was going to Gallipoli – to the battlefields of Troy – rather than to France or Belgium. As it turned out, he never made it because he **died** at Scyros, Achilles' island, just before the first landings at Helles.

There were many other renowned struggles in the immediate area too, including the Greek war with the Persians of 480–479 BC. This war must surely be one of the most significant struggles in European history, given that the very existence of the Greek cities depended on their victory over the enemy.

**Herodotus** is our main historical source for this struggle. He ends his whole work on the Gallipoli peninsula at the unassuming little town of Eceabat, a short drive from the Anzac battlefield.

Later in the same century, the Athenians and Spartans, along with their allies, fought some monumental sea-battles in the Dardanelles straits. These were part of the **Peloponnesian war** fought between the two Greek superpowers from 431 to 404 BC. The **battle of Cynossema** (411 BC, off modern Kilitbahir, near Eceabat) involved about 160 ships. It was fought only a little way up the channel from where the French and British navies came to grief on March 18, 1915.

Similarly, the **battle of Aigospotami** (405 BC, near modern Gelibolu) saw an even more monumental struggle of about 350 ships. It might be said that this last struggle was the final and decisive conflict of the Peloponnesian war, and produced the imminent defeat of Athens.

In the fourth century, Alexander the Great – probably the peninsula's most famous visitor – came to the peninsula and sent his army across the narrows from Sestos to Abydos. He went down to tip of the Gallipoli at Helles and crossed from there to Homer's Troy.

### The role of Charles Bean

So, ancient Greek heroes in the region were in no short supply for the writers at Gallipoli in 1915, should they have chosen to show an interest. But did this concern ever go beyond a poetic and socioeconomic elite?

It did, in the figure of **Charles Bean**, the Australian correspondent and official historian of the First World War. He ensured that the Greek context would have a part to play in the way that the Australian sojourn at Gallipoli would be remembered. Bean had studied Classics as a child in Australia and Britain, and then went to Oxford where he studied Greats (that is, Classics).





Rupert Brooke, an English poet, died before arriving at Gallipoli.

PHOTO by Michael Rogers, used under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#)

No-one among the Australians was more conscious of the ancient Greek context of Gallipoli than Bean. No-one was able to use it to such good effect. He is the master of memorialising soldiers in the Greek way, but without explicit reference to classical borrowings.

For instance, Bean ends his book **Gallipoli Mission** with reference

to an inscription of ancient Athenian warriors who fell in the Dardanelles in 440BCE. But there is no explicit comparison of Athenians and Anzacs – nor does there need to be.

There will be many references to heroism and heroic conduct amid the commemoration of the Anzac centenary. The broader cultural context of ancient Greece will not play any part in this,



Charles Bean acknowledged the Greek context in documenting Australia's campaign at Gallipoli.

SOURCE: [ArchivesACT](#), used under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

nor should it really. Australia and New Zealand – and Turkey – have their own stories to tell and commemorate.

But one might also be mindful of the earlier layers of occupation of the region, and the background part that they play in the commemoration of Anzac.



The Anzac landings at Gallipoli in April 1915 marked the beginning of another instance of conflict in the war-rich region's history.

SOURCE: [Flickr](#), used under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

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## 2 Battlefield Gallipoli

The legend of the Gallipoli Campaign is familiar to many Australians, but details of what happened during the 9-month stalemate are less well known. This chapter outlines the history of the Anzac Campaign between the Allied landing in 1915 and the evacuation of all invading forces in January 1916. The harsh realities of life on the battlefield are covered in detail, as well as the remains of the battlefield today from an archaeological perspective.



Podcast: **The Gallipoli Campaign** – Professor Robin Prior and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith

**RP:** Robin Prior

**MS:** Hello podcast listeners. The interview you're about to hear is from the subject Gallipoli and the Great War at La Trobe University. You can enrol in it and find out more information at [latrobe.edu.au/gallipoli](http://latrobe.edu.au/gallipoli).

Welcome to Gallipoli and the Great War. I'm Matt Smith.

Much of Australia's participation in World War I has been reduced to the Gallipoli campaign, and our contribution on this battlefield can often be overstated. Here to talk about the landing at Gallipoli and to set the record straight is Robin Prior, professor of History at Flinders University, and the author of many books on the subject, his most recent being "Gallipoli: The End of the Myth".

**RP:** The idea was to avoid the bloodshed that was becoming apparent on the Western Front. Some of the politicians, Winston Churchill in particular, had witnessed failed battles on the Western Front and had seen troops impaled on the barbed wire. He sought for a cheaper end to the campaign by attacking Turkey which had thrown in its lot with Germany and Austria-Hungary, and advancing up the Balkans and attacking Germany and Austria from behind. That was the original idea of the campaign.

**MS:** It's a long way to go around, isn't it though?

**RP:** It's a long way around. The Australians were involved because they happened to be in Egypt training; why were they in Egypt training? Because

### Chapter questions

To comprehensively understand the day-to-day lives of soldiers on the battlefield, compose answers to the following questions:

1. What rations kept the men on Gallipoli alive?
2. Were the rations sufficient and appropriate?
3. Did the landscape affect what the men on Gallipoli ate and drank?
4. Were there ways around the monotony of the diet (ie trade, purchase)?
5. What was the water situation?
6. Where did the water come from?
7. Was there enough water?
8. What impact did diet and lifestyle have on the soldiers on Gallipoli?
9. What were the main factors that contributed to low morale on Gallipoli?
10. Were there any differences between the Ottoman and Allied experiences on Gallipoli? What were they?
11. Why did digging occupy so much of the Anzac's time?
12. How important was digging to the campaign?
13. How were digging and safety connected?
14. What would the soldiers have been able to hear?
15. What could the soldiers see?
16. What would Gallipoli have smelled like?

there were no facilities for them to train in England; they were taken up with the enormous armies that Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, was raising there. So for the moment there were no positions on Salisbury Plain for the Australians to train so they trained in Egypt. And it so happened that the Gallipoli idea came to the British government in those early months of 1915. They were looking for troops and the Australians just happened to be in Egypt.

**MS:** So right place at the right time, so to speak?

**RP:** So to speak.

**MS:** It'd be good to know about the details of the landing then; who landed where and when?



**RP:** There were three landings on the 25th of April. The main landing was undertaken by the British regular division, the 29th Division, just at the tip of Cape Helles; they landed there. The Australians landed further up the peninsula. The idea was that the Australians would land, dash across the peninsula and cut off any Turkish reserves that might interfere with the main British landing that day. The French also landed on the Asiatic shore at a place called Kum Kale. Their landing was a diversion; they were to destroy some guns, re-embark and operate alongside the British at the southern portion of the peninsula.

**MS:** Those sound like they were the intentions; did they go ahead as planned?

**RP:** Well, the landing succeeded in a sense in that they got footholds; the British got a foothold at Helles, the Australians got a foothold at Anzac Cove. What they couldn't do was advance any further with the troops they had available. The reasons for that, and especially at Anzac, were the difficult nature of the country, the Turkish opposition which Mustafa Kemal had marshalled in short order, and we just didn't have enough troops.

**MS:** Did they meet the resistance they were expecting?

**RP:** The resistance was probably stronger than they were expecting. It's very difficult to know exactly what the Allies thought of the Turks; there's not much mention of them in the literature. What the Allies knew was that the Turks had been defeated in two Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, and clearly there were some racial assumptions that the Turks were not a first class enemy. What the Allies perhaps missed was that in those Balkan Wars, especially the second, the Turks had defended their own country when it was under attack by the Balkan states with great tenacity. Maybe the Allies missed that and thought this was an easy enemy to defeat. Only 75,000 Allied were available for the first landings; the Turks had an army of 400,000. The idea that 70,000 could defeat 400 only works if most of the 400 run away.

**MS:** In your opinion is there a number of troops that would have been adequate to take that, because the Turks definitely had the better ground?

**RP:** The Turks had all the high ground. They were sitting on top of all those ridges, even in the south at Helles, they had the high ground there as well. The problem for the Allies was they really didn't have enough troops, either at Anzac or at Helles to bring to bear any concerted attack on those ridges.

**MS:** So what sort of fighting was happening here? Was it a bloody landing?

**RP:** No, not particularly. People have portrayed it that way.

**MS:** As being shot while they're coming up the beach and everything and...?

**RP:** Yes.

**MS:** So that wasn't the reality at all?

**RP:** There were some, there were about a company and a half of Turks, maybe 300 opposing the landing. Now with a modern rifle you could fire eight to 10 rounds a minute; the troops are going to experience some fire, and there as, and there were some casualties, but the fact is that the covering force and then the follow-up force got ashore quite readily, quite quickly and started to advance inland. That's where the problems came.

**MS:** So there wasn't any heavy weaponry firing on them when they were coming on the beaches or anything?

**RP:** No, the guns the Turks had at Gaba Tepe could fire on the troops inland, but they didn't fire on the landing itself.

**MS:** So the problems that they were facing really happened once they got inland? What sort of forces were they fighting there?

**RP:** The forces were scattered, and until at least mid-morning there were considerable numbers of Turks present, but the problem was the countryside was so tortuous that you can get split up into small groups the further you advance. You can go down the wrong gully, you can lose each other in the bush. That's what tended to happen. The parties that got furthest that day finished up being tiny numbers of people, a dozen, six, because they'd been split up from their companions by the difficulty of the country.

The intention was to get two ridges; one to the south of the landing called Gun Ridge, and the other one to capture places like Chunuk Bair and Hill 971 on the Sari Bair Ridge to the right. The trouble was that the country is much more difficult than it looks; there's sometimes only narrow razorback ridges between these hills. To do that you needed far more troops than the Anzacs had in the first instance, far more.

**MS:** They'd landed successfully but they didn't achieve what they wanted to, so why didn't they retreat? Why dig in and keep trying?

**RP:** They nearly did retreat, they nearly evacuated. There was a meeting on the beach in the evening of the 25th of April and Birdwood, the commander, was pretty keen on getting out. And he sends a message out to the overall commander of the force, General Ian Hamilton, to say, "I think we should go." Hamilton passes that force on to the admiral, Admiral Thursby, Naval Commander at Gallipoli, and Thursby says, "No, I can't do it. I can't do a night evacuation. It's too difficult. We'll lose men in the dark. It'll be a

shambles.” And it’s Thursby therefore who insists that the Anzacs stay. If it hadn’t been for Thursby there would be no Anzac myth; we wouldn’t be talking about subsequent operations because there wouldn’t have been any. It’s odd that a British admiral should play that role in our national history, but the fact was that the people on the beach, the generals didn’t really know what the situation inland was. It was okay; the troops hadn’t got very far, but they were holding and there was a, more or less, continuous firing line. There was no way in which the Turks at night could have dislodged them.

**MS:** So you say they’re relatively okay then?

**RP:** They were always okay from then on; they just couldn’t advance very far. When the Turks mount their first big counter attack on May the 19th to drive them back into the sea it fails with enormous casualties, possibly 10,000 Turks died that day, a million rounds from rifles and machine guns were fired at them. No troops can withstand that. So by the 19th of May what we can say is that the Australian and New Zealand troops were well enough dug in to beat off a very, very strong counter attack.

**MS:** How many reinforcements were they getting during the campaign? Were they a lot, and what sort of men were they being reinforced with?

**RP:** The original First Division that landed, and the New Zealand brigade that landed are gradually reinforced as the campaign goes on. There’s no substantial reinforcement though until August when the second series of attacks take place. So we’re talking about 20,000 or 30,000 men. Not enough.

**MS:** What’s a battle that you can tell me about that you think is a really significant one in this campaign?

**RP:** It’s a strange campaign. After the landing on April the 25th and the beating off of the Turkish counter attack on May the 19th, what we get is a period of consolidation. It’s not that no fighting is happening; there’s quite a lot of fighting but it’s small scale. The Australians and New Zealanders are trying to push their line a little bit further into those hills, and the Turks are trying to stop them. The trench lines are often very close together, there’s a lot of mining going on, tunnelling under the Turkish lines, set explosives and blow them up so they can advance just that little bit further, get a position that’s more easily defensible. That goes on from May until early August, that kind of warfare. It’s quite intense. Places like Quinn’s Post, Courtney’s are some of the worst places and the worst fighting in the entire campaign. The trench lines were so close together each side can hear the other talking. So it’s wrong to say there’s no fighting, it’s wrong to say it’s not intense in this period, but it’s small in scale.

What happens in that period is plans are laid for the big offensive in August 1915; reinforcements are provided from London for those battles. You have two divisions from the Kitchener armies first, then 29th Indian Brigade is moved north from where it’s been fighting with the British to the Anzac area, and you get the Anzac area also reinforced by some British troops for the August attack; it’s a very large one indeed. It involves a separate landing by the British at Suvla Bay, and an outflanking operation by the Australians and New Zealanders trying to get around behind the Turks holding these very steep hills; maybe 70,000 men, plus, involved in that.

**MS:** What happened in it?

**RP:** The August attack looks like a good plan on paper; you’re confronted with Turkish trench lines, now of considerable complexity and depth in front of the Anzac perimeter. The plan is to outflank that to the north by doing night marches through the gullies, and so that you appear on the heights behind the Turkish lines, and sweep them up down to the coast. That’s the plan. The second part of the plan is that the British forces will land at Suvla Bay just to the north of Anzac, they will push inland and capture a ridge of their own, and that will enable this now quite large force to be supplied, should the operation go on through the winter. Suvla is a little bit of flat land, so it’s ideal for establishing a base, you need room for stores, food, ammunition, that sort of thing. So there are two operations going on. There’s a lot of confusion in the literature about the Suvla landing; many people think it was designed to support the Anzac attack. It wasn’t. It was its own operation to establish the base. The Anzacs were virtually on their own. The problem with it is that the countryside, again, is so difficult and now you are advancing thousands of troops along gullies for which you have no accurate maps, at night. They get lost, it’s incredibly dark, Monash commanding the Fourth Brigade actually finishes up with his troops facing the wrong way, and no one could know that, it’s too difficult, the countryside. But there are a couple of moments in this attack; there are two out of the three major hills where the Anzac forces actually get people up to the summit. They are the New Zealanders at Chunuk Bair and the Gurkhas from the Indian Brigade on a place called Hill Q just to the north of Chunuk Bair. The New Zealanders have got several hundred troops there, the Gurkhas have got a couple of hundred, and people have got very excited about these operations. We nearly seized the ridge. The fact is, we nearly didn’t. The troops there are not in sufficient numbers, there aren’t sufficient reinforcements even if the command had known exactly where the troops were, the Gurkhas are shelled off Hill Q possibly by friendly fire, possibly by naval gun fire trying to support them, but that’s



less likely, the New Zealanders on Chunuk Bair can't be reinforced in time, the Turks attack in force, there's nothing the Allies can do about that, there's no gunfire, there's no artillery fire they can bring to bear on the Turks, and both Chunuk Bair and Hill Q, they're held briefly but then our troops are driven off by Turkish forces in great numbers. You don't get a piece of this ridge; you either get it or none, and that's in fact what happened.

**The** thing is though, if you look at it from Chunuk Bair you can see the Straits. Now this was the aim of the August attack, to get Allied troops to the Dardanelles Straits where the naval attack earlier in March had failed. Okay, you can't do it by ships; you get there by troops, you destroy the Turkish guns and forts, then the ships can sail through to Constantinople, the Turks will surrender and you'll have won that way. And from Chunuk Bair you can actually see those straits, but the fact is there are a lot more ridges and hills between Chunuk Bair and the straits.

**MS:** So at what point did the Gallipoli campaign become unsustainable? Why did they make the decision to call it off?

**RP:** They do so with great reluctance in London. The August offensive by about the 12th of August has failed and everybody knows that. Now, the question is what do you do next? They sent out General Monro; he advises evacuation. They don't like the advice they're getting so they send out one of their own number, this time Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State. He advises the same thing, but months have now gone by. The other thing is it's getting cold, there are snow storms at Gallipoli. It's very bleak in place indeed in winter, and the troops are suffering to no good purpose. There's also a worry that the Germans are going to supply heavy artillery to the Turks over winter; this will make the positions held there untenable. That's not true actually, the Germans didn't have any guns to spare, but the British thought reasonably that that's what might happen. And the accumulation of the weather, the lack of progress, the prospect of German guns decides them in the end to evacuate.

**MS:** That must have been a really bleak day when they left there.

**RP:** It was. It's December-January; the weather is just appalling, things are grim. Nevertheless, the evacuation is carried out in pretty good order, both from the British head and from the Anzac perimeter.

**MS:** So do you believe the Gallipoli campaign achieved anything?

**RP:** No, I think it achieved nothing at all, nothing. That's a bleak assessment. But looking at the war as a whole, the great engine of the war for the central powers, German, Austria-Hungary, was the German

army. It was on the Eastern Front and on the Western Front. Britain and France had to defeat that army or lose the war, and the Gallipoli campaign contributed precisely nothing to the defeat of the German army. So looking at the campaign as a whole you have to say it didn't shorten the war by a single day.

**MS:** That's Robin Prior, professor of History at Flinders University. And you can follow him on Twitter; he's @prior\_robin.

**This** podcast is part of La Trobe University's online subject on Gallipoli and the Great War. You can find more resources from it on iTunes U, and you can find more information about it at their website [latrobe.edu.au/gallipoli](http://latrobe.edu.au/gallipoli).

## Life on the Gallipoli battlefield



Podcast: **Life on the Gallipoli battlefield**, — Dr Michelle Negus Cleary and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith

**MNG:** Michelle Negus Cleary

**MS:** Here to discuss how the men were living is Dr Michelle Negus Cleary, an archaeologist and research associate in Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University. War is fought in the trenches, and conditions on the ground and how men live is a critical factor in their effectiveness and, ultimately, their victory. While war is never going to be under good circumstances, the conditions at Gallipoli in particular were strenuous.

**MNG:** There's a lot of horror stories about what life was like for Diggers on the battlefield at Gallipoli and unfortunately, for a lot of soldiers, it was true. It was extremely arduous, quite gruelling. I have to say though, it was quite varied. If you were an officer or if you played other than a frontline soldier, then often you did have slightly better conditions. The main problem was a lack of water, so thirst was a major problem. Sanitation was a major issue too, and obviously things like constant firing meant that there was loud noise all the time. The Diggers comment on this a lot, and obviously it caused a lot of post-traumatic stress.

Basically, they were in this environment that's incredibly dirty, incredibly cramped, they were clinging literally to the edge of a cliff. There was very poor food; at the beginning they were very poorly provisioned. It was also very frustrating. Apart from the dangers and the daily loss of lives, not only for yourself, but losing comrades and colleagues

and superior officers all the time, it was obviously incredibly difficult.

**MS:** So how long was a soldier at Gallipoli? Were they rotated off at all or were they on there for a set amount of time?

**MNG:** Most Gallipolis – and often they were known as the ‘veterans’ – who landed on the 25th of April stayed for the entire duration. If they remained alive and were in good enough health, they stayed. There were some who stayed right to the end, and some who even then went on to serve at Fromelles and other places on the Western Front. Some soldiers though – for example, my great-grandfather, Lesley Negus, was landed on the 6th of May at Gallipoli and he basically only spent 2 days on the peninsula. He was involved in a major offensive by the Turks who were attacking the Allied positions and he received a really bad shoulder wound, so he was immediately evacuated and sent to hospital in Alexandria.

So, you get a real disparity, and obviously there are some soldiers who were there for a very, very long time and living in very difficult conditions.

**MS:** When you say ‘difficult conditions’, I want to go into what the day of a soldier would have been like. I imagine that it wasn’t fighting all the time; that there were spurts of activity, but, I suppose, a lot of just waiting?

**MNG:** Well, interestingly, again, I’m going to say that that varied. Obviously what happened during the Gallipoli Campaign was there were very discrete, different stages. The first couple of weeks from the landing, the fighting was pretty much constant and a lot of the soldiers basically were falling asleep on duty because their exhaustion level was so high; they’d been constantly fighting and constantly under fire. They hadn’t yet entrenched well, they hadn’t yet secured positions that were safe from fire, so, in the first couple of weeks the fighting was very intense. Then, after that, yes, soldiers’ lives became a bit more routine, once fortified positions were established along the second ridge.

Again though, it depended on your job, because, remember, there’s a lot of Gallipoli Anzacs who were in non-fighting roles. So there’s a lot of people like stretcher-bearers, engineers, people in the medical corps, signalmen; a lot of them did their duty under fire in active zones of warfare but they weren’t actually firing guns. Then there were people like the guys in the Army Service Corps who were basically helping supply all the soldiers on the frontline – bringing in stores, etc. So, you’ve got a really varied experience depending on your actual role in the military at that time. But, for example, a soldier in one of the frontline positions, up on say Quinn’s Post, which was infamous for being one of the worst places

for fighting throughout the campaign, would have experienced constant fighting.

They would usually get up quite early in the morning, they would service their rifles, they’d eat together, sometimes do a bit of sniping, sometimes do a bit of patrol. They didn’t do a lot of digging during the day because the digging during the day would attract fire. There would be a rest time often during the middle of the day; this was in the middle of the campaign – summer time – when it’s quite hot, and so fighting was probably lowest during the middle of the day in the summer. Then they would obviously often have patrol duties to do. Sometimes they would get time to write a letter home or talk to a mate and eat again. They’d have their main meal in the evening, sort of around 4.00, 5.00 or 6.00, depending on your unit, and then they would get ready for their main fighting period, which was actually in the evening.

Also, for a lot of Diggers, they were digging. They called it a ‘rabbit existence’. The only way they could actually stay on Gallipoli was to be literally clinging on to these cliffs, and to be digging and entrenching themselves and tunnelling. They would spend time fighting during the day, then they would spend time digging at night. For some Diggers, they didn’t even get to fire a weapon, perhaps for weeks. Also, they would do things like bringing water and supplies from the beaches – and, if you’ve ever been to Gallipoli, you’ll know what I’m saying – it’s quite an arduous trek to bring supplies up to those frontline positions!

**MS:** So what sort of supplies was a Digger getting as part of their daily rations?

**MNG:** Daily rations were interesting, and this is one of the reasons why life on Gallipoli was so difficult, and one of the reasons why disease became such a major problem, particularly in the summer months. A lot of the time, these soldiers became very run-down because their food was so poor, particularly on the frontline; it was whatever could be brought up to them. Most soldiers on Gallipoli existed on the British army provisions, which were originally designed just to sustain soldiers when they were going forward and didn’t have time to establish kitchens.

So, soldiers were originally only meant to live on this food for perhaps 3 or 4 days; at Gallipoli, they were living on it for 3 or 4 months.

**MS:** So these days, they probably think about nutrition and sustenance; back in those days, it was more important to just get them food?

**MNG:** For Gallipoli in particular, yes. Basically, what the men were given was bully beef; corned beef in cans. They were given these hard-tack biscuits, which are sort of a wholemeal biscuit that the men absolutely hated. They were so hard they broke their teeth sometimes, and eating them day after day was obviously a chore.



They also had this watery jam that came in tins. They were the main 3 staples that soldiers had to live on. They were also issued cheese, but the cheese often had been sitting around for quite a long time. In the summer months in Gallipoli, this cheese really was pretty unpleasant and not in very good condition. They often also had condensed milk in cans, but sometimes the British officials wouldn't send it up to the men because they wanted the men to finish the cheese.

Often the men tried to get really creative; they hated their provisions, hated them with a passion. There's a scholar, Rebecca Duffett, who's written a really great analysis of British Army provisioning for the rank-and-file soldiers and officers in World War I. She talks about how so many soldiers wrote home about food. There's so many things that they couldn't say about their experience at war time, but food was something they could talk about, and it was something they knew that their family would understand and that wouldn't worry them too much. Instead of talking about some of the horrors they may have seen or the wounds they may have sustained, they could write home to mum and say 'Oh, the food is awful', you know, and it really was awful food a lot of the time.

What we have are these Australians who come, they're physically fit, they're remarked upon by all of the other British Army units: 'Look at these Australians, they're so tall, they're so well-built, they're so well-fed, they're so full of spirit', but of course, by June, that was really deteriorating because of the conditions they'd been enduring. A large part of it must have been due to their really poor diet.

And, unfortunately, the majority of the rank-and-file soldiers at Gallipoli were existing on this horrible diet, this really horrible diet, whereas the Turks were getting fresh food all the time.

**MS:** Was there much in the way of contraband?

**MNG:** There were very few rotations of soldiers. There were a few sometimes that were sent back to Imbros and Lemnos; they would bring back whatever they could – eggs, fruit, vegetables. Men would trade anything for a fresh egg! Occasionally, they were given fresh bread and eggs, but that was quite a rare treat. The other big problem though, apart from the food, was the water. The men were really thirsty, and often they were doing really hard labour with the digging. Fighting, of course, also takes a toll on your body, as does the summer heat. Very hot. They were literally often only given a cupful of water a day, which is not enough.

**MS:** Their health must have been terrible during that time.

**MNG:** It was really poor, which is a shame because you had these men who probably were at that point in

time some of the prime fighting men available to the British Army and they really did not treat them well; they put them in a very difficult position.

**MS:** What did a soldier at Gallipoli do during their time off? I know that time off is a very kind of relative term in this situation, but there must have been quiet periods.

**MNG:** I think during some of those quieter times in the middle of the day once the campaign was well established, they would just talk, smoke if they had tobacco, play cards if they had cards, tell stories. They also wrote letters home. A lot of the men wrote diaries; occasionally they were given reprieves from fighting – for example, the armistice, although obviously that was not a relaxing time. The armistice took place after the big Ottoman offensive: the Turks tried to push the Australians off the cliffs. We probably lost several hundred; they lost something like 5000. These bodies were decomposing rapidly, and it was also, of course, a very unpleasant thing to be shooting, literally, over parapets of your dead comrades.

An armistice was organised and the white flags were raised. It was commented on by the Anzacs as the longest period of silence they had heard while being on Gallipoli. So, they had several hours to bury their dead. They were mainly buried in the no-man's-land zone in between both frontline trenches on the second ridge.

The vast majority of the bodies were Turkish, and a lot of the Australians helped bury thousands of Turkish soldiers with the Turks. It was a good chance for them to meet. They couldn't often speak the same language but they shook hands, they got to actually see each other face to face for the first time, and some soldiers did take that opportunity to rest and sleep. It was a really pivotal time, I think, for a lot of the Diggers, in understanding their enemy and understanding them actually as fellow men and often local men, local farmers who were protecting their land and their families and their homes.

**MS:** You've talked about how hard it is to get the Anzacs supplies; how else did the landscape that they were fighting in affect them?

**MNG:** The landscape was cliff edges and then there are three steep ridges. Their frontline was along the middle (second) ridge, which is the highest ridge. The main fighting took place on this second ridge, and in between there's quite steep gullies that had been very densely vegetated. There was little water, so provisioning from these precarious beaches was difficult. The beaches are under fire the whole time as well – there were very few sheltered positions. A couple of them were around Anzac Cove and then in an area in behind North Beach where the Australian commemorative site now sits, but, essentially, trying

to supply and provision and fight on the low ground with the Turks up on the high ground made everything more difficult – living, fighting, eating, sleeping, all of it was really difficult.

So, a lot of the soldiers would have to just sleep in their trenches on the frontlines; there wasn't a lot of space. It's very steep terrain, and they were occupying basically the down side of a ridge and trying to fight uphill the entire time. Soldiers who were on the frontlines lived in very steep, tight little dugouts, or they slept in little alcoves cut into the side of a trench, or they just slept in the bottom of their trenches sometimes. They often weren't given proper living conditions. Some of the officers were very good at looking after their men and trying to get the best conditions they could for the men to sleep, eat and rest in.

Lieutenant Colonel Malone was a New Zealander who took over Quinn's Post and Courtney's Post for a time. He actually cut into the side of the ridge these five terraces and had them properly roofed, creating spaces for his soldiers to actually rest that were slightly out of the enemy fire. Although it was still a dangerous position. Then at the headquarters down at Anzac Cove, basically all the sides of the cliffs, or the hills that were outside of the enemy fire, were hollowed or honeycombed with dugouts. Obviously high-ranking officers had their own dugouts; they were still pretty rudimentary but they usually had sandbags, doors, windows, roofs and a bed. A lot of other lower ranking or non-ranking soldiers would just have had a dugout that they shared, maybe with several other men. They would be rotating, so they probably weren't sleeping at the same time.

So there's a bit of variety in terms of the living arrangements in this landscape. We certainly have found quite a few dugouts really high up behind the enemy frontlines that show that the men were quite adept at making a living space of some sort in this really challenging terrain.

**MS:** So you've done a bit of field work over in Gallipoli. What sort of things have you been finding there?

**MNG:** A lot of artefacts. They're probably the largest group of features that we find there – and earthworks, so things like trenches, tunnels, dugouts, pits, craters, things like that that all date from the 1915 campaign. A lot of the artefacts that we find, the vast majority of them, are metal. The metal finds fall into things like ordnance, obviously. We find bits of shrapnel, we find expended bullets, we find rifle cartridge cases, sometimes we find unexpended ordnance, so unexpended bullets.

**MS:** You've got to handle those carefully, I take it. That must make it a bit problematic.

**MNG:** Yeah, we do need to. They're pretty rare but obviously, yes, we need to handle those with care. And we find a lot of rusted metal cans; we find a hell of a lot of food can remains and other kind of products like kerosene, or petrol, or oil cans, and they're all across the Anzac areas. Interestingly, in the Turkish zones we find very few of those things, which shows the difference in provisioning of both sides in quite a marked way.

**MS:** It's bully cans is it?

**MNG:** A lot of them! Bully beef; some of the bully beef cans are recognisable because they're this rectangular shape. The brand that was that shape was Fray Bentos, which you might see sometimes in photos. A lot of the cans are jam tins and condensed milk tins. So we find a variety of sizes of tins, we've found a few oval tins which may have been some sort of fish, but they're pretty rare as well. We also find, on the Anzac side, more of these SRD jars – they were these big ceramic jars that were known as 'demijohns'. They were used a lot throughout the Commonwealth at that time to transport liquids of all different types, from alcohols, to chemicals, to ginger beer. At Anzac, they were mainly used to bring in rum supplies, but then they were reused for carrying water or any other liquids that may have been used on the frontline.

Quite interesting, we also find remains of glass, so we know they had bottles. They're fragmentary, so they're often quite difficult to identify exactly, but condiments – things like sauces, mustards and things like that – and a lot of those were not army issue.

**MS:** So did the beach factor a lot into their life there?

**MNG:** The beach was obviously iconic in that it was the landing position and a lot of men died on that first day on the beach. It was a very busy place, it was always under fire; there were very few sheltered locations along the beachfronts, so it was a precarious zone, and it was a zone in which the Navy were bringing in men, provisions, and taking men off to hospital ships. They'd built several large piers off the beaches, and that was the only place the Anzacs really could run a communications trench and road to, to link those north-south areas. So, the beach formed a danger zone, but it was also the zone which was the only place that the Allies could place the hospital tents, the main supply provisions, and link those areas of conflict.

But, having said that, it was also the place where ward officers were based, so it was sort of the hub of communications and administration for the Anzacs there. It was a really important place, but it wasn't an easy place to just hang out in. Many soldiers talk about the beach often. When they were up on second ridge, defending Quinn's Post or the Neck, looking down on the beautiful ocean, the Aegean Sea there and the beaches, and they hadn't had a wash, they



were thirsty, they were hungry, they were exhausted, and they just wanted to go and have a swim. There were several times where men could come down; they weren't regular and they were often quite intermittent but men sometimes did get opportunities to go down to the beach.

General Birdwood officially sanctioned swimming for the soldiers. It was the only thing he basically did allow as a recreation activity. Whenever they could – if men could get a chance to get down to the beaches – regardless of the danger, they would go into the water. Some of them hadn't washed for weeks, they had lice, they were sick of the flies; up on the frontlines where the bodies were all decomposing, the flies were terrible. It was a place where they felt they could actually cleanse themselves in many respects of those rigours of the battlefield.



## Flies, filth and bully beef: life at Gallipoli in 1915

By Michelle Negus Cleary (Research Associate, Mediterranean Studies, La Trobe University) and first published on **The Conversation** on 10 April 2015, 3.07 pm AEST (used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#))

### Disclosure statement

Michelle Negus Cleary does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would

benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

*Of all the bastards of places this is the greatest bastard in the world.* – Ion Idriess, 1932, **The Desert Column**

It has often been repeated that the lived existence of soldiers at Gallipoli in the 1915 campaign was extremely arduous. The soldiers' accounts and recent archaeological surveys of this best-preserved First World War battlefield illustrate just how inhumane and gruelling the conditions were for both Allied and Turkish soldiers.

## Conditions

Many factors contributed to making the Gallipoli battlefield an almost unendurable place for all soldiers. The constant noise, cramped unsanitary conditions, disease, stench, daily death of comrades, terrible food, lack of rest and thirst all contributed to the most gruelling conditions.

The Anzacs were literally clinging onto the edge of a cliff with the sea at their backs and the Turks occupying the higher ground. They were forced to dig extensive trench and tunnels systems and to endure a **semi-subterranean existence** of cramped and filthy living and working conditions under constant shellfire.



Anzac soldiers line up for water parade, Gallipoli 1915.

SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#); used under [PDM 1.0](#)



Anzac soldiers in a trench at Lone Pine, August 1915.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0

Incessant noise from shelling, bombing, artillery, machine-gun and rifle fire caused psychological and physiological problems for the soldiers. These included shell shock, stress from unceasing exposure to loud mechanical noises, hearing impairment and lack of sleep.

The cramped conditions and steep terrain left few safe places for men to rest in the frontline on Second Ridge above Anzac Cove. Severe exhaustion from lack of sleep caused by the constant noise in front-line positions such as Silt Spur, Quinn's Post and Tasmania Post meant that many men fell asleep at their posts.

## Food

Food was a major concern to Anzac soldiers. Much has been written about the food rations provided for the Anzacs at Gallipoli, including the dark, humorous odes to bully beef and impenetrably hard **army biscuits** in *The Anzac Book*.

There is no denying that the rations issued to the Anzacs provided very poor nutrition due to the unvarying diet of processed foods: canned meat



Anzac soldiers making biscuit 'porridge' in a trench at Gallipoli, 1915.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0

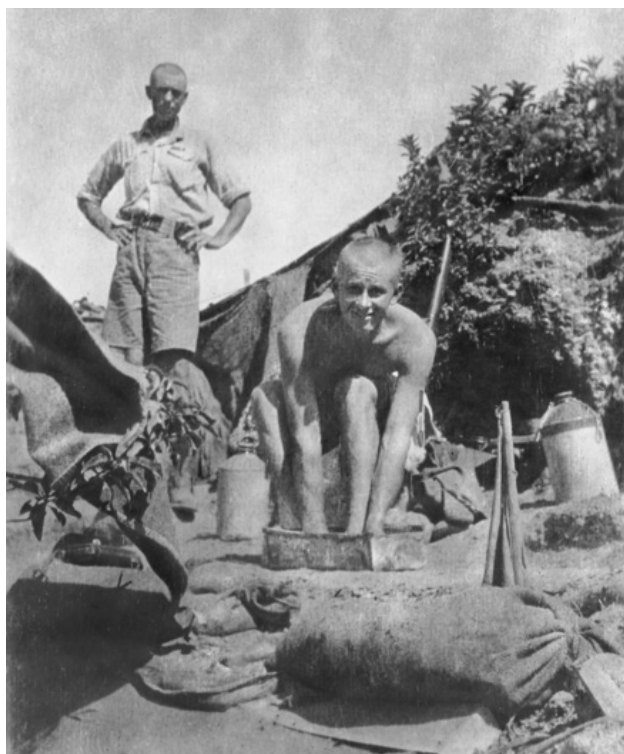
(corned "bully" beef, bacon or Maconochie's beef stew), hard tack biscuits and watery jam. The diet was varied sometimes by sugar, condensed milk, rice and cocoa, but there was a distinct lack of fresh fruit or vegetables for the Anzacs.





Sick soldiers waiting to be evacuated from Anzac Cove, August 1915.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under [PDM 1.0](#)



An Anzac soldier washes from his small mess tin, Quinn's Post, Gallipoli, 1915.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under [PDM 1.0](#)

These rations were intended to be lived on for only short periods of time by British army divisions, not for extended months as was the case at Gallipoli. Living on these rations caused major health problems for the soldiers. So prevalent on the Anzac battlefields were the food cans in which these rations were issued that their remains can still be found around the sites of Anzac trenches and dugouts.

The Turkish forces were provided with a wider variety of food. This was centrally prepared by cooks and consisted of fresh local foods, although it was often lacking in meat. French and Indian divisions had much better rations than Anzacs, with more vegetables and bread.

## Disease

The poor nutritional content of the British rations contributed to the physical decline of the Anzac and British troops at Gallipoli. The unappetising and unvaried diet affected the soldiers' morale and psychological well-being. It also increased their susceptibility to disease, which spread rapidly during the summer months of the campaign.

Disease swept through both Anzac and Turkish forces at Gallipoli. Dysentery, tetanus and septic

wounds plagued the soldiers and necessitated the evacuation of thousands of men from the battlefield. The latrines were open and rudimentary.

There were no bathing facilities and few opportunities to wash bodies or clothes. The lack of sanitation in the Anzac areas caused the rapid spread of dysentery, known as the “Gallipoli Gallop”.

The unburied corpses in and around the **front-line areas** were the perfect breeding ground for flies. These were almost unbearable in the summer months. The flies were so thick that soldiers could not eat without their biscuits and jam being blackened with flies.

Flies spread diseases rapidly through the troops living in cramped, over-crowded trenches and dugouts and unable even to wash their hands. Lice were also a major problem for soldiers during the summer months.

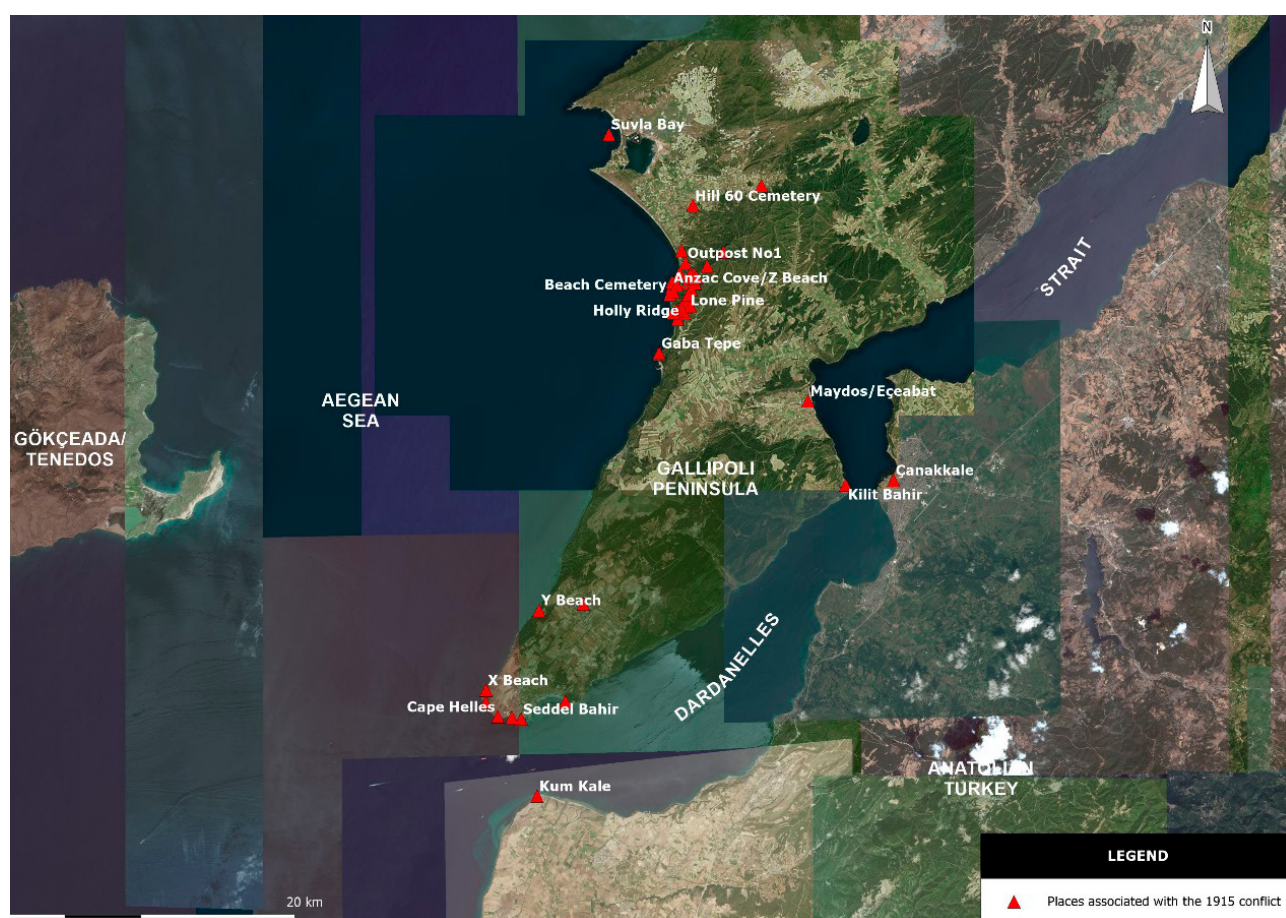
## Other factors

The local water supply was very limited in the British- and Anzac-held areas of the peninsula. At Anzac Cove in particular, the water supply was a serious problem that contributed to the soldiers’ ill-health and exacerbated the wretched sanitary conditions.

Soldiers in front-line positions were issued only small amounts of water per day and the water quality was poor. Thirst and dehydration were common amongst the men. Often their only drink was extremely strong **black tea**.

Other factors that characterised the life of soldiers during the 1915 conflict were psychological. These included homesickness, fear and anxiety, the constant threat of death, killing and grief at the loss of mates, brothers and comrades on a daily basis.

Overall, these were appalling conditions, which indicate the wholly inadequate planning and response of the British and Allied military authorities to basic human needs and a failure

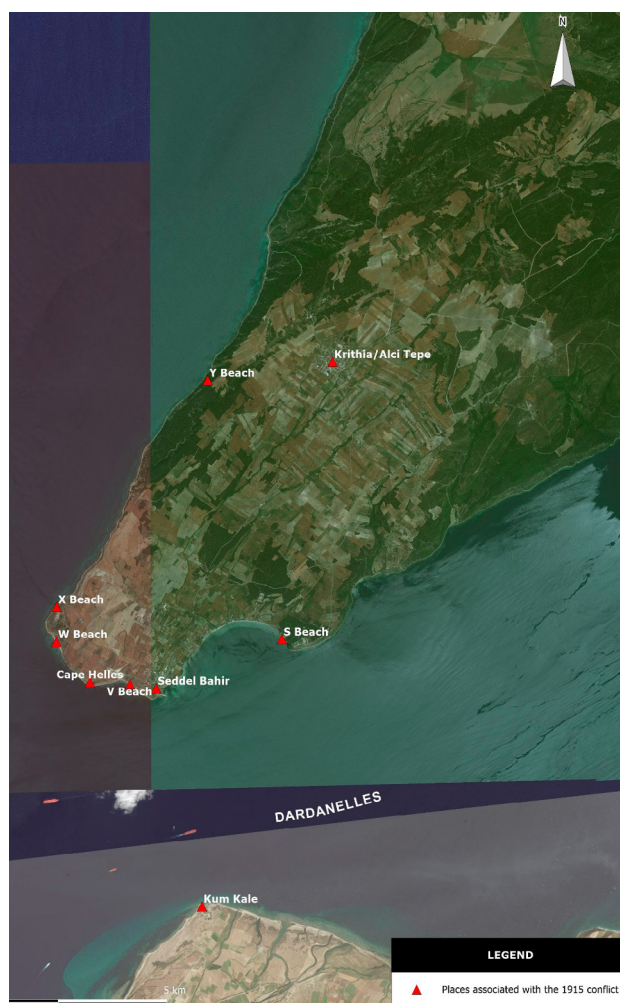


The Gallipoli peninsula and the Dardanelles from Virtual Earth, used with permission from Michelle Negus Cleary.





Places at Anzac on the Gallipoli peninsula from Virtual Earth, used with permission from Michelle Negus Cleary.



The southern end of the Gallipoli peninsula, previously known as Helles and Krithia from Virtual Earth, used with permission from Michelle Negus Cleary.

in their duty of care to their soldiers. The Anzac soldiers earned the respect of others largely because of the projected image of their laconic good humour in the face of the most terrible circumstances.

However, some soldiers could not handle these conditions at all and understandably succumbed to mental, physical and emotional injuries, which continue to be marginalised or completely unacknowledged in the Anzac legend. The conditions took their toll on even the most stoic and fortunate of survivors, who felt the effects of their time at Gallipoli decades after the conflict.

## Battlefield archaeology at Gallipoli



Podcast: **Battlefield archaeology at Gallipoli**, — Dr Jessie Birkett-Rees and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith

**JBR:** Jessie Birkett-Rees

**MS:** My guest today is Dr Jessie Birkett-Rees, a Lecturer at the Centre for Ancient Cultures at Monash University. For the past 5 years, she has been a member of a team at Gallipoli undertaking an archaeological survey of the battlefields.

The event of a battle can make many changes to a landscape, from debris left behind like rubbish and shrapnel to damage from shelling and digging of trenches. These artefacts and changes are an important part of telling the story of the battle but at the same time studying them can be a sensitive subject, and conducting archaeology on such a site a bit of a challenge.

**JBR:** You can call it battlefield or conflict archaeology. Conflict archaeology is the more inclusive term. Battlefield implies just the area that was fought over. Conflict archaeology implies areas that are involved in the battle, but not necessarily the battlefield itself; so things like encampments or logistic supply stores, cemeteries, all those kinds of features that occur behind the frontline and outside the actual battlefield.

**MS:** So it's all part of the same story – caught up in the conflict but not specifically the battlefield.

**JBR:** Exactly, you can even include (at a stretch) things like the factories that were used to produce the kinds of materials that went to the battlefield as part of conflict archaeology.

**MS:** So what's the specific battlefield that we're talking about today?

**JBR:** The battlefield that we'll be talking about today is what we call the 'Anzac Area' or the 'Ari Burnu Area' – the northern battlefields on the Gallipoli peninsula.

**MS:** What sort of landscape is that?

**JBR:** It's a coastal landscape on the Gallipoli peninsula. It extends from the coastal plain of Suvla, a broad, flat area, up into some really high ridges with deeply incised valleys. It's quite a complex landscape, the Anzac Area. To the south of it exists another broad plateau – the Kilitbahir Plateau. It's the area between Kilitbahir and Suvla.

**MS:** What about the terrain itself?

**JBR:** It's pretty rugged. It's limestone and sandstone, if you want to get to the geological nuts and bolts.

**MS:** Yeah, I do, it's rocky beaches, high cliffs?

**JBR:** Fairly sandy beaches, but the cliffs are certainly high and they rise right from the beach. They're very steep from the outset and they rise up into these northeast/southwest trending ridges. In between those, you get these really deep gullies. The landscape is quite prone to erosion. You get the winter snow and then the spring runoff, so you've got this landscape that's really defined by water.

**MS:** That sounds like the best place to defend and the worst place to invade?

**JBR:** Pretty much.

**MS:** Before this became a site of World War I conflict, what would you find there if you were an archaeologist digging a trench? What sort of history would you be hitting on that site?

**JBR:** Well it's a layered landscape and there's a number of different cultures that have moved through the area. Right before the war, it was both Greek and Turkish people who were living on the landscape, so we also find a lot of Ottoman material. The fortifications around the Dardanelles and the peninsula are Ottoman, so there is obviously lots of Ottoman material in the region. Before that, we've got Roman material, some of which we've actually located at Lone Pine as well, and was encountered by the soldiers during the battle. Before that, there's classical Greek material. There are several important sites that were inhabited by the Greeks on the peninsula. There's also quite a few important Bronze Age sites: what the Greeks refer to as the Tomb of Protesilaus. Karaagaçtepe is a Bronze Age settlement that was destroyed by fire. When you think about the broader region, we're looking at an area that also included places like Troy, which is a very prominent settlement in the Late Bronze Age – you've got that Bronze Age element prevalent on the peninsula. We don't find a lot of it in the battlefield area itself, but certainly when you're talking about the broader landscape it's there. And it was also an area that people moved to in the Neolithic period. It's a sort of corridor between Asia and Europe, which is an idea that has extended for a long time. If you want to go back to the Neolithic, you're looking back to at least 6000 BCE.

**MS:** So a lot of history that you could hit! When World War I commences and Gallipoli becomes a battlefield, what sort of changes are the soldiers making to this landscape?

**JBR:** Well, much like archaeologists, I guess, they're actually excavating into the landscape. One of the purposes of Gallipoli was to actually break the



stalemate of trench warfare that had happened on the Western Front. But, what we see happening at Gallipoli is trench warfare again. The trenches would have been about 8 feet deep. That's a substantial excavation! On top of that, or I should say below that, you actually have tunnels. There was a lot of tunnelling and subterranean work that went on at Gallipoli as well.

**MS:** Were they building many structures?

**JBR:** They built terraces and platforms onto which they then built structures, but there's not a great deal of building going on, on the site, it's more about excavation and about temporary accommodations.

**MS:** And which side is doing this predominantly? Or are both sides engaged?

**JBR:** Both sides. Before the land war began, the Ottoman army were excavating defensive trenches right along the peninsula. There was already quite a bit of excavation going on before the Anzacs and the Allied forces landed. Then, once they landed you get another whole side to the battle and a very extensive excavation program.

**MS:** Besides these changes to the landscape, you're going to have a lot of battle debris left around the area, aren't you?

**JBR:** There are a few quotes from historical sources about what the landscape looked like at the time. People like Sergeant Lawrence write about what Lone Pine looked like after the August Offensive. He says that 'the vegetation had just been mown down by the rifle fire, so it looked like straw just standing on end, and it looked as though the whole ground had been raked over and scratched, and there were holes from the shells and the heavy artillery they'd been using as well'. So the battle was really destructive both obviously to people, but to the landscape as well.

**MS:** Going past the battle and the changes that happened to the landscape, what happens after the battle? Is the land reclaimed at all, are the trenches just covered over?

**JBR:** Parts of the landscape were reclaimed, not immediately, but in the years after the war. Areas like Suvla and Cape Helles down south on the peninsula, which are flatter and more amenable to agricultural activity like farming or grazing, were reclaimed. But the Anzac Area is so rugged that it's really unappealing to farmers. Also, that area was reserved after the war. In the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, the particular area that we call Anzac was preserved as an open cemetery. There are several official memorials within the area, and the whole area is classed as a cemetery.

**MS:** The team that you are a part of was responsible for the first official battlefield archaeology that took

place at Gallipoli. What sort of work had been done in the area before that?

**JBR:** There had been archaeological work undertaken on the peninsula more broadly, but, within the Anzac Area, there hadn't been any official archaeological research. Back in 1919, Charles Bean, Australia's Official War Historian, and a multidisciplinary team including an artist, cartographer, photographer and a Turkish representative came and surveyed the battlefield. That was just a few years after the war.

**MS:** The Turkish representative was actually a soldier who had fought there, wasn't he?

**JBR:** He was, yes. He was there with the Anzacs and so were several other members of his team. It was a veteran's expedition, I guess, back to Gallipoli to examine some of the questions that Bean had about the events of 1915. He was particularly interested in locating people and locating events within the landscape. He considered the landscape to be an important part of the battlefield, an important context, and he was one of the ones who recommended reserving that particular area for the purpose it serves today – as a memorial landscape. So there was Bean's party who investigated the Gallipoli area, and after that there were the activities of the Imperial War Graves Commission. The construction of all those cemeteries, like Lone Pine that I mentioned. Since then, the Turkish Government has made parts of the peninsula a national park, which also then reserves certain areas and limits the activity that can take place in them – no clearing of vegetation, for instance. UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] also recognised the area in 1997 as a historically significant area.

**MS:** Left to your own devices, and in an ideal world, how would you excavate a site like this? If you didn't have any restrictions?

**JBR:** I guess you wouldn't normally excavate an open cemetery but there are instances, say, on the Western Front, where excavations have taken place. These have been both cultural and heritage management activities in relation to, say, roads being built or pipelines being installed; also, research activities.

They go about it much as you would any archaeological excavation: excavating in stratigraphic sections and recording the context of all the finds that you come across, increasingly using modern technologies to help us understand the landscape better. What we've done at Gallipoli – where we're not permitted to excavate, and it would be inappropriate to excavate – is we've used these non-invasive methods to understand as much as we can of the battlefield, its formation and also its preservation without actually breaking the surface.

**MS:** In ideal terms in Gallipoli, without hitting graves and being very respectful about everything, how would you dig a trench?

**JBR:** We could call them trenches; they're usually square in shape. You start off with say a 5 metre x 5 metre trench. You might have multiple trenches in a row in a grid-based system. You survey in the site so you know exactly where everything is spatially before you begin, and then you start excavating and you excavate layers according to their appearance. You record these different loci as you come across them.

**MS:** Since you can't do that in Gallipoli, what is the non-invasive equivalent?

**JBR:** There are a few methods nowadays that assist us to look below the surface without actually breaking ground. One of those includes ground-penetrating radar (GPR). Sometimes people just call it geo-phys. We had a team from Melbourne University, Guillermo Narsilio and Cliff Ogleby, come out and do some GPR along the Second Ridge Road. The second ridge is where the frontlines were established, pretty much from the first week of May, and they didn't alter substantially until the August Offensive. Cliff and Guillermo looked at what was below the surface on the Second Ridge Road. That's the area I mean when I talk about trenching and tunnelling, it was the frontline, that was the area that was tunnelled into as each side tried to gain ground and reach each other without actually being exposed on the surface. So they were looking for evidence of those tunnels below the Second Ridge Road.

**MS:** You go back and forth with the GPR, don't you; it's like a bit of a sled, isn't it?

**JBR:** Yes, this one was on a cart.

**MS:** Yes, on a cart in a grid fashion, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth like you're mowing a lawn. It sends a signal down through the soil and you can see what you're looking for on a screen.

**JBR:** That's right.

**MS:** When there's a cavern there or a hole or something interesting, it will register differently and it will look different on the screen.

**JBR:** The radar has a different response to different types of materials under the ground, so if it comes across something that's different, whether it's a hole, an air pocket or whether it's something that's more solid, it will send a different response back so you can see where there are what they call anomalies under the ground. Then you can look at those in relation to, say, historic documents, which show where the tunnels were. Then you can start to surmise what those anomalies might be.

**MS:** So can you see the tunnels on the results then?

**JBR:** There are some indications that the tunnels are still there; there's a great section of the battlefield opposite Johnston's Jolly Cemetery, and there are a couple of trenches and tunnels there that have been restored for the public to look at and to give visitors an idea of what these features were actually like. That was used as the test area to see what the GPR's response might be like.

**MS:** And what they would look like.

**JBR:** We do find similar responses further up the road – so they had some success.

**MS:** But I gather that there's no way to verify, you're not allowed to dig these, are you?

**JBR:** That's right.

**MS:** Oh, how frustrating. Can you at least tell whose tunnels they would be? By the locations and by maps, as you say?

**JBR:** You can use the historic documents. Really what we're doing at Gallipoli is both an archaeological and an historical survey. We're trying to bring those different disciplines together: the methodology of archaeology, which looks at material culture and physical remains, with the documents and the analysis of historians.

**MS:** So how else are you doing your work there? You're doing surveying of the surface as well, aren't you?

**JBR:** Yes, we are. What archaeologists would ideally do is use a grid-based structure – we really like grids and it gives us spatial control over where we find things. What we're interested in, of course, is context. We want to know not just what something is, but where it comes from and what it was near, what it relates to. We want to have that spatial control. The landscape at Gallipoli is so rugged and so densely vegetated that it was not possible to do a traditional grid-based survey. We've kept the idea of transects, but instead what we've done is follow features. We'll find a trench line that we can move through and we'll do a transect along that trench line. What we do is not just record the main trench, but record the features that exist around it as well, so dugouts that are off to the side, any artefacts that we find in the area, and all the junctions that we find in those trench networks as well. What we end up with is a series of transects that we can then put together to have a decent understanding of the battlefield landscape.

**MS:** Is there much still to find after all this time; are there finds on the surface, for example?

**JBR:** There is, actually. There are increasing numbers of people visiting Gallipoli annually.

**MS:** So you get problems with souvenir hunters, especially after this amount of time?



**JBR:** I think so, and that's also the case on the Western Front as well – perhaps less so in the Anzac Area because it is so rugged. People do, generally speaking, tend to stick to the paths and to visit the monuments, the memorials and the cemeteries, without bushbashing off into the remnants of the battlefield. Between the cemeteries and the modern infrastructure, we do find really well-preserved sections of the battlefield.

**MS:** What sort of artefacts are you finding?

**JBR:** We find some material from prehistory. We've found some Roman material, we've found some stone tools even, but what we mostly find are artefacts from 1915, from that industrial conflict that took place there. What we find is evidence of food cans – all the tin cans that the Anzacs brought onto the battlefield. We find a lot of evidence of ordnance; that would include shells, bullets, cartridges, all those sorts of things. We find barbed wire. Both sides used barbed wire as a defensive mechanism on the frontline only. We also find other aspects, which give you some insight into daily life there; things like lots of ceramic shards from SRD jars, which contained rum and were one of the rations the Anzacs received. We find bully beef containers, which the Anzacs themselves wrote about with such disgust! We're finding a lot of metal, a bit of ceramic, barbed wire, those sorts of things. As well as the artefacts, we also have plenty of earthworks from 1915. These are classed as features, and we found some significant sections of the frontline still remaining. Also the communication trenches that lead to and from the frontline, and some back-of-line positions and support trenches where reserves would have waited. People would have rested in all the dugouts that exist behind the frontline. These are where people actually lived during the conflict.

**MS:** I suppose if people are over there or find historical artefacts they should leave them where they are, shouldn't they?

**JBR:** Definitely! There are plenty of items that you can look at in museums that have been taken from the battlefield, so really you want to leave those materials where they are as part of the context of the battlefield. It's part of what makes Gallipoli special. By leaving them there, you're actually showing more respect than to put it in your pocket and take it home.

**MS:** So how are you recording your findings in the field?

**JBR:** There are a few methods that are fairly standard for archaeological surveys that we're using. We're taking notes in the field to provide more of an idea about the context of the finds; we're also taking photographs of all the artefacts and the features we record so there's a photographic record of the items

that we've come across. We're also taking a DGPS into the field with us. A DGPS is a differential global positioning system – it's a way of recording the location of features and artefacts with high accuracy. Because we've got this digital record of where things are on the battlefield, we can then start to investigate how they relate to each other, and how they relate to the modern commemorative landscape as well. We can use the DGPS survey essentially to help us understand what took place at the battlefield and relate it to the historic documents as well – bringing those different spatial records together can give us some insight into the battlefield.

## FURTHER INVESTIGATION

### Bread like chaff and putrid rations: how WW1 troops obsessed over food



By Heather Merle Benbow (Senior Lecturer in German and European Studies, University of Melbourne) and first published on **The Conversation** on 21 April 2016, 2.55 pm AEST (used under **CC BY-ND 4.0**)

#### Disclosure statement

Heather Merle Benbow does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

*Sing me to sleep, the bullets fall  
Let me forget the war & all  
Damp is my dugout, cold is my feet  
Nothing but biscuits & bully to eat.*

Popular soldier's song, circa 1918, recorded in the diary of **Archie A. Barwick**.

Many of us will be making Anzac biscuits this Anzac Day, paying homage to an apocryphal story of soldiers in the first world war and the comfort afforded by these gifts sent from home. While the provenance of this most iconic of war food is debatable, we can learn a lot about what soldiers really ate by reading their letters and diaries. These sources reveal that food was a vital part of daily life, with emotional, cultural and practical facets.

Bully beef (brined and boiled beef in a can) and biscuits were the notoriously dull cornerstones of rations for both Australian and British soldiers in the first world war.



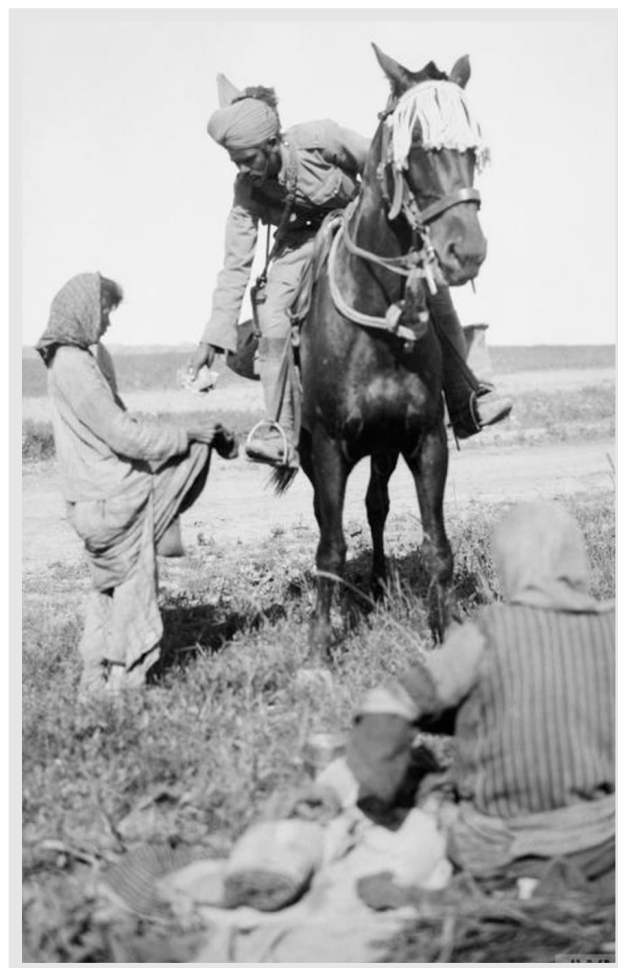
A tinned ration consisting of sliced vegetables, chiefly turnips and carrots, and a deal of thin soup or gravy. Warmed in the tin, 'Maconochie' was edible; cold, it was a man-killer. By some soldiers it was regarded as a welcome change from bully-beef.

SOURCE: Imperial War Museum; used under IWM Licence



Ration parties, like this one from the 12th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, had to bring rations from horse-drawn limbers at night to avoid enemy fire. Supply lines were often targeted by both sides.

SOURCE: Imperial War Museum; used under IWM Licence



An Indian cavalryman who has found two starving Christian girls in the desert leans down from his horse to give one of them half his rations. At the time the men themselves were on short rations.

SOURCE: Imperial War Museum; used under IWM Licence

While the rations commonly included other items such as tea, jam, sugar, bacon, peas, beans or cheese, "B.B.B." were symbolic of the inadequacy of the soldier's diet.

*Am living quite a terrible life! No rations or. than B.B.B. How cheerful. – Leonard V. Bartlett, Alexandria, December 1915.*

The shortcomings of the rations weren't just a lack of vitamin C and other essential nutrients. Lack of variety and taste in food took an emotional toll on the servicemen, and in the soldiers' **letters and diaries** we can see a veritable obsession with food.

**The diary of Lieut. Bartlett**, a signaller who served in Egypt and Gallipoli, pithily conveys how his emotions fluctuated depending on the food available. Thus on 9 July, 1915 he rejoices:

*Salmon for Brekker, what joy, my luck is really in today.*

Nine days later, while suffering from one of his regular bouts of dysentery, he declares:

*Feelg. rotten all day & existed on dried biscuits & tea.*

For Bartlett and others serving in the Middle East, the harsh conditions made mealtimes a trial; he declared the rations "putrid". One history describes mealtimes in the Jordan Valley in May 1918 as unbearably hot, humid and plagued by "venomous creatures" of various kinds, these miseries **exacerbated by the food**:

*Rations reached the lines [...] in a condition which would have revolted any men but soldiers on active service. The bread was dry and unpalatable as chaff; the beef, heated and reheated in its tins, came out like so much string and oil.*

Supplements to the army ration were therefore intensely welcome. One letter to **Mrs Hugh Venables Vernon** thanking her for her contribution to the Australian Comforts Funds describes the



soldiers in receipt of her gifts as “like kiddies at a picnic”.

Comfort packages – while probably not containing actual Anzac biscuits – did distribute items redolent of home and civilian life. The “Christmas billies” for the Australian Light Horse in Sinai and Palestine in 1916 included “Christmas puddings, tins of milk, packets of chocolates and similar dainties”.

Soldiers also took advantage of opportunities to scrounge, buy or commandeered supplementary foodstuffs from local populations, including “eggs and camel whey” from a Bedouin encampment in Palestine.

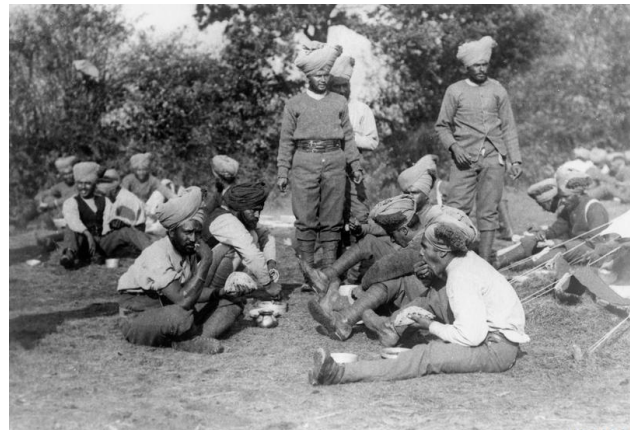
It’s [sic] worth noting that conditions behind the lines in France were very different to the Middle East. Sapper Vasco, a caricature artist and draftsman, wrote letters to his wife from “Somewhere in France” as though on a grand tour, and food **featured prominently in his rhapsodic prose**:

*Precious One [...] Ever since I landed in France life has been perfect. [...] This is our country. If I’ve ever made up my mind about anything it’s to get you over here ‘Après la guerre’. [...] More violent contrasts, more delicious food, wine, exquisite country, music, more café life and true ‘bohemianism’ on a Sunday or any week day than England ever dreamt of in a lifetime. [...] Sunshine as mellow as Brisbane’s shines day after day on La Belle France. [...] The pastry cook shops make our pastry cakes taste like piffle. You couldn’t believe there was a war on here.*

During the war giving or exchanging food – often across cultural divides – was a potent act of caring, and relationships between soldiers were cemented over food. Bartlett **writes** of having “a pleasant little feed” with his friend Monty, and of a visit from a fellow soldier called Merrivale, who shared cake with him.

Bartlett was involved in a lively network of exchange and barter among soldiers, and regularly visited the “Indian Camp” for “chapadies” or curry. Meanwhile in Cairo, General Rosenthal **enjoyed** “a sumptuous dinner of about 15 courses, all exquisitely cooked. The table was set out in faultless British style, but the foods were prepared in Egyptian style.”

Even across enemy lines, intercultural culinary encounters occurred, such as during the famous 1914 “Christmas truce” when German and British soldiers entered into no-man’s land to exchange gifts of rations, cigarettes and chocolate.



Indian Army soldiers eating chapadies at a camp in New Forest, October 1914.

SOURCE: Imperial War Museum; used under IWM Licence

Australian prisoners of war experienced particularly poignant acts of generosity from civilians as they were marched by German soldiers through occupied France. Corporal Claude Corderoy Benson describes French women attempting to smuggle bread, biscuits and sweets to the POWs, often at **great personal cost**:

*I felt I would rather have died from starvation than see these women so ill treated, and wished the poor creatures would not try and help us.*

Benson describes the deprivation of the prisoners, which makes for **harrowing reading**:

*...very often the German guard would offer us half a loaf of bread for a watch, and I have seen gold watches and rings go for less than a loaf of bread, anything to satisfy our hunger.*

In the long and arduous campaigns of WWI, food – and the lack of it – was paramount. Major battles were fought to control supply lines, and hunger was a brutalising and dehumanising tool of war. In looking at food and its exchange, we see how the conflict produced both the best and the worst of human behaviour.

*The soldier’s diaries and letters quoted in this article are publically [sic] available through the **World War One collection** of the State Library of NSW.*

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## Chapter 3: The Gallipoli armistice





### 3 The Gallipoli armistice

On 19 May 1915, the Ottoman forces mounted a powerful attack on the Allied forces. This was the first significant counterattack to the landing on 25 April. The Ottoman's objective was to push the Anzacs into the Aegean Sea and then out of Turkey altogether. One million rifle rounds were fired that day. But – despite the force of the attack – the Anzacs had had enough time to dig in to their positions.

The Ottomans failed, and suffered heavy losses. Approximately 10 000 men died during the offensive, with about 3000 of these lying in no-man's-land for days, slowly decomposing in the warm weather. By 24 May, the stench and the health implications of so many rotting corpses in such a small area were too much for either side to bear, and an armistice was called.

It was a wet day, but at 7.30 am troops emerged from trenches on either side of no-man's-land with white flags that were used to divide the area into equal halves. It was forbidden to trespass into the opposition's territory or to view the opposition's trenches. Each side was heavily guarded to prevent soldiers from crossing enemy lines. Those responsible for burying the dead wore white armbands. Most of those involved in the operation had to stuff cotton wool into their nostrils to reduce the putrid smell.

*Photographs can be used as historical documents when undertaking academic research and are important primary sources of information. Photos from World War I form a visual record, and preserve information about the landscape and battlefield terrain.*

The scene was harrowing. Many bodies were found kneeling, still holding their rifles – frozen in their moment of death. Trooper William McGregor of the 4th Australian Light Horse describes what he saw that day:

*After stationing men with white flags midway between each other's trenches, both sides proceeded to collect the dead.*

*The Turks buried all their side of the white flags and we did likewise on our side. It was the most awful sight anyone could witness. There must have been thousands to bury and we placed Turks and Australians in the same trenches and covered them in. Some had been lying there for weeks and some for three days in patches of about half an acre they were almost touching.*

By 4.30 pm, men from each side were back in their respective trenches, and the fighting started again. Eleven days after he witnessed the Gallipoli armistice, Trooper McGregor was killed. He is buried in Shrapnel Valley Cemetery on the Gallipoli peninsula.

Photographs can be used as historical documents when undertaking academic research and are important primary sources of information. Photos from World War I form a visual record, and preserve information about the landscape and battlefield terrain. They also allow us to see material objects as they were, see soldiers in context, and better understand the scale of death and destruction.



Gallipoli, 22 May 1915. Captain Sam Butler, holding the white truce flag, leads the blindfolded Turkish envoy Major Kemal Ohri from General Sir William Riddell Birdwood's headquarters to return to the Turkish lines. Major Ohri was representing the Turkish army in negotiations at Birdwood's headquarters to arrange an armistice so that the 3000 Turks and approximately 169 Australians killed during the Turkish attack on Anzac positions on 19 May 1915 could be buried. A 9-hour armistice was arranged for 24 May 1915. (Donor: CS Ryan)

SOURCE: [Australian War Memorial](#); used under [PDM 1.0](#)





Australian burial parties burying Australian and Turkish dead during the armistice. More than 3000 Turks and approximately 160 Australians were killed during the Turkish counter attack on 19 May 1915. Approximately 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired during the 1-day attack. The stench from the dead was so unbearable that the Turks initiated a 9-hour armistice so that both sides could recover and bury the dead.

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, 24 May 1915. Turkish and Australian soldiers recover and bury the bodies of their dead comrades killed during the Turks' attack on Anzac positions on 19 May 1915. The Turks left more than 3000 killed during the attack. The stench from the dead and wounded became so unbearable that a 9-hour truce was arranged for 24 May 1915. (Donor: Sir Charles Ryan).

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



24 May 1915. Turks burying their dead in front of trenches during the armistice on 24 May 1915. The Australians in front are collecting equipment gathered from their dead and in the back near the group of Turks and Australians is a trench where several dozen dead Turks were being buried. More than 3000 Turks and approximately 160 Australians were killed during the Turkish counter attack on 19 May 1915. Approximately 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired during the 1-day attack. The stench from the dead was so unbearable that the Turks initiated a 9-hour armistice so that both sides could recover and bury the dead.

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



Australian burial parties burying Australian and Turkish dead during the armistice. More than 3000 Turks and approximately 160 Australians were killed during the Turkish counterattack on 19 May 1915. Approximately 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired during the 1-day attack. The stench from the dead was so unbearable that the Turks initiated a 9-hour armistice so that both sides could recover and bury the dead. The trench shown is German Officer's Trench and was taken from near old Marine Trench. See also C02049.

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



Gallipoli, c 21 May 1915. An Australian soldier (right) leading a blindfolded Turkish envoy mounted on a horse along the beach. The envoy had been sent by the Turks to arrange a brief armistice or truce with the Australians, so that the 2 sides could recover their wounded and bury their dead lying in no-man's-land after a costly and abortive Turkish attack on 19 May 1915.

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



Gallipoli Peninsula. 24 May 1915. Australian burial parties burying dead Australian and Turkish soldiers in old trenches at Quinn's Post. More than 3000 Turks and approximately 160 Australians were killed in the Turkish attack on 19 May 1915.

Approximately 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired during the 1-day attack. The stench from the dead became so unbearable that the Turks initiated a 9-hour armistice so that both sides could recover and bury their dead. Surgeon General Sir Charles Ryan contravened the terms of the armistice by taking this photograph. This is one half of a stereo image. The full stereo image is held at P02648.015. (Donor: RG Casey)

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



Australian burial parties burying Australian and Turkish dead during the armistice. More than 3000 Turks and approximately 169 Australians were killed during the Turkish counterattack on 19 May 1915. Approximately 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired during the 1-day attack. The stench from the dead was so unbearable that the Turks initiated a 9-hour armistice so that both sides could recover and bury the dead.

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0

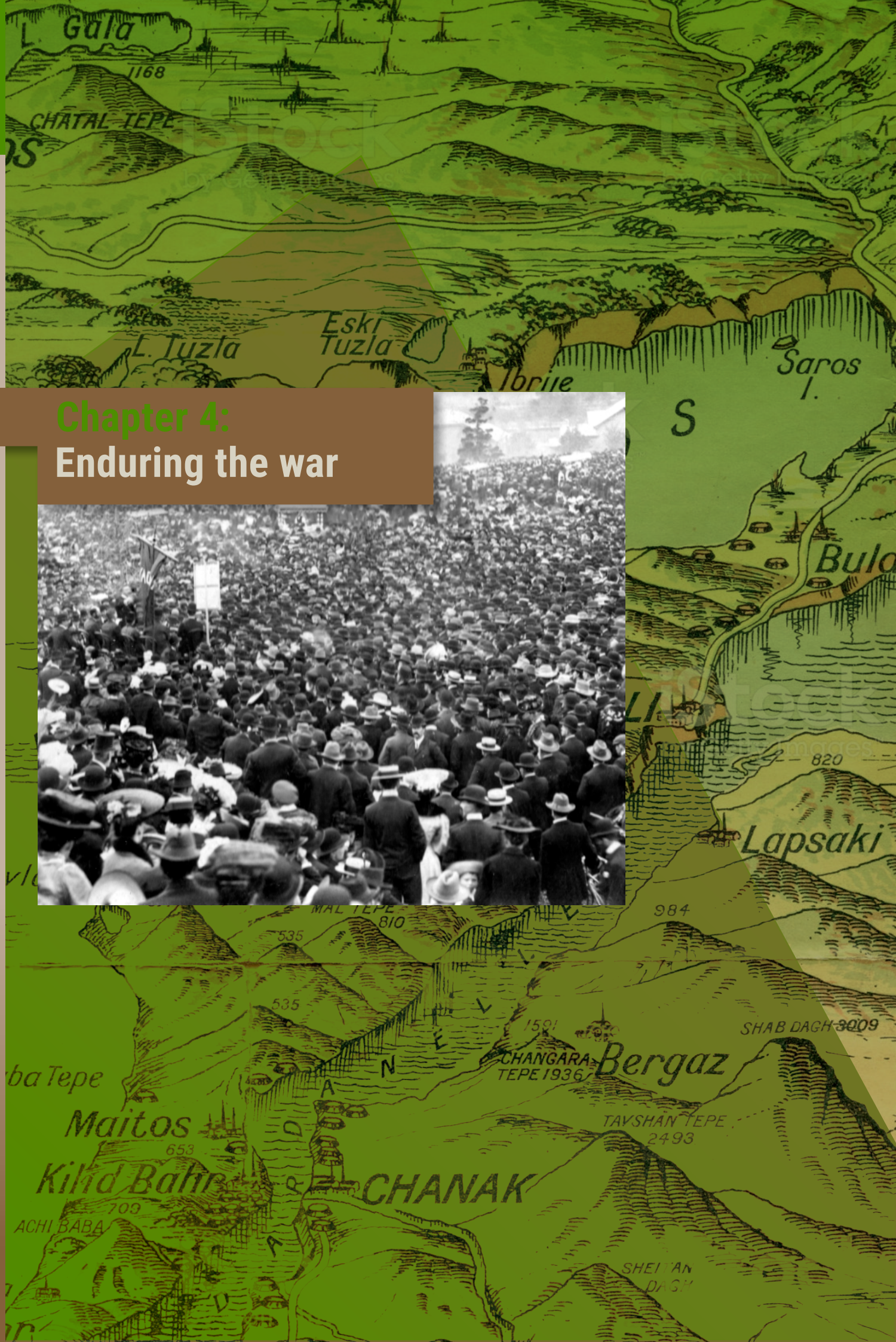


The slope in front of Courtney's Post as seen from the parapet of Quinn's Post. Australian burial parties burying Australian and Turkish dead during the armistice. More than 3000 Turks and approximately 160 Australians were killed during the Turkish counter attack on 19 May 1915. Approximately 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired during the 1-day attack. The stench from the dead was so unbearable that the Turks initiated a 9-hour armistice so that both sides could recover and bury the dead.

**SOURCE:** Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



## Chapter 4: Enduring the war





## 4 Enduring the war

Life on the battlefield wasn't all fighting. The Anzacs had to eat, sleep and live on the cliffs, which was far from pleasant. Despite the horrific conditions, the Anzac soldiers managed to forge strong friendships and produce humorous accounts of their experiences in publications such as *The Anzac book*.

Whether in Australia or Gallipoli, people were looking for ways to endure the war. This chapter looks at coping mechanisms used by the Anzac soldiers to survive the Gallipoli Campaign, as well as anti-conscription movements on the home front that focused on limiting the impact of World War I.

### Frontline experiences: Charles Bean and *The Anzac book*

*The Anzac book* (1916) was written and illustrated by Anzac soldiers serving in the trenches on Gallipoli. Charles Bean solicited contributions for the publication in a notice circulated to the population of Anzac Cove on 14 November 1915. A committee had been established earlier that month to create an annual Anzac trench magazine. It was hoped that it would raise morale and offer light relief for the soldiers. The publication was to be released in time for the New Year, a time the soldiers' thoughts would be at home with their loved ones. However, the Gallipoli Campaign ended very shortly after this committee formed, with all soldiers evacuated from the Gallipoli peninsula by early January 1916. Therefore, the nature of the publication needed to change. The original name of the magazine was meant to be *The Anzac magazine* or *The Anzac annual*; however, it became *The Anzac book* after it became clear that the Anzacs would not be on the Gallipoli peninsula the following year.

*Trench publications were common during World War I. They were written by the troops, for the troops.*

Trench publications were common during World War I. They were written by the troops, for the troops. The content is generally lighthearted and entertaining – the stories were not meant to be

### Chapter questions

To comprehensively understand the characterisation of the Anzac soldier, consider and answer the following questions:

1. Who was Charles Bean, and how did he characterise the Anzac soldier in his writing?
2. How important were journalists' dispatches in shaping the public perception of the campaign?
3. How did censorship affect the records associated with the Gallipoli Campaign?
4. List at least 3 characteristics of the archetypal Anzac soldier as presented in *The Anzac book*.
5. What is 'mateship' and what are its origins?
6. Was Anzac humour always appropriate?
7. How are females represented in *The Anzac book* and newspaper articles about the Gallipoli Campaign?

To comprehensively understand the role of women at home and on the frontlines, consider and answer the following questions:

1. What role did Australian women have during World War I?
2. What did the ideal female look like during World War I?
3. What is patriotic feminism?
4. Who was Vida Goldstein?
5. Why would the patriotic efforts of women during World War I be marginalised in the historical record?
6. Why is it important to tell the story of women's role in the war?
7. To what extent were men pushed to 'volunteer' for service?

great works of literature, and their purpose as a distraction for the troops meant they couldn't contain anything too serious. *The Anzac book* differs from more conventional trench magazines because it was not written exclusively for the soldiers in the trenches. When it became clear that the Anzac soldiers would not be stationed on Gallipoli for the New Year, the magazine was reimagined as a souvenir of the campaign for soldiers, their families and interested Australian citizens.



*The Anzac book* sold 104 432 first-edition copies. Of these, 53 000 were purchased by members of the Australian Infantry Force. So about half of them went to soldiers, but those soldiers didn't usually keep them. They may have read them, but they often sent them home.

*The Anzac book* was well known and well read in Australia, and those households that had a copy would have treasured it. Books were more highly regarded and expensive in 1916 than they are nowadays, and *The Anzac book* was a tangible means of connecting with the war experience, which was so geographically and conceptually distant from people in Australia, yet so much a part of their everyday lives.

My first-edition copy of *The Anzac book* once belonged to a boy named Roland. I know this because of the inscription penned into the first page: 'Roland with love from Auntie Polly, Christmas 1916'. Young Roland received this book for Christmas 100 years ago. The book is in perfect condition; there are no pages missing, no corners turned down, and the binding remains intact. Roland loved this book and took great care of it.

*The Anzac book sold 104 432 first-edition copies. Of these, 53 000 were purchased by members of the Australian Infantry Force.*

## Crafting the Anzac archetype

The Australian War Correspondent, and later the Official War Historian, Charles Bean, was responsible for editing *The Anzac book*. Bean had been with the Anzac soldiers on Gallipoli since they left Australian shores. He was with them as they trained in Egypt, and he was at the Gallipoli landing in April 1915. Bean resided with the Anzacs on Gallipoli until they evacuated Anzac Cove in December 1915, and then followed them to the Western Front, where he stayed until the war ended. Throughout the war, Bean insisted on living with the troops and spent as much time as he could as close to the frontlines as possible. Bean knew the Anzac soldiers – he knew what they had to endure, and he wanted to craft a legacy that honoured their wartime experience, so that the greatness of their service could be remembered.

Once Bean knew he was in charge of the publication, he sent out a call for contributions

to the troops in the trenches. The call stated that he was looking for fiction and non-fiction stories, illustrations, photographs, poems and other creative contributions for a trench publication. Those who submitted would be in contention for prizes, which were designed to incentivise soldiers and encourage as many people as possible to contribute. By the deadline, 150 contributions had been received, but not all of them made it into the book.

The contributions that did make it into the publication included illustrations, poems, stories, recounts of events (such as the landing) and creative gags. A number of accounts of the landing were submitted, but only one was published, and Bean edited the story to avoid romanticising the event.

Bean also contributed to *The Anzac book*. He was a keen photographer and took photos whenever he could get his hands on a camera. Some of these are in the book. There is also a poem, 'Non nobis', which includes a drawing of conifers and pines on a hill's edge. Under a fallen tree lies a man, face down. The poem grappled with the purpose of war – why some lived when others died. Bean's other contribution was 'Abdul', which honoured the Turkish forces as gentlemen and worthy foes. Where Bean does contribute to the book, he includes his initials (CEWB) so the reader knows the contribution isn't from a soldier.

Bean's name is noticeably absent from the front cover of *The Anzac book*. He is not credited as the editor anywhere. This is because Bean focuses as much attention as he can on the deeds of the frontline soldiers and the wartime experience, which he respected above all else. He wanted soldiers' voices to be preserved in the book. Throughout his career, Bean was a curator of the Anzac legend, and the person who championed, protected and publicised what the Anzacs had done, but he didn't necessarily want to be credited for that.

*In The Anzac book, Bean focuses as much attention as he can on the deeds of the frontline soldiers and the wartime experience.*

The Anzac character, so familiar to Australians today, was still being crafted when *The Anzac book* was in production. Because it is the first major publication concerning Anzac soldiers from Gallipoli and the Great War, it is largely responsible

for subsequent understanding of what a 'typical' Digger would have been like. Also, by looking at those contributions that were not included in *The Anzac book*, we can better understand the type of Anzac that Bean wanted to fashion for posterity.

*The Anzac book* is really the first publication that sets out the idealised characteristics of a Digger. The Anzacs are characterised throughout as good humoured, loyal, courageous and resilient. Mateship is a key feature of the book, as is the idea that Australian soldiers are descended from rugged bushmen. One of the contributions that provides an early account of an emerging Australian character is 'The raid on London'. This contribution is about a soldier known as Bill Kangaroo, who takes his leave in London, and how he encounters the city for the first time. The first line casts Bill, an injured soldier, as the latest in a long line of conquerors, 'England has been conquered by Julius Caesar, William of Normandy, nearly, but not quite by William of Germany and lastly by plain Bill of Australia'. Bill Kangaroo represents every Australian, so his entry into London represents Australia's return to the mother country.

Bill's ability to triumphantly enter London, injured, and conquer it in the footsteps of history's greatest military figures is a lighthearted way of characterising the new Australian soldier as the greatest of all military men. Bill exemplifies the Australian character, and his triumphant return to the Old World is a means to express that Australians have matured and returned as equals. There is no sense that Bill is not British; rather, he is a rare type of Briton from the antipodes, shaped by his environment into an Australian-Briton. This Australian-Briton is characterised as strong, resourceful and good-humoured – and proud to be so.

*Bill Kangaroo exemplifies the Australian character, and his triumphant return to the Old World is a means to express that Australians have matured and returned as equals.*

## Missing creature comforts

*The Anzac book* is filled with stories about how the soldiers miss life's small luxuries while serving on the frontlines. They miss home, warm cups of tea, hot baths and insect-free environments. In the trenches, they ate poorly, washed rarely, and

couldn't sleep because of the noise, and the fly and flea infestations. They lived outside, and endured temperature extremes. At any moment, they or their comrades could have been hit by any number of fatal projectiles that were constantly flying through the air.

The contribution 'To my bath' is an ode written by a soldier who wants nothing more than a hot bath. The soldiers also wrote a lot about the abysmal nature of the food. They clearly hated their ration-issued army biscuits, but they also contended with the lack of food and its lack of variety.

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It wouldn't have been possible to print contributions that mentioned too much about the reality of the Gallipoli Campaign. Firstly, censorship rules wouldn't have permitted the reality of the campaign to be published. Secondly, the soldiers wouldn't have wanted to distress their family members by confronting them with the harsh realities of life on the frontline. Humorous grumbles about the poor state of the food available and an overwhelming desire for a bath domesticised the soldiers' experiences and presented relatable situations to readers, who could sympathise with the conditions the Anzacs faced.

## Fighting in an ancient landscape

The Anzac soldiers were generally aware that they were fighting in a landscape that once hosted the Trojan War. This is illustrated by two contributions in *The Anzac book*. The first is a translation of a poem written by the ancient Greek female poet Sappho. While serving on Gallipoli, a New Zealand bomb thrower apparently found a fragment of a Sappho poem and then went to the trouble of translating it from ancient Greek while under bombfire. However, as much as it would be nice to believe the New Zealand bomb thrower, the printed poem is actually a canto from 'Don Juan' by Lord Byron. What is important, however, is the plausibility of the bomb thrower's story – it isn't that far-fetched that a soldier digging trenches in this landscape would locate a tablet, and that the tablet might have a poem etched into it. Bean claimed to have found a Greek coin on the peninsula, although he lost it again. Soldiers were



#### AUSTRALIANS AT GALLIPOLI: STORMING A TURKISH TRENCH.



Of the soldiers left of a thousand who, while advanced to charge a Turkish trench, were stopped by the enemy, and actually were the last to see the trench. They are all, by the way, the last to see the trench. The trench is now a ruin, and the soldiers are all dead. The trench is now a ruin, and the soldiers are all dead. The trench is now a ruin, and the soldiers are all dead.

Australians at Gallipoli: storming a Turkish trench, Sydney Mail, Wednesday 14 July 1915, page 19.

SOURCE: National Library of Australia



'Seeds of Friendship' on Birdwood Ave, Kings Domain, Melbourne – the Australian Turkish Friendship Memorial for 2015 for the Anzac centenary. Granite, stainless steel, copper and pebbles.

SOURCE: City of Maribyrnong

finding ancient pottery and sarcophagi as they dug their trenches. Even today, ancient Roman pottery, bricks and roof tiles are evident on the surface at Lone Pine.

*The Anzac soldiers were generally aware that they were fighting in a landscape that once hosted the Trojan War.*

Also included in *The Anzac book* was the poem 'The Trojan War, 1915', which casts the Anzac soldiers as heirs to the warriors of the Trojan War. In the poem, the Australian soldiers are fighting for their own Helens, not the face that launched a thousand ships, but 'Some Mother-Helen sad at home' or 'Some obscure Helen on a farm' back in Australia. The poem concludes with the great Achaean hero Agamemnon lifting his hand to plain Private Bill, acknowledging their shared experience. When Agamemnon raises his hand to Bill, the Australian soldier becomes an equal to the archetypal warrior, and the epitome of nobility and valour.

## Romanticising the enemy

*The contribution 'Abdul' by Bean in The Anzac book is the first presentation of the Turkish enemy as a worthy foe and a noble people, and sets the tone for future representations.*

The contribution 'Abdul' by Bean in *The Anzac book* is the first presentation of the Turkish enemy as a worthy foe and a noble people, and sets the tone for future representations. In a war, it is far more noble to meet an equal enemy, because it levels the playing field and no one side is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged. This idea is related to the rules of 'fair play' that exist in the sporting arena and fits into Bean's understanding of war as a game.

The way that the Anzacs interacted with the Turks during the Gallipoli Campaign has continued to be romanticised. By casting the enemy as a well-met equal, the reality of the Anzac invasion of Turkey is airbrushed, and duty and courage are remembered in place of enmity and conflict.

In 2010, a third edition of *The Anzac book* was published and is available for purchase today. One hundred years after its first publication, Australians

are still interested in the stories told by the Anzacs who fought in the trenches on Gallipoli, and still associate the archetypal Australian soldier with that presented to the nation by Bean in 1916.

## Women and friendship in war



An **interview** with Janet Butler, historian and honorary associate at La Trobe University

My first book (*Kitty's war*) was based on the diaries of a World War I army nurse (Sister Kit McNaughton) who came from my home town. In the book, I looked at how her ideas about herself – for example, as a woman, a nurse, an Australian and a member of the British Empire – changed as she experienced the war.

When I first read Kitty's diaries, what leapt from the page, from the very first paragraphs, was the centrality and the functionality of friendship in the lives of the nurses, and its importance in shaping both their own experience and that of the soldiers with whom they spent what leisure they could find.

In Australia, we are used to thinking of mateship between men as the definitive kind of friendship during the Great War. So iconic is this concept that we have rarely looked beyond it. Many important questions about the nature and the effect of friendships during World War I have thus not been asked.

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This is true, to a degree, of the relationships between women on active service. Active service, however, vastly increased the possibility for friendships between men and women, and the friendships that grew between Australian soldiers and nurses posted overseas have perhaps been even less examined.

The soldiers and nurses were cut off from their families and their neighbourhoods, except through the mail. Often, when they were transferred from unit to unit, or because of submarine attacks, they were even without this. So friendship, in senses both broad and deep, was vital in shaping their experience of active service in World War I. A consideration of the role of friendship is therefore important for our understanding of our nation's experience of the war.

The importance of such friendships lay in their ordinary practice – in the way they were experienced as a day-to-day reality, and in what the nurses gained and offered to others, within them, in the extraordinary circumstances in which they found themselves – together among unknown others, in conditions of stress and adversity, and cut off from family networks.

In Australia, part of the reason we have not looked beyond the friendships between men can be traced to the privileging of the experience of combatants compared with others, as well as the fiercely masculine nature of Anzac mythology. This oversight is more generally symptomatic, however, of the lack of serious consideration of the subject of friendship in any academic field until the 1970s. The modern, western idea of friendship has been that it is private and personal – something that adds a little flavour to social life, but is peripheral. What work was done was in sociology, anthropology and philosophy.

*In history, with a few notable exceptions, the examination of friendship is less than a decade old.*

In history, with a few notable exceptions, the examination of friendship is less than a decade old. Yet friendships should be of interest to us as historians, because – as the sociologist Graham Allan points out to us – friendships are a product of their time and place. They take on shape and meaning in their particular situations and circumstances, and, when those situations change, so too do the kind of friendships.

Kit McNaughton's diary – in fact, all the nurses' diaries – are unsurpassed sources for friendship during war. Women's diaries were expected to confine themselves, according to the conventions of the time, to the acceptable topics of the domestic sphere, family, social life, and the lives and activities of women. So what does it tell us?



First, let's look at the friendships between the nurses themselves. For nurses going on active service, to have the close friendship of at least one other woman – a special 'pal', as they called them – was of primary importance. Friends provided a buffer and support – an anchor in an unfamiliar world. Letters and diaries show that the nurses' friendships at this time were exclusive rather than inclusive in nature, so this was a real concern. Olive Haynes, already with Kit's future unit in Egypt and destined to become her friend, had written in July 1915, 'it's horribly lonely; everyone seems to have each other'. Olive's own pal, Sister Peters, was away serving on the *Gascon*, a hospital ship.

Early philosophers such as Montaigne and Aristotle believed that women, who were associated with more fickle, romantic love, were incapable of the higher forms of friendship. The nurses' diaries, however, show that the friendships of these women at war can be understood in terms of continuity with the deep and loving friendships between women of the 19th century, which have been so sensitively revealed through Carol Smith Rosenberg's work. When we look at female friendships on a daily basis, we see that they did have their instrumental, useful side – friends provided companions in excursions, and chaperones. But, more importantly, they offered

emotional support. This was particularly important given that nurses were moving into new roles in a male domain. The nurses offered practical nurturing and care, for example, when soldiers were ill.

*When we look at women's relationships, we can see that they were based on sisterly relations, as they were cut off from family and neighbourhood. They offered each other the emotional and practical support of family.*

When we look at women's relationships, we can see that they were based on sisterly relations, as they were cut off from family and neighbourhood. They offered each other the emotional and practical support of family. They were forming, as the anthropologists would tell us, substitute kin networks. These networks extended to their relationships with Australian men, to whom they were sisters in arms, and sisters from home. World War I brought men and women into contact in unprecedented numbers, in situations away from their neighbourhoods. In the nurses' case, military authorities feared that the relationships between nurses and soldiers would be a threat to



Australian Army nurses.

SOURCE: [State Library of South Australia](#) [SRG 435/1/2]; used under [PDM 1.0](#)

discipline. The nurses used the idea of family to set acceptable boundaries to their relationships with men for the benefit of their family at home and for authorities at war. The soldiers were their 'boys' (in this example, the nurses were motherly in their relationships), their brothers in arms or 'dear old chaps' – which reflected nice, safe, grandfatherly relationships.

Although the nurses sought access to a full range of social activities from their friendships with soldiers at war – they were taken to concerts and dinners, and for a spin out to the Egyptian pyramids in a car – men sought the kind of emotional support that the nurses offered to each other. Women are generally regarded as better at offering emotional support in friendship than men. Whether the reasons originate in socialisation or in the women's position in society, women's friendships were seen, particularly at this time, to be characterised by intimacy and self-disclosure. They were 'face to face' and focused on talking, whereas men's friendships were regarded as sociable rather than intimate. Men's friendships were 'side by side' relationships, focused on activity, and often instrumental, rather than nurturing, in nature.

In the climate of military manliness of World War I, and given the conventions that protected family at

home (ie from being told the harsh realities of war through letters), the soldiers confided in the nurses. Kit's diary has a lot of evidence of the nurses 'yarning' with the soldiers, and of the soldiers confessing the harshness of their experience and of their fears.

*Kit's diary has a lot of evidence of the nurses 'yarning' with the soldiers, and of the soldiers confessing the harshness of their experience and of their fears.*

Not all theatres of war would encourage the kind of relationships that grew up between Australian men and women. On the Western Front, they would return to strict segregation and conditions of work that were so intense that opportunities for friendships to build were minimised. But, on the ships on their way to war, in Egypt and on Lemnos Island, the opportunities were there for the beginnings of friendships between nurses and soldiers that would see them through the war.

The nurses would pay a high price – an unexpected one – for their new friendships. As their hospitals and the men they were serving were moved to



Contingent of Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses marching along King William Street.

SOURCE: [State Library of South Australia](#); used under [CC BY 4.0](#)



the Western Front, and as the results of attrition warfare came into their hospitals, the nurses would experience loss and the fear of loss. But the comfort and companionship of their new friendships would be a rock on which they would depend during the darker times of war.

## The anti-conscription movement



Podcast: **The anti-conscription movement**, – Clare Wright and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith  
**CW:** Clare Wright

**MS:** Joining me today to talk about the public response to the Great War, the anti-conscription movement, the protest rallies and the driving force of Vida Goldstein is Associate Professor Clare Wright, a historian and winner of the 2014 Stella Award for her book *The forgotten rebels of Eureka*.

By 1916, the appalling losses in Gallipoli started to become a daily reality on the streets of Melbourne and the other cities around Australia. The boys were coming home wounded messes. They were mentally disturbed, physically incapacitated – and these were the ones that were lucky enough to return. As the war ground on, Australians realised that it wouldn't be quickly won and recruits started to drop off. At the time, Australia was the only all-voluntary force in the war, and the government mooted that this might not continue. They called a referendum to establish conscription.

Today we are talking on the walk that the protesters would have marched one century ago: from Flinders Street Station in Melbourne to the oratory stumps on the banks of the Yarra River.

**CW:** The move towards conscription became a massive rallying point for people who were against the war for a number of reasons. For women who were pacifists and had been against the war from the beginning, for people who believed that it was not the government's role to sign people up in this way, that this was going to be a sort of attack on freedoms and liberties here in Australia that was not going to be tolerated. And so the anti-conscription movement became a real rallying force for a number of dissident and protest groups.

And here in Melbourne, this became the focal point for the actual physical presence of the anti-conscription movement. We're standing across from Federation Square, which is now a sort of base for

open-air meetings in Melbourne, but that didn't exist at the time. There was no real place that people could gather in the heart of Melbourne as there was in Sydney at the Domain.

**MS:** I've read newspapers that reported the reason that there was no square in Melbourne, and there was no public space really, was because these spaces encouraged democratic participation (such as protests and soapboxing about the war, which was not wanted), so Yarra Bank has always served as a default. So where did these people have to go? Did they have anywhere they could gather?

**CW:** Because there was nowhere in the centre of Melbourne where people could gather, they tended to gather at Yarra Bank. There were other places where stump oratory happened around Melbourne – for example, in Studley Park and in other suburban locations, along the Merri Creek near St George's Road, but for the really big mass meetings in the centre of Melbourne it was Yarra Bank.

**MS:** How mass are we talking about? How many people were turning up to these protests?

**CW:** In October of 1916, there was a rally that attracted 100 000 people at Yarra Bank. But we are talking about tens of thousands of people gathering in the city to listen to speakers protest against the war and, in particular, against conscription.

So the route that we are going to take is the way the protesters marched. One of my favourite marches was actually a women's march that occurred on 22 October 1916. It was organised by the Women's Peace Army headed up by Vida Goldstein, and this group met at Guild Hall, which was their headquarters. Today, this is where the RMIT building is, on the corner of La Trobe and Swanston streets. A total of 3000 women and girls, and many male supporters as well, marched in procession from Guild Hall down to Swanston Street, where we are, and then continued on to Yarra Bank.

There was a great report in the newspaper that said that at the head of the procession there was a little girl dressed in white, who was carried on the shoulders of a man. There was a banner behind her that said 'a small child shall lead you'.

**MS:** Was this one of many protests? How many were going on at that time?

**CW:** Well, there were protests being held by numerous anti-conscription groups. The Women's Peace Army was one of the largest and most organised, and certainly able to gather huge numbers; they had thousands and thousands of women and other supporters. But there were many other anti-conscription groups in Melbourne, so it was when all

of these groups came together that you would get these rallies that would have up to 100 000 people.

At this stage, the government was talking about introducing conscription and, indeed, by the end of the year they would put forward a conscription referendum. There was, at one stage, talk of a unilateral move to introduce conscription, but in the end they put it to the vote of the people. It would be 1 of 2 conscription referendums held during the Great War, both of which were defeated.

**MS:** There's a massive amount of work to be done to even get up to the point of a referendum. Were our war troops of just volunteers really lacking at that stage?

**CW:** The recruit numbers were dropping off immensely. It wasn't a fear, it wasn't an apprehension, it wasn't an anxiety about whether Australia was going to be able to fulfil its imperial duties. You could count the numbers and men just weren't enrolling.

**MS:** That tells you about the state of the war then. It must have become really unpopular quite quickly. So what sort of people were involved in these war protests? One of the contemporary papers lamented the fact that there were so many young able-bodied men protesting, who could have been doing much better things with their time.

**CW:** That's right. They were called shirkers and were often sent the white feather. The white feather was a symbol of cowardice and there were groups – in particular, the Australian Women's National League – that were very much backing the war. The Australian Women's National League had the highest number of members at the time, and was led by Eva Hughes. They believed in king and country, and that it was a woman's duty to make sure that those able-bodied men got to war. And one of the things that they did was to be behind some of these white feather campaigns, where a man in a town who was known to be able-bodied – and had no justifiable reason to stay behind – was sent a white feather in the mail. So he'd open up his mail and he's sitting on his veranda and a white feather would drop out. This was very publicly humiliating.

**MS:** So that was the argument for conscription. It just seems patriotic: 'We've got a duty to go and do this, you're able-bodied, go to war'. What was the argument against going to war?

**CW:** The anti-war movement came from many different directions, but some of the arguments against were that this was a capitalist war that had nothing to do with the people who were actually the ones being sent to war, who were largely the workers. That this was a capitalist war that was just feeding off the bodies of disenfranchised workers who had no power and no say. There were others, like women,

who were saying that it was a mother's duty to defend the life that she had borne; it was women's role to uphold pacifism in the world, to find another way of dealing with aggression and dispute. Women like Vida Goldstein were very much pleading, from the beginning, for peaceful negotiations. She said that Australia – who really had no truck in this war on foreign shores, that there was no risk to Australia of any form of invasion of its sovereignty in any way – should be playing a role as a peacemaker. They should be using their skills as negotiators.

**MS:** Back in the day, 100 years ago when these protest marchers were coming down here, this would have been all just pretty much open space, wouldn't it?

**CW:** It was. This was open space. There would also have been factories that would have traditionally been spilling their bilge and their gross fetid output into the Yarra River, tanneries and butchers all the way lining along the Yarra River down here. But you can see why this space was used for the protests. There is this very clear open line, and we're heading towards now the actual place where Yarra Bank was set up.

It was actually a place that the police pretty much left alone. There were always inspectors not in uniform who would be there keeping an eye on things. Vida Goldstein herself attracted an ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] file after the war years. By about 1925, the stump oratory at Yarra Bank was such a deeply ingrained part of Melbourne's democratic life that they actually built some stumps into the ground, which we'll see, and they still remain there now so that people could actually get up on them without having to bring their soapbox.

**MS:** Vida Goldstein sounds like a central figure in all these protests. Can you give me some background on her? I understand that, by this point of her life, she's quite well known as an agitator.

**CW:** She was an agitator and, really, Vida Goldstein was a politician. An unelected member of Australian politics, although she did certainly try. She stood for parliament 5 times. She was in fact the first woman in the British Empire to stand for parliament. Australia was the first country in the world that gave women the right to stand for federal parliament. She stood as an independent, and she wanted to represent the rights of women and children. Vida Goldstein was a very well-bred, well-educated woman. Her mother was from the western district of Victoria, squattocracy, and her father was descended from a Polish-Jewish freedom fighter who had come to Australia during the gold rush. Her father was a member of the Victorian militia during World War I. They were very much part of the establishment.

But Vida's mother had radicalised her during the 1880s depression, when she started doing slum





The 1906 May Day demonstration in Melbourne, being addressed by Tom Mann.

SOURCE: [www.solidarityforeverbook.com/cgi-bin/showchapter.pl?c=2](http://www.solidarityforeverbook.com/cgi-bin/showchapter.pl?c=2)

work around Melbourne and saw the conditions that so many women and children lived in. Vida herself got her political apprenticeship when she became involved in gathering signatures for the monster women's petition to give women the right to vote in Melbourne, which attracted 30 000 signatures in 6 weeks and became the largest petition ever put to an Australian parliament at that time. It didn't hold. Victorian women didn't get the right to vote until 1908, but Vida became the leading figure of the Australian suffrage movement and, indeed, became an international figure when Australia did hit that milestone of becoming the first country in the world to give women full political equality.

Vida travelled to Washington DC and spoke at the first International Women's Suffrage Convention. She met Teddy Roosevelt in the Oval Office. He invited her there because he wanted to see what one of these fully enfranchised women looked like. He'd never seen one before and he rather thought the vote for women was a good idea. He was keen to see what the future might look like. As far as I can tell, Vida Goldstein was the first woman, the first Australian, to be invited into the Oval Office to meet an American president.

By the time the war years came along, Vida was already a massive presence in public life in Victoria,

in Australia. She used her magazine, which she edited and published, called *The woman voter*, as an organ for her anti-war activities.

We're here now at Speakers' Corner. It's beautiful, isn't it?

**MS:** Yeah, it's a lovely place, and so cut off from the rest of the city. I've never been here or really knew that this was here.

**CW:** Well, not many Melburnians would. It has a very different role now than it did. It really stopped being used by about the 1960s when other places became available, particularly university campuses, for people to gather and protest the issues of the day. The streets were much more used for gatherings of protesters and dissenters, whereas this was the spot. Melburnians don't know about it now. It's very lush, it's green, it's actually a little oasis. It didn't look like this during the war years.

**MS:** It was much bigger than this as well, wasn't it? It's been kind of cut up into pieces a bit.

**CW:** It's been chopped up by an extension of Exhibition Street that comes down here and winds its way down past the MCG [Melbourne Cricket Ground], and the tennis centre is just over there now. It was a

bigger area. It was just a dusty stretch of the Yarra. These gorgeous trees that we're standing under here and enjoying the shade on this hot day were planted in the 1920s, really as a way of providing shade for the protesters. It was a way of actually giving some amenity to those who they knew were going to come out.

Speakers' Corner was held here every Sunday, and it became a kind of a form of public entertainment, really. Sundays were time when there was no shopping and very few other entertainments available, but people could come here and they could hear a range of speakers talking about a range of issues. Some people referred to this as the university of the working class. You can see the mounds that have been set up. There's stones around them, they're really quite permanent spots for speakers to stand and gather a crowd around them. Anybody could just come and mount one of these stumps and have a crack at whatever they wanted to talk about.

**MS:** Before the stumps, I suppose people would literally bring a soapbox out.

**CW:** They did. They would bring a soapbox, they would stand on a suitcase, and, if you look at photos like I've got here, May Day was a huge day for speeches in Speakers' Corner. You can see that, just there, is a sea of hats.

**MS:** Yeah, yeah.

**CW:** Thousands of people. No trees.

**MS:** I can't even see the ground!

**CW:** You can't see the ground. It's a swarm of people. And then this photo here is of the anti-conscription rally in 1916 and, again, it almost looks like it's a day at the races, doesn't it? That could be Flemington today that you're looking at. You can see what an incredibly popular and intense part of Melbourne's public life this public speaking was.

**MS:** So Vida Goldstein and her supporters, and a lot of the general public would have come along the river here and come out to a space that they had set up here. What was she talking about?

**CW:** We know the content of some of the speeches that were made here during the anti-conscription rallies, particularly of the Women's Peace Army, because Vida Goldstein recorded them in *The woman voter*. If you'd like, I could mount the stump?

**MS:** Definitely. Give us some of Vida Goldstein's words.

**CW:** Okay, so you just have to imagine that there's 30 000 people around me here I'm speaking to.

**MS:** I am imagining, yes.



Speakers' Corner. Crowds at the anti-conscription rally, Melbourne, 1916.

SOURCE: <http://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Anti-conscription-rally-762x418.jpg>



Taking the votes of members of the 3rd Battalion on the second conscription referendum at Halinghen, near Samer. Identified left to right: Lieutenant (Lt) FW Taylor (face not visible); Lt CS Clifton MC, A Company; Captain SFP White, Officer Commanding B Company (seated); unidentified (looking over Breitman's shoulder); Private Breitman MM (died of illness 19 April 1919); unidentified (obscured); Lt E Hawkshaw MC, B Company (extreme right seated); all other men are unidentified.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial, used under **PDM 1.0**

**CW:** Shouts and great cries of hoorah. The following words are taken from '**Special appeal by women to women. Manifesto Australia's Women's Peace Army. Conscription vote no.**': 'Women of Australia! On October 28 we shall have laid upon us the greatest responsibility and the greatest privilege that could be placed upon the women of any country. For the first time in history the people of a whole nation are being asked whether they shall declare their allegiance to the force of might or the force of right. The ABC of the case. Down the ages the rulers of the world have held that might is a nation's only defence and in the twentieth century this doctrine has been carried to such a point that no nation can claim to be a great power unless it is so great in naval or military





Speakers' Corner. Crowds at the the polling booth on the conscription referendum with the 10th ALH Regiment. At Hod Willegha, Sinai, October 1916.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under [PDM 1.0](#)



A large crowd of spectators in Collins Street during the conscription referendum campaign listen to soldiers addressing the gathering from a dais.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under [PDM 1.0](#)

strength as to excite the fear and suspicion of other great powers. It has been universally recognised that conscription and freedom are mutually destructive and in conscript countries the aim of the masses in contradistinction to the classes has always been to throw off the crushing yoke of conscription and militarism.'

**MS:** Hoorah.

**CW:** Hoorah. Well not everybody was saying 'hoorah'. Actually, at the conscription rally, there was a force of ex-Gallipoli veterans who turned up. Their rally turned into something of a riot that all the papers around Australia ended up reporting on. There was a terrible skirmish. People ended up being arrested. Even though it was very obvious that the violence had been started by the soldiers who had come, it ended up being people from the anti-conscription lobby, men who were defending the women who were being attacked, who were in fact arrested. But it was such

a massive upheaval and such an unexpected turn to violence, it was reported in all the newspapers around the country.

**MS:** And maybe in that way the anti-conscription movement got more attention than it would have normally if it was just a plain oratory speech. And ultimately the attempts to bring in conscription for the war failed, so this would have had a sway on public sentiment.

**CW:** That's right. It was a case that just kept building up. There were many different sides of the anti-conscription debate, but there is absolutely no doubt that the women's demonstrations were a huge part of the force that mobilised behind the anti-conscription movement, and that pacifism was a great force for good and it had a large political effect.

## Bean's Anzac Book shaped how Australians think about Gallipoli



By Sarah Midford (Lecturer, Interdisciplinary Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University) and first published on [The Conversation](#) on 9 April 2015, 3.49 pm AEST (used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#))

### Disclosure statement

Sarah Midford was a team member on the Joint Historical and Archaeological Survey (JHAS) of the Gallipoli Peninsula, which received financial support from the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs.

One man is central to Australia's understanding of its protracted defeat at Gallipoli a century ago: C.E.W. (Charles) Bean, Australian War Correspondent, Official Historian and unofficial curator of the Anzac legend.

Bean's overwhelming influence over how Australians remember Gallipoli, Anzacs and the Great War is undeniable and nowhere more evident than in his first Anzac publication – [The Anzac Book](#). This was an anthology of stories, poems, cartoons and colour illustrations written and drawn by the Anzac soldiers while they were in the Gallipoli trenches.

For Bean, the archetypal Anzac was strong, resilient, inventive, good-humoured, laconic and duty-bound. This is not too far removed from the archetypal Australian bushman of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A quick look at Bean's pre-war writing, such as his book [On the Wool Track](#), provides a clear indication that he already had a

strong idea of the Australian character even before he landed with the troops at Gallipoli in April 1915.

After the Gallipoli landing, the bushman's character easily transformed into that of the Anzac soldier. Bean's Anzac drew on the bushman's colonial roots and continued to demonstrate strength in the face of harsh and dangerous conditions, all with good humour. However, this was just an ideal, conceived and promoted by a man with the means to do so and a personal investment in the commemoration of Anzac deeds.

## How the book came about

Bean's first opportunity to promote a comprehensive image of the generalised Anzac character presented itself in November 1915. A special committee was formed to produce an Anzac trench publication; contributions were solicited in a notice circulated to the population of Anzac Cove on November 14.

To encourage contributors, prizes were offered for the best submission in each category. All profits were to be used to benefit the Army Corps. In the end, 150 submissions were received – although not all of these were included in the final publication.

While it was originally conceived as an annual magazine, it became clear very quickly that the Allied forces would not remain on the Gallipoli peninsula much longer. In light of this, the publication was reconsidered as a souvenir of the campaign for a military and civilian audience.

After the Gallipoli peninsula was evacuated in December 1915, Bean and his assistant Arthur Bazley worked on the manuscript from a cowshed in Imbros, which they named the "Villa Pericles". What resulted was *The Anzac Book*.

Bean selected submissions that promoted the everyday challenges faced by the Anzac soldier. For Bean, the simple act of completing ordinary day-to-day duties in the face of adversity was an act of heroism worth recording. Poems such as "To My Bath" and "Army Biscuits" related the ongoing filth and drudgery with good humour and light-heartedness. It was the dignity of facing the horror of war with an easy-going nature that Bean was keen to present as heroic.

## What was left out

However, the submissions that Bean excluded were just as important to the construction of



The idea of the Anzac soldier, as crafted by Australia's official historian at Gallipoli, Charles Bean, has dominated historical memory.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under [PDM 1.0](#)

*The Anzac Book* as the submissions he included. Bean was a meticulous editor. The nature of the final publication owes much to his alteration and rejection of the works submitted.

Bean had a tendency to omit anything that had exaggerated sentiment, or anything that dealt with the harsh realities of war without humour. He specifically rejected items that included anything grotesque, discussed the crippling fear of war, deserting soldiers, or included descriptions of extended tedium.

Bean also rejected a number of poems that presented Anzac soldiers in more traditionally heroic ways, and/or the history-making nature of the campaign. He preferred to highlight the witty and more down-to-earth accounts of the Gallipoli landing and occupation.

Although *The Anzac Book* presented a specially crafted image of the Anzac soldier, Bean did not want the historical record altered because of





Charles Bean's dugout at Gallipoli.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0

selective editing. In February 1917, he wrote to the War Records Office with a suggestion that important documents – such as The Anzac Book manuscript – be preserved so that they could one day be deposited in a museum.

This request was granted. The rejected submissions can be viewed in the Australian War Memorial archives today.

## The book's significance

Bean was sure that The Anzac Book would hold a place of significance in the Australian historical record. In anticipation of its importance, he reserved several hundred copies of the book for Australian libraries and museums.

After publication, Bean spent the next three years tirelessly distributing copies to soldiers, officers, civilians and anyone else who could be convinced to buy a copy. Almost half of the copies ordered by the AIF's First Division were sent home to Australia. This trend continued as more copies were ordered on the front lines in France and Belgium.

In September 1916, the publisher recorded 104,432 book sales, of which 53,000 were to the AIF. Before the end of the war, almost every Australian household would have had access to a copy of The Anzac Book. The **third edition** of The Anzac Book was published in 2010 and is still being purchased in 2015.

Bean's vision of the Anzac soldier has dominated historical memory for nearly 100 years. For that reason, The Anzac Book is crucial to understanding how Australians conceptualise their ideal national character.

As we pause to reflect on the Gallipoli landings, we might think about Bean's omissions and the reasons behind his editorial decisions to eliminate the bloody realities of war in favour of a specially crafted and idealised construction of the Anzacs and the Gallipoli campaign.

Whether Bean's edits were made to build morale or even to construct a legacy, that he made an effort to preserve what was excluded in 1915 for the historical record is significant and worth revisiting.

## Only the conscription referendums made Australia's Great War experience different



By Ben Wellings (Lecturer, Politics and International Relations, Monash University) and first published on **The Conversation** on 10 November 2015, 6.19 am AEDT (used under **CC BY-ND 4.0**)

### Disclosure statement

Ben Wellings does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

November 11 **resonates less** with Australians than April 25. But Armistice Day provides a moment to reflect on Australia's self-identity in comparison to other nations that experienced the first world war and commemorate it to this day.

Nations exist in a perpetual state of creative tension. They must appear to be unique: that is the basis of nationhood. However, all nations are essentially the same in form: only the content of legends, heroes and villains differ.

Australia is no different. So, thinking about Australia in comparison with others will provide a more accurate understanding of Australia's past and soften some of the **hyperbole** surrounding Anzac today. And these global comparisons will enable a clearer picture of what might make Australia unique to be formed.

### Ties that bind

The first world war was a truly global and transnational conflict. This makes it doubly noticeable that centenary commemorations across the world are so dominated by stubbornly national narratives.

Australia is a good case in point. When Australia went to war in 1914 it was part of "the Empire on which the sun never set". At Gallipoli, Australians fought alongside and were cared for by men and women from Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, British India and France. Australians fought against Turks, Arabs and other peoples of the Ottoman Empire.

Relegating the global and transnational dimensions and reiterating familiar – if erroneous – national narratives creates distortions in the image of the national self.

For example, it is sometimes implied that Australia was the only nation during the war not to impose conscription on its (male) population. This leads to understandings that Australia was unique in its deployment of an army of citizen-soldiers – a sort of latter-day Athens with all of its implied virtues. As retired Chief of Army Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie **said** in 2014, Australia was:

*... not founded on militarism; citizen soldiers forged the tradition and that legacy is in our modern Diggers and has flowed through to the population at large.*

But a wider look at the history of the Great War suggests that this citizen-soldier source of uniqueness needs to be qualified in several ways. The South African government did not conscript white men for fear of provoking the Afrikaners, although there was little hesitation in conscripting African labour.

Similarly, men of the British West Indies also freely volunteered their services. But they **found themselves** reduced to menial and dangerous non-combatant roles when sent to the Western Front. Prevailing British racial attitudes towards "inferior races", such as the descendants of slaves in the Caribbean, suggested that arming such men in the heart of Europe would only invite trouble – even though the French deployed thousands of men from West Africa.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, no official Great War commemorations are currently planned in Jamaica.

The British Indian Army recruited more than 240,000 soldiers without resorting to conscription – an endeavour that historian David Olusoga has **described as** "the largest volunteer army in the world".

But we must be careful when ascribing motives for enlistment. This is as true for India as it is for Australia. Many of these men from British India were from impoverished villages and war provided the (dangerous) prospect of advancement. But this is not so different from Australia, where the motives for enlisting were various – whatever the official propaganda of the recruitment posters may have implied.

Thus, the suggestion that Australia was the only combatant nation to have free citizen-soldiers is not true. A more accurate claim would be that Australia was only one of two of the "white" Dominions not to impose conscription.



## What makes Australia different

What is unique, however, is that the proposal to impose conscription was voted down twice in referendums in which men and women voted. Here is something that Australia, as a new nation-state with a reputation for social and political innovation, could offer the world as a unique moment in the history of the Great War.

It is to be hoped that after 2015 the commemorative emphasis will be less on military service and broaden to the **two referendums** of 1916 and 1917: a moment for the commemoration of citizenry in wartime rather than soldier-citizenry in war.

It may be that it is difficult to commemorate the intense divisions created by the conscription referendums at a time when bipartisanship rules in the rhetoric of contemporary commemoration. Nevertheless, this could be just the breath of fresh air that the potentially repetitive centenary needs. By looking more closely at others, we will understand more about ourselves.

## Lest we forget our other heroes of war, fighting for freedom at home



By Clare Wright (Associate Professor in History, La Trobe University) and first published on **The Conversation** on 20 April 2015, 6.08 am AEST (used under **CC BY-ND 4.0**)

### Disclosure statement

Clare Wright receives funding from the Australian Research Council.

A man stands on a beach in a distant land. Waves lap his ankles. He wades through the gentle dawn light, arms outstretched, his head held high. He is fully dressed; not a tourist but a freedom fighter.

A photograph of this man, beamed around the world, becomes a universal symbol of the struggle against tyranny and the sweet triumph of liberty. It is 2015. The man is **Peter Greste**.

If you thought the man might have been an Anzac on the shores of Gallipoli, such is the power of persuasion. It's easy to lead a horse to water when, in the centenary year of the Gallipoli campaign, our nation is at saturation point with battlefield remembrance.

The sum total of television programming, beer advertising, political grandstanding and **opportunistic marketing** suggests that the historical legacy of Australia's involvement in the first world war boils down to a simple equation: young (white) man plus distant beach equals sacrifice.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with military commemoration that honours the dead. Last weekend I planted Gallipoli rosemary in my backyard; part of the proceeds go to the Avenues of Honour, a national project to preserve and restore **Australia's living memorials**.

More objectionable is the fact that war remembrance is played like it is a zero sum game. To widen the scope of historical tribute, and also recall the words and deeds of the Australian men and women who fought against the prescribed route of militaristic sentiment, is to risk being branded disrespectful and **divisive**.

But the unassailable fact is that the first world war ripped Australia asunder. Even at the time, the Great War itself was divisive, a historical reality belied by today's bland, blanket coverage of "the Anzac spirit".

Australia's participation in the war was contested from the outset. On August 11, 1914, veteran political campaigner Vida Goldstein wrote in her *Woman Voter* newspaper:

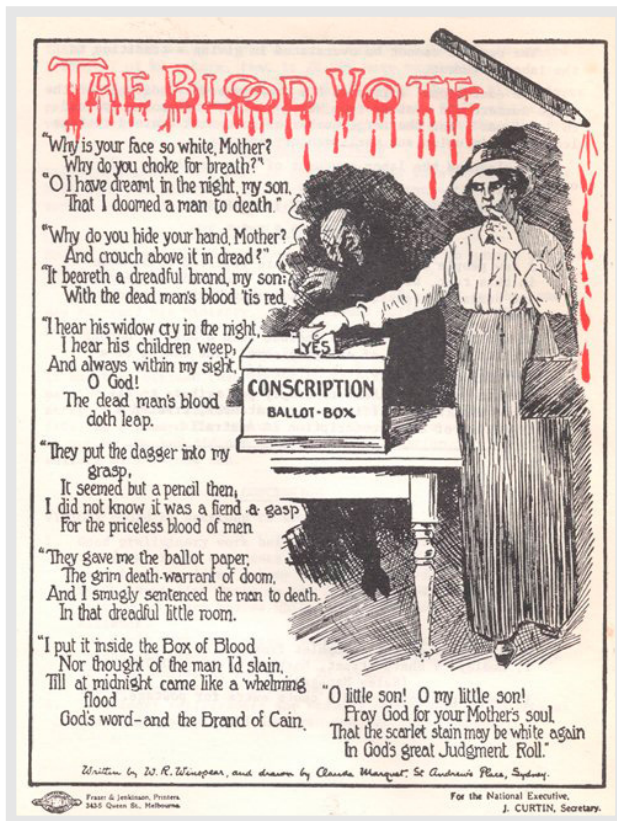
*It is a fearful reflection on 2000 years of Christianity that men have rushed into war before using every combined effort to prevent this appalling conflict.*

As she had done 20 years earlier in mobilising forces around the issue of female suffrage, Goldstein rallied her own army of foot soldiers with fighting words.



Protesters attend a huge anti-conscription rally at Yarra Bank in Melbourne, 1916.

SOURCE: **National Library of Australia**; used under **CC BY-NC-ND 4.0**



The Blood Vote, the poem credited with influencing many votes in the conscription referendum. Reproduced from a pamphlet, *How to Defeat Conscription: a Story of the 1916 and 1917 Campaigns in Victoria*.

SOURCE: Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever!*; used under CC BY



Vida Goldstein fought often unpopular battles for women's rights and against conscription.

SOURCE: used with permission from *Bath in time*, Bath Central Library

*The time has come for women to show that they, as givers of life, refuse to give their sons as material for slaughter.*

Australian and New Zealand women had a unique advantage in shaping public debate: the vote. "The enfranchised women of Australia are political units in the British Empire," Goldstein argued, "and they ought to lead the world in sane methods of dealing with these conflicts."

Goldstein's early entreaties failed to bite with the general populace. Under the newly legislated **War Precautions Act**, the Woman Voter suffered censorship, leading Goldstein and her Women's Peace Army to fight on multiple fronts: "we are fighting for Civil Liberty and against Military Despotism". Around the nation, trade unionists opposed to "the capitalist war" joined the movement.

Australia had the only entirely voluntary military service among the Allied forces; less than 40% of eligible men signed up to fight "for King and Country". As the carnage at Gallipoli brought home the realities of war, recruitments fell and peace activism became more widespread. General strikes halted industry, as workers reacted to the food shortages, unemployment and rising poverty that threatened the social accord of "the Working Man's Paradise".

With enlistments **falling away in 1916**, Prime Minister Billy Hughes pushed for conscription and pushed through the Unlawful Associations Act.

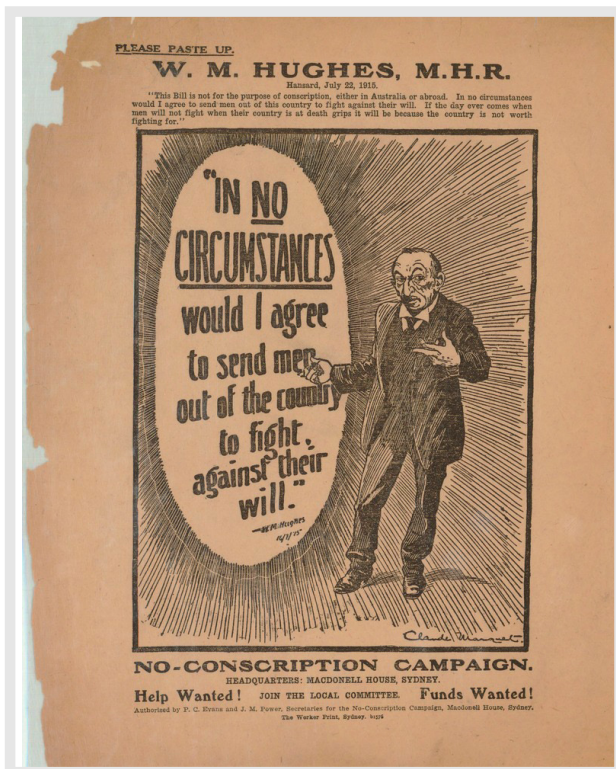
Groups that voiced opposition to the war, like the International Workers of the World, were banned and dissidents were jailed for publishing material "likely to cause disaffection or alarm". When waterfront workers and coal miners went on strike, the War Precautions Act was invoked to send them back to work.

In September 1916, the Sydney Twelve were arrested and tried for treason. "Fifteen years for 15 words" was how one of the prisoners described his crime and punishment.

The conscription referendums of October 28, 1916, and December 20, 1917, became a massive rallying point for people who opposed the war – or the federal government's domestic policies. There were diverse reasons for that opposition, including the anti-British sentiments of Irish Catholic Australians.

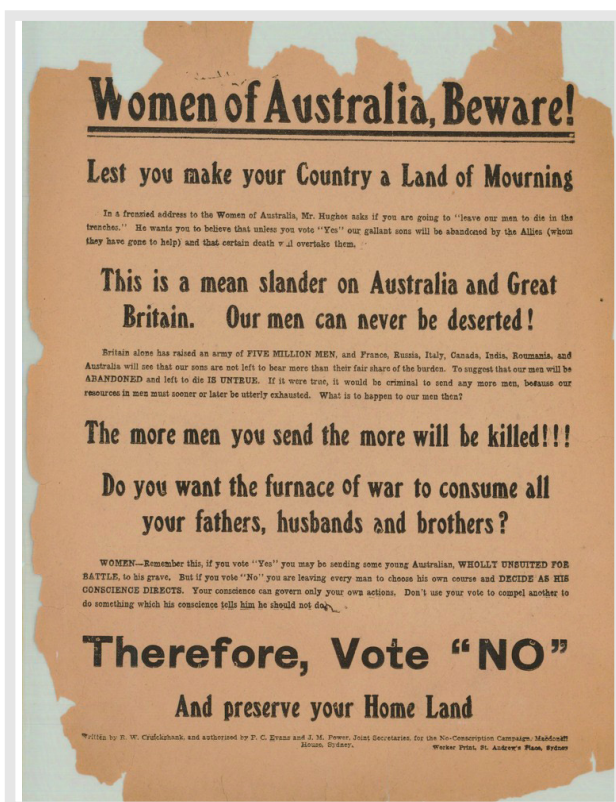
In Melbourne, the meeting place for such public debate was Yarra Bank, a pocket of land nestled between what today is Birrarung Marr and the Rod





Even 100 years ago Australian politicians weren't popular: this poster attacked Billy Hughes' change of heart on conscription.

SOURCE: [State Library of Victoria digital image pool](#); used under CC BY



An anti-conscription poster, appealing to women voters.

SOURCE: [State Library of Victoria digital image pool](#); used under CC BY

Laver Arena. Anti-conscription demonstrations saw **up to 100,000 people** gather on the dusty banks of dirty brown Yarra River.

Most protest meetings were peaceful, but one became infamously violent. "Riotous scenes at Yarra Bank", headlines around the nation proclaimed, when a demonstration organised by the Women's Peace Army in the week before the 1916 referendum turned nasty and returned servicemen began to attack female speakers. Both conscription referendums ultimately failed.

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* contains profiles of **174 anti-conscriptionists**, many of whom went to jail, including Vida Goldstein's compatriots Adela Pankhurst and Jennie Baines. Baines was imprisoned for refusing to pay the fine she was issued for flying a red flag at Yarra Bank in 1918. She is reputedly the first Australian prisoner to go on a hunger strike.

Other protesters were deported. As historian **Janet Butler** reminds us:

*It does take a special kind of bravery to stand against the tide.*

The **enduring legacies** of the first world war emanate beyond the battlefields of Gallipoli, manifested not only in the "**shattered Anzacs**" whose families bore the burden of care, but also in the class and sectarian divisions that shaped Australia's social and political relations in the 20th century.

Lest we also forget that the democratic freedoms we hold dear today – freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech – were won in battles fought on home soil by courageous women and men who sacrificed much, but are still accorded little recognition.

Perhaps, by the 125th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, when we again celebrate our national liberation narratives, we will come to associate riverbanks, as well as beaches, with the potent ebb and flow of freedom.

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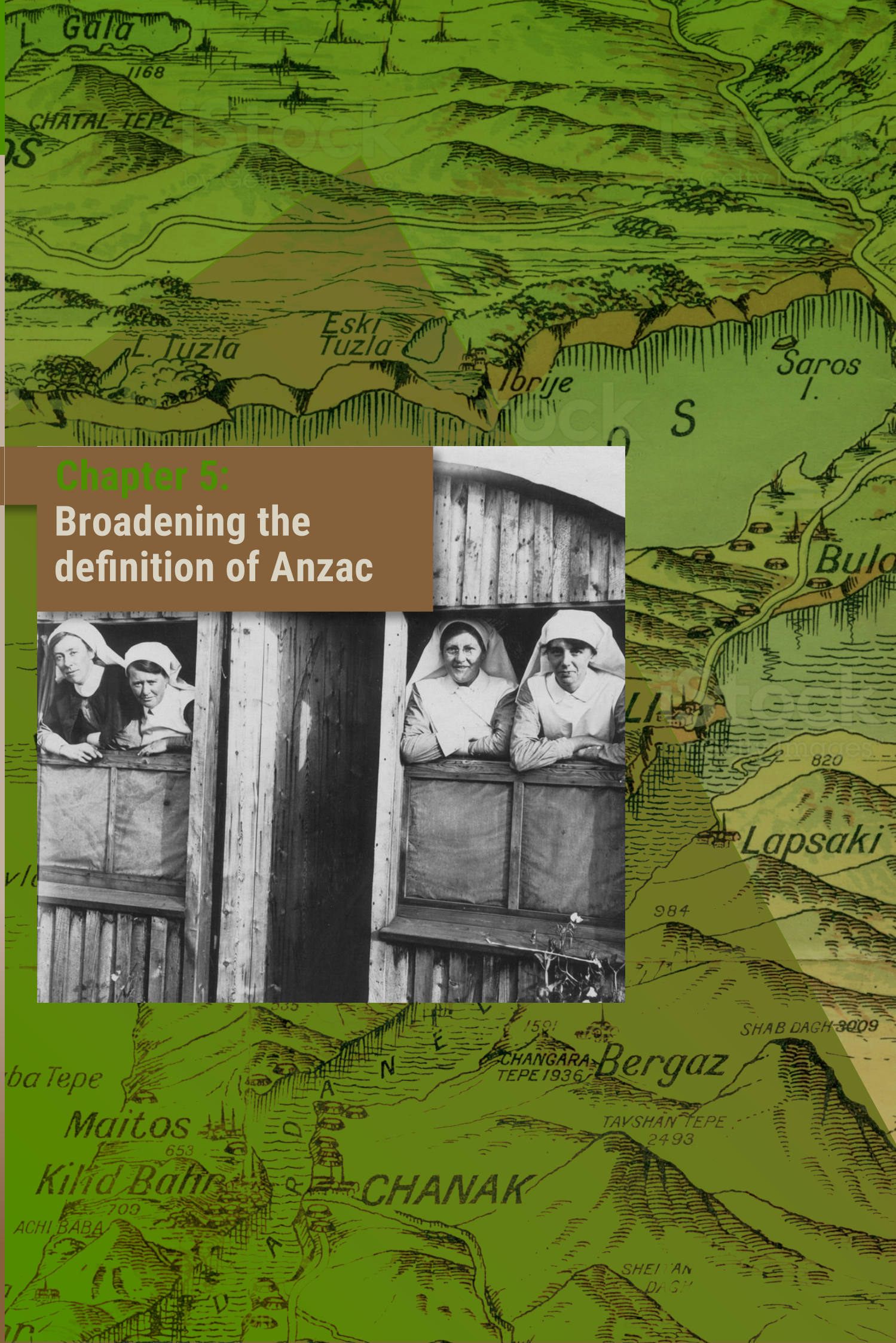
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## Chapter 5: Broadening the definition of Anzac



## 5 Broadening the definition of Anzac

**A**n Anzac soldier is typically represented as a young white male, but Anzac forces also comprised women, Indigenous soldiers from Australia and Māori soldiers from New Zealand. This chapter introduces readers to the role of nurses, Red Cross volunteers, and Indigenous Australian and Māori soldiers. It also outlines reasons for why these groups may not be as well remembered as the traditional Anzac soldier.

### Australian nurses



Podcast: **Australian nurses in World War I**, — Dr Janet Butler and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith

**JB:** Janet Butler

**MS:** Traditionally, the story of World War I is that of the men who fought and died to protect their countries and their ideals, and little is said about the role that women played in the war. Here to speak on behalf of the Australian nurses who went across to the frontlines to look after their boys is Janet Butler, Honorary Research Associate and Historian at La Trobe University.

**JB:** At the beginning of the First World War, there was a lot of enthusiasm to join up and fight for the British Empire, to help the British Empire. Women and men tried to enlist in droves. They were all turned down with the exception of nurses, and a very small number of masseuses who were accepted for official overseas service.

Women were fully involved on the home front in a variety of capacities. War touches everybody, and women, unofficially, really had to pick up the slack. If their husband went to war, and they were running a farm, then the woman was running the farm; if they were running a shop, they were taking care of the family business.

**MS:** It seems that even those who enlisted were in supporting roles, is that fair to say? They were

### Chapter questions

To comprehensively understand the diversity of the Anzac forces and the multicultural nature of their wartime experience, consider and answer the following questions:

1. Is there an idealised image of a female service person?
2. What were the day-to-day duties of a frontline nurse?
3. What were the differences experienced by male and female service people when they returned to Australia?
4. Why were the Imperial Camel Corps established?
5. What role did the Imperial Camel Corps play in World War I?
6. How many Indigenous Australian soldiers served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and what challenges did they meet when they enlisted?
7. What motivated Indigenous Australians to enlist?
8. Could the enlistment of Indigenous Australian soldiers have been a pathway to change?
9. How were the service conditions of Indigenous Australian soldiers different from those of Māori soldiers?

going over there as nurses, and at home they were supporting in a different capacity.

**JB:** I think so. And I think that's the way the nurses saw themselves. Because even in the nurses' diaries, they talk mainly about the 'boys', the soldiers. That's how they saw themselves, in a service capacity. Their mission, they called it, was to go overseas and serve their boys.

**MS:** How many went overseas?

**JB:** The official estimate, after the war, in the official histories, is 2139. But that seriously underestimates the number of nurses who actually enlisted to go overseas. That number would be increased by nurses who paid their own fare overseas and joined the Queen Alexandra Military Nursing Service, and other nursing services overseas, including Red Cross nurses. The current thinking is that somewhere between 2700 and 3000 Australian women who were fully trained nurses went overseas.





Australian Army nurses, ca 1915.

SOURCE: [State Library of South Australia](#), used under public domain



Red Cross Society in Biggenden, 1918.

SOURCE: [Wikimedia Commons](#), used under public domain

**MS:** So was the concept of women serving in a capacity like this new? And was there a reluctance to let them go over and help out at all in the war efforts?

**JB:** The nurses were accepted, because they were able to prove that what they were offering in their support role didn't interfere with the kind of feminine image of themselves. They weren't, in the military's eyes, crossing boundaries. The nurses really had to push this point. They had to argue that it was the womanly side of nursing that would actually help the men: their attention to domestic detail, their sympathy, their humanitarian support of the men in a physical and an emotional sense.

The military did accept that that was the case. They didn't accept that a doctor, an ambulance driver or an orderly needed to have womanly qualities. So female doctors, female ambulance drivers and female orderlies were not accepted for overseas service, and the majority of women who did go were nurses. But other women, who wanted to be doctors overseas, ambulance drivers and so on, could go as long as they were women of means and could pay their own way.

For example, Olive King had her own ambulance and took it overseas. The situation of the First World War, of course, was that there weren't enough fully trained male orderlies, and they actually needed the nurses. But the nurses that went to the First World War still faced that wall of prejudice.

We see this, particularly, with the nurse I looked at in my book (Kitty McNaughton in *Kitty's war*) and her friends, who went to Lemnos Island. When the nurses moved into the hospital, they were needed, but they weren't wanted. The preference was that they could train the orderlies up to do the job of nurses. But of course the nurses had 3 years training, so they proved their worth to such a degree that, towards the end of the war, they were actually asking for more female nursing staff to be sent. It actually changed the expectations of what a woman could do and achieve.

**MS:** So was it patriotism that was driving these women to enlist?

**JB:** It was. It was patriotism, the desire to serve the mother country in her hour of need. The nurses also wanted to go and serve their boys who were going overseas. Their brothers, their fathers and their fiancés were going overseas, so they wanted to be there.

The women also lived very restricted lives at home, nurses in particular. They weren't allowed to live away from the hospitals. They had 'lights out' at 10.00 every night and 1 late pass a week. One of the reasons that they enlisted was that it would give them a degree of freedom. They would be able to make a contribution and experience life to the full, including



Grace Wilson on Lemnos.

SOURCE: [Wikimedia Commons](#), used under public domain



Portianos Cemetary at Lemnos.

SOURCE: [Flickr \(Ellen Thompson\)](#), used under public domain

danger, which was something that wasn't possible for them at home.

This was the case for Kitty McNaughton. She was born in the country. I interviewed somebody who said they thought she wanted to get away from a life of cooking for the shearers. She was adventurous, as were they all, and she wanted to see the world and make a contribution.

**MS:** Do we have a lot of stories and evidence of what nurses encountered during their service?

**JB:** In Australia, we're blessed with sources about the nurses' experience. The Australians and the New Zealanders were unique in that the very first step in their experience of war was a 6-week journey on a cruise ship, on the passenger or tourist route to Egypt and to Britain. They were given travel diaries in which to record what people from home would think were thrilling adventures.

The nurses wrote diaries, as did many of the soldiers. They wrote letters home. But we also were very well served by our medical historian of the First World War, Arthur Graham Butler. He sent out a circular asking for nurses after the war to send in their accounts. He has more than 100 in the files at the Australian War Memorial. The nurses in these accounts perhaps tell a slightly different story than they do in their diaries. They expected the diaries to be read by people at home, so – to a degree – they're protective and discreet. In the narratives they wrote for the medical historian, they're a little bit more open.

Matron Kellett was asked by the collator of medical records at the end of the war to interview nurses who were going home. Luckily for me, Kitty was one of them, she's interview number 83. But there are also more than 100 of those. There are gaps because the nurses were discreet and, to a degree, they're invisible in a lot of the official records.

**MS:** What is there specifically for Kitty that you found? Were her diaries around as well as the interviews?

**JB:** Her diaries are in private hands. There are 4 years of war diaries and an interview.

**MS:** How many diaries did she write?

**JB:** Three small diaries. They were very conscientious recorders. It was that kind of age. They were quite driven to record because of the expectations of people at home, but also – in the end when things turned quite tough – I think they found recording things in the diaries helpful.

**MS:** It was therapeutic for them?

**JB:** It was. We have photographs as well. The photographs too tell their story.

**MS:** So what was the first encounter in a war situation like for a nurse?

**JB:** They were unprepared. The first encounter Kitty had was in Egypt. She arrived there in August just in time for the casualties from the August Offensive in the Dardanelles. By the time Kit got to Egypt, there wasn't a bed empty and she writes about 800 men arriving. I'll read you a little bit from the diary:

*The night we arrived, 800 patients came from Gaba Tepe, and most of them were seriously wounded, poor boys, but also brave. So we just got here in time. They were coming in from 11 pm to 3 am, just one continual hum of motor ambulances.*

The main thing was the volume of casualties, I think, in Egypt. They were totally unprepared for the volume of casualties and the inability to look after the boys individually. When they went to the Western Front, it changed again. They'd experienced the volume, but what they were getting on the Western Front





Nurses look out of the windows of the New Zealand Stationary Hospital, Wisques, France, during World War 1.

SOURCE: [National Library NZ](#), used under public domain

were high-explosive injuries. In Egypt, it was mainly gunshot wounds and illness, infectious diseases. What they got on the Western Front shocked them.

You can see from Kit's diary, her first sight of the wounded from the Western Front was during the Somme. The Somme began on 1 July 1916. It took 2 and a bit days for the casualties to come down from the clearing stations by train, down into the base hospital where she was working. But on the day they arrived, 3 July, you can see from the physical writing, the shock that she felt. And she writes on that day:

*No time off today, nothing but convoy after the other, and evacuating at the same time, some awful wounds. I hadn't time to draw breath all day. The news from the front is great, but the slaughter must be awful, and the wounds are terrible.*

Two days later, she wrote, 'Such wounds as I've never seen'. And the day after that, casting her eyes over the men in her care, she wrote, 'I have 11 with their legs off, and a couple ditto arms, and hips and heads galore'. Over and over in that first week, she talks about the severity of the wounds. Sometimes she mentions it twice in an entry. On the fifth day, she writes, 'The men have several different wounds'. A man can have 2 or 3 severe wounds as well as other shrapnel wounds. They have maggots in the wounds,

which is quite confronting. One man, she wrote, 'had a huge wound in his chest, you could see his heart beating. A most awful wound'.

They're the kind of wounds that they're facing. They haven't really seen this before. The other thing that shocks them, and that they're completely unprepared for, is that the soils of France are heavily manured. When shrapnel or bullets enter the soldiers' bodies, they also bring with them soil and a cocktail of toxins.

The nurses back in Australia were trained in aseptic, 'germ-free' surgery, but they get to France and they have to go back to the methods of a generation ago because all of the wounds are septic. Everything is infected. One of the consequences is that the soldiers get what is called gas gangrene, where the bacteria set up a reaction in the body and a leg can need to be amputated within a day – it moves that quickly. Even what they've gone through at a base doesn't prepare them for what they're going to see at the casualty clearing station.

Now Kit moves to an Australian casualty clearing station and she doesn't talk about the wounded, because they're Allied wounded. But one of the matrons writes to Dr Arthur Butler, who's collecting the records, and she describes what it's like for the nurses. She says nothing in the base hospitals, in

their training, could possibly prepare them for what they're about to see at the clearing station, where people are coming straight off the battlefield. They still have field dressings on legs that can be just hanging, virtually by a thread, and they see wounds that aren't seen further down the line. The reason is, of course, that soldiers with these injuries don't survive. Abdominal injuries do particularly poorly. Nothing prepares them.

**MS:** What will make it into her diary at this point? Is it going to be heavily sanitised? Even what you read out, there's not a lot of her in there. There's what she sees, there's what she's going through, and you can get glimpses of it. Do you know how this sort of thing affected the nurses?

**JB:** The workloads were extremely heavy. There were some dips in between the battles, but basically they're working full throttle all the time. They don't have a day off for months, and they burn out. They start to suffer from post-traumatic stress. You can see it in the diary; by the time she gets back to England, for example, she's becoming quite detached from what she's writing.

They keep the diary going, even under the most difficult conditions in the clearing stations. If there's a bombing raid, they have to go into the dugout. They're up all day, they're up most of the night, they're exhausted. They're seeing terrible things. Alice Ross King said:

*All day long you can hear the Last Post playing. It plays day and night as they carry out the people that they haven't been able to save.*

In Kit's diary, she writes about the kind of conventional things that a woman would be expected to write in her diary at home. She talks about going in the ambulance to collect the laundry, and describes the fields, the Australian men helping the French soldiers bringing in the harvest, the visitors who come to see them. One day, she talks about sitting there with a group of her friends, including soldiers, and she said, 'who should come around the corner but good old Ted Conup from Little River'. That's her home town. She used to go to church with him. She said, 'he's just as round and bonny as he ever was'. He sits and has afternoon tea with them. Her other soldier friends tease him because he comes from the same small town as Kit. Two weeks later, he's dead, and 4 days after that his brother's dead. Now Kit must have known that, because it fell to her sister-in-law in Little River to walk up to Mrs Conup, 2 consecutive days, to tell her that her sons had been killed.

But none of those deaths get into Kit's diary. Even though they must have been some of the biggest things that happened to her at the time. One of them was ill for a very long time in hospital when he

was wounded before he died, and the family would certainly have cabled Kit and asked her to go and see him. She almost certainly did.

**MS:** So they really played the role of a counsellor as well then, not just a nurse?

**JB:** They did. They did. The idea of mateship between the men has become so iconic, as our idea of friendship in the First World War, that we haven't really looked beyond it. But the First World War gave men and women the opportunity to socialise away from home in extraordinary numbers. On the journey out to war, in Egypt, on Lemnos Island, there was time to socialise with the men, and the women formed friendship groups that were really like de facto families. Because they were all away from home, they provided that group of friends (nurses and soldiers) with the kind of support and companionship – emotional as well as practical support – that a family would give. Because they were cut off from that, even sometimes from the mail.

To the soldiers, they were sisters from home, but they were also sisters in arms. They were there, on the spot, and they knew what was happening to the soldiers. They could see it, they were dealing with the results. The soldiers couldn't share that with their family back home because of the convention of protecting them. They couldn't say, 'we're having a terrible time'. They're writing back to their mother saying, 'we're all cheerful, we're all going to be fine, don't worry about me'. But they could tell the nurses.

Kitty met 4 men on Lemnos who served on Gallipoli, who remained her friends throughout the war. She talks about one of them visiting her in France and sharing the fact that he was afraid. Because he'd been on leave and he had to go back into the line, where, really, at that stage of the war, they were becoming quite fatalistic about their chances. But, as I write about in my book, Kit doesn't pass that along. She doesn't tell us what he tells her. Because it's not a tale that's going home. But it gives the soldiers a source of emotional support. It was the only source of that kind of emotional support they had.

**MS:** Was there support, or consideration for the nurses, in the same way that there was for soldiers?

**JB:** The nurses didn't have the same support and consideration as the soldiers did. The kinds of discrimination they faced were financial. They had to provide their own uniforms. They had a dress allowance, but a man could, say on Lemnos Island, draw on new boots because the ground was very hard on their feet, but the women couldn't. When they went to Lemnos, nurses went as honorary officers, without badges of rank. The men who weren't that happy with them being there, because they felt it was not an appropriate place for women, and they couldn't



respect the nurses because of rank. So women faced discrimination and prejudice in that way.

**MS:** Did they get a lot of recognition once they come back?

**JB:** They didn't. The memorial to the nurses was opened in 1999. They were older than the soldiers. They were single when they went to war. They had to stay single in order to remain at war and, when they came back, they found that there was a much smaller pool of available single men.

The nurses themselves weren't well. They were burnt out, and they'd had some terrible illnesses during the war. So they were often in necessitous circumstances. Funds were set up and you can see from the nurses drawing on them that they weren't in a good financial situation. They weren't allowed to be given hospital care in the repatriation hospitals for disabilities that weren't accepted as war related. Whereas, at the same time, veteran's wives were. People were agitating for this because they were so unwell, they'd done so much, and they were so frail. In 1950 they were given that right, and then in 1973 they were allowed into nursing home care for veterans if they had chronic illnesses. But, by that stage, most of them had died.

So the answer is no. They faded back into the community. I think the overarching story of the war was really of the Anzac soldier. The nurses were a long way down the scale of people whose stories were being told, and the stories were complicated because of the nurses' modesty.

**MS:** So how did you get involved in researching all this?

**JB:** I come from the same country town as Kit. I found Kit and her cousin Sadie on our War Memorial, which I had passed thousands of times as I'd grown up. They were not in alphabetical order and they were under the soldiers that they went to serve. They were self-effacing in memory as they had been in life. I hadn't even noticed them.

The idea of that nurse going to war from our tiny town, over to the First World War, that was what gripped me. I wanted to know what had happened to her. I wanted to know how it had changed her. I wanted to know what it was like. I didn't know if she'd come back, but if she had come back to our tiny town, what that was like, to come back from everything she'd seen, back to our little country town, afterwards.

**MS:** Did she come back?

**JB:** She did. She lived the rest of her life in Little River where she'd been born. I think, over the course of the war, the idea of home changed for the soldiers and the nurses – from a place that they'd return to in triumph, it began to be seen as a sanctuary. When

she got off that train, in that country town, after the war, I think it would have been the most enormous relief. You know, to get back to that kind of peace, after what she had seen.

## Imperial Camel Corp



Podcast: **The Imperial Camel Corp**, – Dr Janet Butler and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith

**JB:** Janet Butler

**MS:** Australia's most famous contribution in World War I was to the Gallipoli Campaign, but it was by no means its only involvement. In Egypt's Western Desert, there was a revolt of pro-Turkish tribes. To deal with this problem, the troops were sent in. Australians were well suited to fighting in this terrain, and were skilled at handling the camels that served as mounts.

**JB:** The Imperial Camel Corp (ICC) was formed because, while Australia was fighting at Gallipoli, the British were also fighting a rebellion in the Western Desert of Egypt. The troops they were using were yeomanry – British yeomanry on horses – and they were struggling in the conditions. It was desert with oases. When the Australians came off Gallipoli – they were evacuated in December 1915 – the British turned their eyes to the Australians and thought that, perhaps, there would be people among them who might be experienced with camels. That perhaps they were the sort of men that might volunteer for a camel corps. They put out a call for volunteers for Australian men to form 4 companies of camel corps, to be independent patrollers in the Western Desert. They were overrun with volunteers. Surprising to me, as somebody from Victoria, I didn't expect there would be that many men with experience, but of course Western Australians had a lot of experience on the Coolgardie Telegraph and with mining camps, so they did get a lot of men volunteering. There was also a rumour that some men were given a bit of a push by their commanding officers who'd had quite enough of them on Gallipoli. The cameleers started their life with quite a rough reputation, which is one of the things that I want to put to the test in my work.

**MS:** So the men who joined the Camel Corps were just Australians to start with?

**JB:** In the beginning they were just Australians, and they were meant to be totally self-sufficient. There were about 125 men with 5 officers stationed in different parts of the Western Desert. They would

patrol; they would search Bedouins for arms and look for the stores of food that the Sanussi were relying on. They were very good at it, and, when General Allenby turned his attention to pushing across the eastern side from the Suez Canal (an 800-kilometre push across the desert against the Ottoman Empire that would eventually finish with the end of the war in Aleppo in 1918), he turned his eyes to the Camel Corps and thought, 'well they've been a success, but as they are, they can't go into combat, they need to be enhanced, made bigger and put into a battalion'.

That is a really interesting thing about the Camel Corps, because they then decided to make it an international unit; it was an Imperial unit. They had New Zealanders, British, they had Indian gunners, they had Egyptian Supply Corps and Veterinary Corps and, in the end, when they ran out of desert and entered Palestine, they changed them back into Light Horsemen, adding French and Arab soldier settlers from Tunisia. They had quite a multicultural experience.

**MS:** The men who were initially going into this, you said they were experienced, but I'm sure that some weren't, and maybe were city boys who had never seen a camel. What sort of men were they; you kind of alluded to the fact that some of them were a bit rough around the edges?

**JB:** They were doubly self-selected in that they had volunteered to go to the First World War and when they came off Gallipoli they had volunteered to become part of the Camel Corps. At first glance, they do tend to have a lot of people who you would describe as adventurous. There was a boy called Sunny Hopkinson who, at 16 when his father died in Calcutta, became a steward on a passenger liner, jumped ship in Melbourne, and joined the Australian Imperial Force saying that he was 18 years and 1 month old. Of course, they couldn't check because he came from Calcutta. By the time he was 18 years and 1 month old, he had been in the Camel Corps, he had fought on Gallipoli, had been through 2 battles and been wounded twice. They had more than their fair share of journalists – Oliver Hogue from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Frank Reid from Melbourne, there was Charles Barrett. All of those men felt attracted to the kind of life that at first appealed in the Camel Corp. The other thing, too, is that the Australians had been very confined on Gallipoli; the area they were fighting in was very small and there were a lot of men. The Camel Corps gave them the opportunity to take part in open warfare, which – because of the Boer War – was more their expectation of what the First World War would be like. Also, as one of the commanders George Langley said, 'they were infantry men who no longer wanted to carry their pack and thought a camel might be perfect for that job'.

**MS:** By the sounds of it, if there were journalists there, there should be some great written records about the Camel Corps. The exoticness and the adventurous elements would attract attention. What kind of records are you dealing with?

**JB:** What I'm trying to do is tell the story of the Camel Corps through the words of the men themselves. One of the features of study of the First World War is that it's been centred on the Western Front, although in Australia we do focus on Gallipoli. The work that has been done on the war in the Middle East, the campaigns in Sinai and Palestine, has tended to be at a fairly high level. It's been strategic or operational, it doesn't tend to go down to the experience of the men themselves. This is when work is done at all; it's a fairly neglected front. It was neglected at the time in terms of reportage, and it is neglected now in terms of study. As Australians, if we look at it, we tend to think of the Light Horse or of Lawrence of Arabia, and I think most people wouldn't even realise that the cameleers even existed. I'm trying to find the men's own words.

You're right about the journalists helping, because they're the ones who wrote the memoirs. They wrote articles for overseas papers, they wrote a lot of letters home, they wrote books. Oliver Hogue wrote at least 2 books at war, one of which is called *The cameleers*.

The other records that we're receiving, because, as you say, the camels were exotic, are those from journalists, photographers or artists who finally did go to the Middle East. They went very late. There was one British official journalist in the Middle East in 1915, and the next person to come along was a British official war artist in July 1915.

The Australians didn't come until much later, so the soldiers fighting in the Middle East were aware that they were being neglected. When they do come, they turn up at headquarters and headquarters wonders what on earth they're going to do with them. What do we do with an artist, what do we do with a photographer, what do we do with a filmmaker? From the very beginning, the answer was always 'well, we'll send them to the camels, they're interesting'. So we do have a really strong pictorial record of the cameleers. They were painted by British War Artist McBey, they were painted by Lambert, they were painted by H Septimus Power. Frank Hurley, who was fresh from the Mawson and Shackleton expeditions to Antarctica, filmed them and photographed them. Gullett, the official war historian, was a visitor to their mess. Banjo Patterson was too, just because the remount depot (where he worked) was next to them. He was renowned because he could catch flies with his bare hands, and, every time he left, there was a pile of flies beside his chair.



**MS:** The soldiers were allowed to take their own cameras, weren't they?

**JB:** Well, it's more that they weren't taken off them. There was a huge security concern on the Western Front, and part of the reason why there wasn't a lot of reportage going on is that the War Office and the Admiralty in England were very concerned about security. They've got a stranglehold on who visited the fronts. On the Western Front, everybody's cameras were taken off them, the nurses, the soldiers, everybody. The photographic record of the Western Front tends to be almost exclusively official. In the Middle East, we have all the soldiers' photographs, so you can get a good feeling of what they felt it was important to record. They have photographs of each other, they have photographs of what they were interested in.

**MS:** And of camels.

**JB:** And of camels, yes.

**MS:** What was it like for these men then, in the accounts that you've found, having to do service on a camel?

**JB:** There is a rumour, or a general consensus, that the men didn't like the camels in the way that they liked the horses when they were in the Light Horse. A lot of Light Horsemen transferred into the Camels and then transferred back again when the ICC ceased to exist.

But I'm not quite sure if that was the case. I've read some accounts where people actually did like their camels, that they felt that they were gentle. I think afterwards, when they lost their camels, when the Camel Corps ceased to exist and they were turned into the 14th and 15th Light Horse Regiments, that then they realised what they had, because there were very strict rules about what you could put on a horse. There was very limited weight a horse could carry; you were allowed 1 blanket. Whereas on a camel you could carry whatever you wanted. If you could manage to get yourself 4 blankets, you could put them on the camel. I think that's part of the reason they got a reputation for being rough around the edges, because they could carry whatever 'they happened to find' with them, including firewood. There are stories about the cameleers following the putting up of the telegraph line and the telegraph line coming down, as the Camels went by chopping it up and putting it on the camels to take with them.

The cameleers were, in reality, mounted infantry. The Light Horse were technically mounted infantry, in that their horse was transport. They took their horses to the battles, they got off and fought, got back on and went away. The last great cavalry charges were felt to be in the past, but were actually brought back during the Middle Eastern fighting – the Charge on

Beersheba wasn't the only one. The Light Horse were issued swords in the end, they became more like cavalry, whereas the cameleers were actually mounted infantry. They couldn't bring their camels all the way up and they couldn't escape rapidly from a battle on the camels, so the camels tended to be put some distance away while they went into the battles.

As infantrymen, the cameleers were instrumental in the retaking of the Sinai Peninsula. They fought at the Battle of Magdhaba, at Rafa. They were very important and actually brought the Sinai Peninsula into British control. At the Battles of Gaza, particularly the First and especially the Second Battle of Gaza, they were decimated. One of the soldiers said, 'not 50 per cent of the men came back'. Some of them were taken prisoner, which was something that they particularly tried to avoid in the desert conditions. It wasn't 'the boy's own adventure' that they thought it would be, and conditions in the desert were very harsh. They were intended to be long-distance patrollers and they would patrol for 5 days in the desert. They would take enough water, supplies and ammunition, which was another advantage of the Camel Corps compared with the Light Horse. A cameleer could take more than 500 rounds, which meant they were fairly independent.

**MS:** So you've put the call out for more information?

**JB:** I have.

**MS:** In the hope that you'll find somebody who says 'oh I've got a photo album, I've got my great uncle's war diary from when he was a cameleer'? Have you found anything?

**JB:** I don't know where all of the cameleers' diaries are because my work in the past has been done on nurses and we're really blessed in Australia with personal accounts of the First World War. Because we travelled a long way to war, the diaries were essentially travel diaries. We were away so long and went so far that a lot of people wrote diaries, but the cameleers' diaries seem to be a bit thin on the ground. I have had some wonderful responses, though – photographs, postcards, letters. One wonderful account was of a memoir written after the war, a couple of different accounts that he'd written for his family. I have 2 sets of diaries that have come in, but still I think they must be somewhere out there, the cameleer diaries, letters home.

**MS:** So are you coming across any stories that you could share?

**JB:** I have the papers of George Langley. They're actually at our War Memorial. He became a Battalion Commander at the age of 25. When he wrote home about it, he begged his family not to tell his age – he felt he'd be demoted because he was in charge of 1000 men. In his own battalion, there were a number

of very interesting men; there was William Patrick Cashman who was his adjutant for a while. This is an indication of the kind of men that I'm coming across. Cashman volunteered from his Infantry Battalion to become part of the Camel Corps. He won the Military Cross, and when the Camels were heading towards being disbanded, he joined the Royal Flying Corps, which was very active in the Middle East. He flew Lawrence of Arabia as part of his work there, then, when the Camels turned into the Light Horse again, he came back as a Light Horseman. He ended the war as the Mayor of Homs, as part of the British Political Service. The first adjutant that Langley had, Paul Goldenstedt, was the Military Governor of Lebanon in the end. So these are very different, interesting men.

**MS:** They sound like men of adventure.

**JB:** They are, they are men of adventure.

**MS:** What is it that set you on this journey?

**JB:** I discovered the existence of the Camel Corps when I was working on the nurse whose biography I wrote (Kitty McNaughton). She was stationed in Egypt for a time. What interested me about the Camel Corps is that they're an international unit, and that's rare. The Australian Government tends not to allow its soldiers to serve inside a unit with other nationalities. We can serve side by side, but not in the same unit. It has its permutations of difficulty I suppose.

The Camel Corps allows us to have a broader view of our experience as Australians in the First World War, because we tend to focus on our national experience (and there are reasons for that), we tend to focus on the firming of our Australian identity. The Camel Corps allows us to look outside the national framework. In the Middle East, it was very clear that empires were at war over the carving up of the Middle East – the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire. The French were trying to extend their empire. The Germans wanted to extend theirs. It kind of puts the empire back into the First World War.

Researching the ICC also enables us, as we focus on our own national identities as Australians, to look a little bit broader than that and think – did we form relationships with other soldiers that were outside the national framework? If we look at other nationalities serving with us, who were part of the empire, we might think of what their relationship was with London, with the centre of the empire, compared with what our relationship was with the centre of the empire. We don't tend to think of what our relationship was with them – do we have a common cross-national identity with them as soldiers of the empire, as fellow colonials?

We also haven't really looked at contact. The Australians were serving in an army of 17 nationalities in the Middle East. We'd come out of a country that

had just brought in the White Australia Policy; we came over to this extraordinary environment of cultural contact, and that's one of the things we haven't looked at: the changes in their ideas about themselves as soldiers, as men of race, as men of religion, as members of the British Empire. How did that change the way they looked at themselves and did they bring those attitudes home with them?

## Indigenous soldiers remembered: the research behind *Black Diggers*



By David Williams (Honorary Associate, Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney) and first published on **The Conversation** on 24 January 2014, 12.56 pm AEDT (used under **CC BY-ND 4.0**)

### Disclosure statement

David Williams was employed by Queensland Theatre Company as a researcher for *Black Diggers*.

In August 2012, I was invited by the Sydney Festival to work with Wesley Enoch, Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre Company, to assist in developing **Black Diggers**, currently playing as part of the 2014 Sydney Festival.

This major theatre project set out to explore Indigenous military service in the first world war, and reflect upon the remarkable absence of those stories from our national history and mythologising of that conflict.

### Unknown soldiers

*Black Diggers* premiered at the Sydney Festival last weekend – and initial inspiration came from the discovery by festival director **Lieven Bertels**, that a young Aboriginal soldier, Private Rufus Rigney from Raukkan in South Australia, was buried in the memorial cemetery near Bertels' home town in Belgium.

How did this young man come to be buried on the other side of the world, fighting for a nation that refused to acknowledge him as a citizen?

It was our job to try to find this out, and also to find a way of translating this and other experiences into theatre.



Remarkably, these stories are not more widely known, despite the efforts and enthusiasm of researchers such as **Rod Pratt, David Huggonson, Philpa Scarlett, Doreen Kartinyeri, Gary Oakley** and **Garth O'Connell**, among many others.

Beyond service records held as part of the collection of the National Archives of Australia, the photographic collection of the Australian War Memorial, a small number of scholarly works, and the occasional family history, the significant military service of Indigenous soldiers in the first world war remains a shameful gap in the Australian historical record.

Our research for Black Diggers primarily comprised of painstaking trawls through archival collections, and long conversations and consultations with various cultural and institutional experts. As a result of this process, we encountered the stories of many Indigenous soldiers, but in most instances the stories were only fragmentary – incomplete accounts of small parts of the lives of these men.

Clearly, the research for this theatre project has only begun to scratch the surface of this subject. But the stories that did emerge to form the basis of the script for Black Diggers by Tom Wright are compelling and deeply moving.

## Australia, 1914

When the first world war broke out in 1914, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were not considered citizens of Australia, but were rather the wards of the local “Protector of Aborigines”.

They were paid low wages, were often forced to live on reserves and mission stations, could not enter a public bar, vote, marry non-Aboriginal partners or buy property. They were actively discriminated against – and yet when war was declared, many Indigenous men wanted to join up and fight for Australia.

The Defence Act of 1903 (amended in 1909) prevented those who were not of “substantially European descent” from being able to enlist in any of the armed forces. Many Indigenous men who tried to enlist were rejected on the grounds of race, but others managed to slip through the net.

In 1917, following the defeat of a conscription referendum, those restrictions were slightly eased. A new order stated that:

*Half-castes may be enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force [AIF] provided that the examining Medical*

*Officers are satisfied that one of the parents is of European origin.*

Despite the difficulties, it seems that at least 1,000 Indigenous soldiers managed to join the AIF, out of a total of only 80,000 Indigenous people thought to be living in Australia at the time.

Some did so despite being rejected several times for being insufficiently white. Some lied about their age, name or parentage, and some were granted formal permission from their local Protector of Aborigines to serve.

Once past the initial barriers to enlistment, these soldiers fully integrated into the AIF. While almost exclusively of low ranks, the black diggers were paid the same as other soldiers, underwent the same training, and experienced the same hardships.

## An unrecognised contribution

As Gary Oakley of the Australian War Memorial has noted on several occasions: “The Army was Australia’s first equal-opportunity employer”. In their civilian life they had to endure constant racist slurs and attitudes. But in the trenches, any negative stereotypes about many Aboriginal diggers quickly disappeared as they lived, ate, laughed and died with these young men.

Indigenous diggers fought in every significant engagement of the war – from Gallipoli, to Palestine, to the Western Front. They served as infantrymen, machine gunners, light artillery and as light horsemen. They won the respect of their fellow soldiers, and won many bravery awards and commendations.

Many were wounded, some were captured, and dozens were killed. But the most tragic aspect of their service was not that they offered their lives for a country that did not recognise them as citizens, but came after they returned to Australia.

When they came back home they were shunned, their sacrifices ignored and their families oppressed even further by the government. Very few Indigenous diggers were given the land grants offered to returned soldiers, and in many cases the land for grants to war veterans was taken away from Indigenous communities whose men had fought overseas. War pensions and back-pay were frequently denied, and very few Indigenous diggers were welcomed at their local RSL – except sometimes on ANZAC Day.

## Black diggers today

Even though their small number seems relatively insignificant compared to the 416,809 men who enlisted in the AIF to fight in the first world war, the significance of the black diggers to modern Aboriginal history is immense.

In recent years, the long-forgotten service of these men has started to be acknowledged and celebrated. The Ipswich re-burial in April 2012 of **Trooper Horace Dalton**, 11th Lighthorse Regiment, with full military honours and traditional ceremony, is a welcome example of this shift.

Today the bodies of Indigenous Australians who fell in the battlefields of France, Belgium, Turkey and Palestine remain buried thousands of miles away from their ancestral homes.

Their brave spirits deserve the honour of remembrance – lest we forget again.

## New Zealand: the other half of the Anzac legend



By Mark McKenna (Associate Professor of History, University of Sydney) and first published on **The Conversation** on 7 August 2014, 2.35 pm AEST (used under **CCBY-ND 4.0**)

### Disclosure statement

Mark McKenna does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

As the centenary of the Gallipoli landings approaches Australians need to consider the other half of the ANZAC acronym. The rise of Anzac Day as Australia's national day has been paralleled by the increasing importance of Anzac Day in New Zealand.

For both Australians and New Zealanders, a visit to Anzac Cove is today seen as a rite of passage. The Anzacs, many Australians and New Zealanders believe, went to war to defend their countries' values and lifestyle. Politicians compete to pay homage to their fallen heroes.

Where New Zealand's embrace of Anzac differs from Australia is the place of the legend in national mythology. Former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark **described** the experience at Gallipoli as

"a defining stage in the evolution of New Zealand" but only one important piece:

*... in the mosaic that makes up ... New Zealand.*

Clark's qualified embrace of Anzac contrasted sharply with Australia under former prime minister John Howard. By the late 1990s, Anzac had become Australia's key national myth. It comes as little surprise, then, that it was Clark who **warned the Australian government** about the inappropriateness of John Farnham's planned performance at Anzac Cove in 2005.

The slickly produced programs at Anzac Cove are perhaps another reminder that New Zealand commemorates Anzac Day, while Australia tends to celebrate it.

One reason that New Zealand can more easily see the Anzac legend as merely one part of the "mosaic" of its national identity is that Waitangi Day (February 6), the anniversary of the signing of New Zealand's founding document (the Waitangi Treaty), provides an alternative founding moment.

While Australia has Australia Day to mark the arrival of the First Fleet (January 26), it arguably has no comparable example of such a "founding document" or historical event to Waitangi Day. There is also no any immediate likelihood that an alternate narrative such as the declaration of a republic is about to emerge to rival Anzac Day.

However, many New Zealanders continue to see Anzac Day as a less problematic national day. In January 2005, New Zealand's then-deputy prime minister, Michael Cullen, argued that Anzac Day was perceived as "**less contentious**" than Waitangi Day, which has previously been **associated with protests** by New Zealand's indigenous peoples.

In New Zealand, Anzac Day allows both Maori and Pakeha (Maori word for a New Zealander of European descent) to unite for a common cause, rather than fighting one another as they did in the Maori Wars. The Anzac unity avoids the stains of colonialism and frontier violence in its celebration of foundational history. Both Australia and New Zealand are conveniently imagined as being "made" as nations elsewhere.

Anzac Day does not raise issues of sovereignty and dispossession – unless you are Turkish. Unlike the haunted history of colonisation, it hails the spirit of thousands of men who died "honourable" deaths in the hills of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the mudfields of the Western Front.





Where New Zealand's embrace of Anzac differs from Australia is the place of the legend in national mythology.

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As recently as Anzac Day 2009, New Zealand prime minister John Key went so far as to suggest that the Anzacs had fought to maintain the country's economic advantage, miraculously securing New Zealand's wealth for a century to come. Key said the Anzacs:

*... were everyday people who rose to heights of sacrifice and, in doing so, preserved the living standards of all of us, for generations to come.*

Some differences exist between Australia and New Zealand. The burying of "the unknown soldier" at the national war memorial took place in Australia in 1993, and in New Zealand in 2004.

One of the most notable parallels is the role of government funding in driving enthusiasm for Anzac heritage. Both countries have seen a steep increase in **media coverage** of Anzac Day and **much greater numbers** attending services at home and abroad.

School-based competitions for the best Anzac essay promote Anzac rituals across the education system, forming the basis of civic cohesion. Substantial government funding fuels domestic and international "military heritage" projects such as the overseas war memorials. Military anniversaries and site-specific building projects on the Gallipoli Peninsula are increasingly popular.

The New Zealand government funded a Gallipoli walking track dedicated for the 90th anniversary of Anzac in 2005. Both countries have provided greater support for military heritage research projects, and increased the funding and prominence of national war memorials.

As the 2015 Anzac centenary approaches it appears that it has managed to provide a nearly immutable history, sacred and free of political division.

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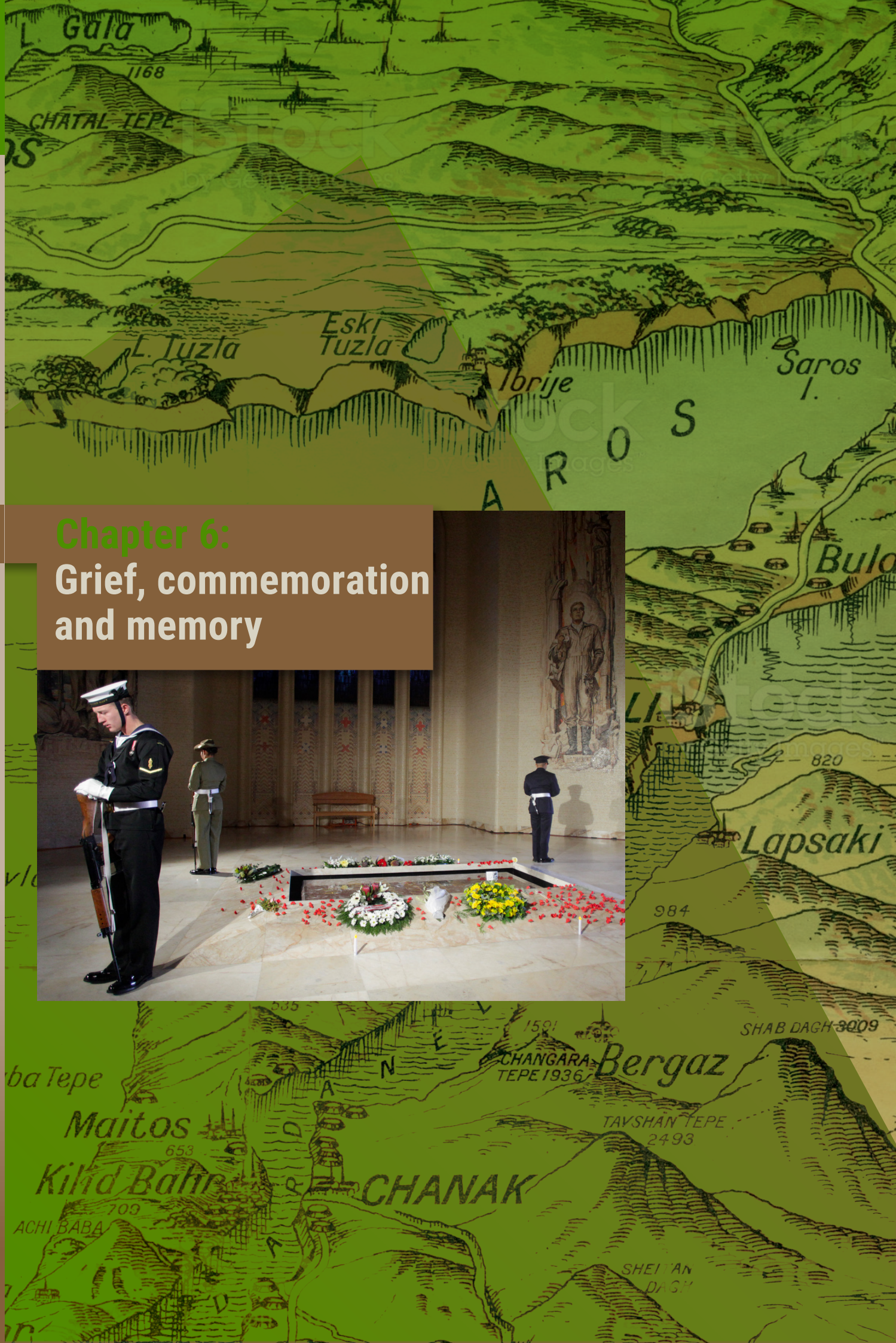
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## Chapter 6: Grief, commemoration and memory





## 6 Grief, commemoration and memory

**W**hen World War I ended, thousands of physically and psychologically wounded men returned to Australia. Although homecoming should have been a happy occasion, the transition back to domestic life was not always easy, and families often suffered the consequences of war for decades after its conclusion. For those families who never saw their family members return, they were left to mourn those they loved. The nation, too, grieved for its loss, and monuments were erected and commemorative ceremonies held as a means to channel and alleviate the nation's sorrow. This chapter examines the ongoing effects that war can have on a society, from family dynamics to monument construction, and ritualistic ceremonies. It also outlines the similarities and differences between the Australian and Turkish experiences of grief, commemoration and memory.

### Grief and commemoration



Podcast: **Grief and commemoration of World War I** – Dr Bart Ziino and Matt Smith.

MS: Matt Smith

BZ: Bart Ziino

MS: When dealing with the impact and aftermath of a war, the sense of grief can be profound, and it's something that needs to be dealt with on a national level, a community level and, in our own ways, on a personal level. Here to discuss how those at home dealt with the grief and how it changed the landscape of that country is Dr Bart Ziino, a historian from Deakin University and author of the book

### Chapter questions

To comprehensively understand the aftermath of World War I, consider and answer the following questions:

1. What function do war memorials serve?
2. Why have so many war memorials been built?
3. Ken Inglis argues that the Australian War Memorial is a temple to the civil religion of Anzac. What makes the Anzac tradition religious?
4. Is there a difference between the way World War I and later Anzacs are revered?
5. How do the Turkish remember World War I?
6. What are the similarities and differences between the ways Australians and Turkish commemorate the Gallipoli Campaign?



Grave cross made from kerosene tin: Private C G H Hampson, 23 Battalion AIF

SOURCE: Used with permission from **AWM**





Silent tributes at the tomb of the unknown soldier at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, representing more than 100 000 men and women lost in war.

PHOTO by Lukas Coch, AAP

*A distant grief, which looks at Australian war graves and the Great War.*

**BZ:** In World War I, around 350 000 Australians went overseas to serve and, of those, some 60 000 died overseas. There were small numbers of Australians who died in Australia from war-related causes during the war, but the accepted figure is 60 000 deaths.

**MS:** How comparable is that to maybe other conflicts that Australia was involved in?

**BZ:** Well, in terms of the conflicts Australia's been involved in, this is by far the most costly. World War II mobilised more people, but the death toll there, I think, is 35 000 or 39 000. This is a massive factor of escalation in terms of the numbers of people who died. If you think across the 20th century, Australia participated in two world wars and a number of other conflicts, and had a sum total of just over 100 000 war-related deaths. Of those, 60 000 came from one conflict – World War I. It's an extraordinary casualty figure in terms of what a society had to sustain across 4 years.

**MS:** Was that sort of number anticipated? At what point did they realise that they were losing so many soldiers, because that's almost a quarter of the number of soldiers they sent across, isn't it?

**BZ:** Your chances of dying in World War I were something like 1 in 5. Your chances of being wounded were even higher than that. There were very few people that escaped unscathed. In terms of what

people expected from this war, it became clear to them reasonably quickly, from what they read in the reports about what was happening in France in 1914, that the scale of death and wounding in this war was extraordinary.

In May 1915, Australians started to learn very quickly, and with considerable shock, what this war meant in terms of what they were going to lose and what they potentially could lose. Casualties continued steadily across the war, so when people in Australia started to learn about Gallipoli, what they were really learning was how immense the cost was. I guess for somebody living in Australia during World War I who had somebody at the front, the experience was one of constant angst.

**MS:** Can we go into that topic a bit? When somebody dies on the battlefield, over in Europe, the other side of the world, how does that news come back to Australia? What's the process that it goes through?

**BZ:** When a death occurred at the front, so long as it could be confirmed, the news would be transmitted back to the Defence Department in Australia who had the details of the next of kin. They attempted to send that information to the local clergyman of whichever religious denomination the family was, and that person was expected to deliver the news. The people that had to do that job felt an enormous strain in doing it. To the extent that some clergymen found that people avoided them when they saw them in the street, because they feared they might be coming to them.

**MS:** Coming to deliver the bad news.

**BZ:** Exactly. So that's how it's supposed to come. It doesn't always happen that way, sometimes you're not home, or somebody at home learns it and brings the news to you if you've got a telephone.

**MS:** There were death lists in the newspapers, weren't there?

**BZ:** Yes, that's right. As a family, you should learn of a death or a wounding ahead of the casualty lists in the newspaper. You'd learn about your extended family or your friends who were being killed and wounded through the casualty lists. What people have written about when reading those casualty lists is the trepidation and the fear that they had upon opening a newspaper and running down the list to see who it is they might have lost this time. It's a rare person in Australia who isn't struck in one way or another by loss in this war.

**MS:** So you've written about this kind of thing, haven't you? Did you come across a lot of accounts when you were doing the research?

**BZ:** Yes, there are accounts of how people respond to reading casualty lists and how people respond to getting the news of death. What we have to bear in mind here, I guess, is that people have been anxious about this, they've been worried about it the whole time that somebody's away, and they become more anxious of course when they learn that major battles are going on. So what we have are accounts sometimes of women collapsing at their front door when the clergyman arrives with the news. Overwhelmingly, it is women who are grieving for their men. Women who are confined to bed, women whose health has already deteriorated through anxiety. Fathers who turn to alcohol.

When we have accounts of people collapsing at their front doors, it's not because the shock is so immediate, it's because the shock has finally come. But it is a terrible, terrible thing to suddenly have this news. In terms of corresponding with somebody at the front, there's something like a 4–6 week delay, sometimes longer. The news of a casualty comes in a matter of days, so it's a very sudden thing. You might be still getting letters from loved ones for weeks and months after you are told that they are dead.

**MS:** Oh no!

**BZ:** Yeah, and it's a highly traumatic thing to keep getting these letters and to get your own letters back with the stamp on them that says 'deceased'.

**MS:** So what stories have you come across?

**BZ:** There is one story of a woman, Maude O'Laughlan, who lived in Brunswick [Victoria]. She had 3 sons who went to the war; 2 of them were

killed. The first was killed on the first day of the landing at Gallipoli and his body was never found. Her other son died in France in 1917. She had a terrible war and, besides that, her husband was the station master at Flemington Bridge Station, and he was killed when he was hit by a train in 1917. Then her daughter died very suddenly in 1919. What Maude O'Laughlan does though, in trying to cope, is that every year on the anniversary of her sons' death and then particularly on the death of George who had been killed at Gallipoli, she would write a notice to be inserted in the newspaper.

There's nothing unusual about this. Every year, you'd have the 'In memoriam' columns, and people would put a new notice every year on the anniversary of a death to say 'we remember our son'.

Maude O'Laughlan was different to most in that she wrote her own poems about what she was going through. Her poems reveal a woman who is trying to find a way to cope with the loss of her sons, and to understand it and to make sense out of it. 'I can't see through my tears', she wrote.

She returns to the letters; she keeps the letters and the photographs of her sons in a little box, and when she feels that she can't cope she goes to the box and she reads the letters and she tries to reconnect with her sons. She writes about her fear that other people might forget her son, 'I'll remember George, though others might forget'. Now here is a very public reminder to other people that individuals are grieving, and grieving for a very long time. There are families that insert these notices for decades after the war, until their own deaths. And we can see, in fact, if we follow those notices, just how resonant the experience of grief from the war was, it just keeps going for those people.

**MS:** You say one of her sons died in Gallipoli and his body was never found. What happened to the other son who died in France?

**BZ:** His body was located. I mean, here are the conditions of death in World War I. There is no genuine expectation in Australia that those who die will have their bodies returned. Australians and New Zealanders are so far away from this that there are really only a very small number of people who actually attempt to get a body returned. That's not to say that people don't want their bodies back, but there's a very broad acceptance that it's not going to happen.

Eventually, it becomes the official policy across the British Empire that bodies will not be returned. Instead, an organisation called the Imperial War Graves Commission is established in 1917. Its job is to take over the cemeteries and to look after them forever. Everyone whose body could be found got a





Private Henry James Burton's headstone from Ari Burnu Cemetery, Gallipoli.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission

headstone that indicated who they were, what their nationality was, which regiment they might have come from. Families were allowed, at a small cost, to put an inscription at the base of that headstone. This is the other important point to make about death in World War I – so many bodies were never found. We said earlier that 60 000 Australians died in that war. Even today, we don't know where 23 000 of them are.

If you go to Gallipoli today, more than half the people who died there have no known grave, so very often we have the phenomenon of what's called 'the missing'. I talked earlier about people who had the news come to their doorstep: 'Your son has been killed'. Many people had the news come without a clergyman that just stated 'your loved one is missing', without further detail.

Later, a court of inquiry might find that that person is dead, but there was never genuine confirmation that the person died. There will be witness statements that say 'struck by a shell', 'hit by a machine gun' or 'I thought he was taken prisoner'. For the people who received the word that 'your son is missing', this is a whole other level of anxiety, pain and torment.

**MS:** I suppose that there were also instances of misidentification, particularly when you are dealing with bodies that are found well after the war? How do you identify who that person was, or even what country they were from?

**BZ:** Exactly! You can go to war cemeteries today and find headstones that just say 'this person is a soldier of the Great War'. And, of course, after the war, there's a rule of diminishing returns. If you find the bodies, you are less and less likely to be able to tell who it is.

**MS:** So when you don't have a body to bury, or even if there is a body, it's not going to come home. What sort of things was Australia doing to cope with this

at an individual level, at a community level and on a national level?

**BZ:** There's a whole range of projects that emerge and, as you say, they are individual, communal and national projects. I guess the most obvious thing you would point to is the proliferation of war memorials across the landscape, and they really do proliferate. Every community has one. Even within small townships and suburbs, churches might have an honour board, schools will have honour boards – Our Young Men. At communal levels, this is where you start to see things built in stone in the landscape. The kinds of things that you would see traditionally in a cemetery being erected in communal spaces – parks, out the front of town halls, this kind of thing.

Some families will put up headstones in cemeteries, or inscribe on a family grave, the name of somebody whose body isn't literally there, but this helps to bring them back within the traditional ways of commemorating the dead. What we see in towns and so forth is debate about what kind of memorial might be had; what's the most appropriate thing to erect. Overwhelmingly, what we get in the First World War is a belief that symbolic forms are the most important. What we find on the memorials in terms of names, very often – not always, but very often – is not just the names of those people who died, but the names of everybody who volunteered to go. And this reminds us that, in the First World War, there was no conscription in Australia. It was defeated twice at a vote. So every soldier who goes overseas to fight in this war had at some point to make the decision that they would volunteer to do so. What we see on those memorials is an acknowledgement that all of those people were the people who went.

In the negative – by contrast – what it also says in small communities is that if your name is not on that list, you did not volunteer to go. Here is the continuation of the very divisive politics of the war that divided communities between those who went and those who were seen not to be committed to the war. Now, they might have had very good reasons for not going. They might have volunteered and been rejected, they might have had brothers and sisters at the war, they might have had philosophical objections to going in the first place.

**MS:** They don't put reasons on monuments though.

**BZ:** They don't put reasons on monuments – no. So you might get halls built for returned soldiers as a way of saying 'we acknowledge you'. Most often, you will have obelisks, statues or, even in Melbourne, we have the Shrine of Remembrance, which is an enormous structure that has no other functional purpose than to be a symbol of gratitude to the people who went. Pride and grief.



### Calling Them Home

They dreamed of home that never came. Now each dead man is a living fame.  
But dreams it still.  
They dream of a call to a last route march, back to a land where the grey guns arch.  
To a home on a Southern hill.

A. Clarke by Will Dyson.

Published in *The Mail*, Adelaide, 31 March 1928, page 2.

SOURCE: Trove, National Library of Australia

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The First World War helped to make us a nation, those soldiers helped to define the Australian character, they put us on the world map. These are all things that are being said about what those people had achieved. By and large, though, I think that people took comfort, or tried to take comfort, in the messages that come from those war memorials and they are trying to tell a story about the meaning of the war. They try to take comfort in the idea that the war had achieved something – now, whether that's the defeat of German militarism or whether that's the elevation of Australia in its international standing, or a combination of both, it all boils down to the individual.

By and large, I think people did try very hard to see the war as being meaningful and that the continued relationship with the British Empire was part of the success of the war. That they had survived it and survived it well.

## Turkish perspective of the Gallipoli Campaign and the Anzac legacy



Podcast: **The Turkish perspective** – Erdem Koç and Matt Smith.

MS: Matt Smith

EK: Erdem Koç

MS: When we hear about the Gallipoli Campaign here in Australia, the story that we hear is that of the Anzacs, and of heroism, bravery and sacrifice. But it's easy to forget that there are at least 2 sides to every war. My guest today on the podcast is Erdem Koç; he is a lecturer in journalism at La Trobe University, a freelance journalist, and he's doing a PhD called 'A hidden legacy', which is looking at the Turkish perspective of the Gallipoli Campaign and the Anzac legacy.

So, Erdem, what is the Turkish perception of the Gallipoli Campaign?

EK: Well, I suppose when we talk about the Turkish perception, we have to understand what is called in Turkey the Battle of Çanakkale. Çanakkale is a city on the Gallipoli peninsula. It's really just a small part of the greater Turkish War of Independence, at the start of the Turkish War of Independence.

So in 1915, Allied forces invade the Gallipoli peninsula, with the sole purpose of spreading western influence and imperialism, and ending a stalemate on the Western Front. Obviously, the advancement of the Ottoman Empire was a threat to Russia. The Allied forces needed to end that statement, which was with the Ottomans, then an ally of Germany. The Allies needed to open up the Black Sea, enrich oil resources and gain access to Russia, etcetera, etcetera.

That's a story that's long told now, but what isn't recognised as much I suppose is the fact that what we now know as Turkey, which was then of course still the Ottoman Empire, was starting to shrink – and significantly. This invasion was a serious threat to national security, sovereignty, the borders and what not, so the Battle of Çanakkale – or as we know it the Gallipoli Battle – is really just the start of a war that didn't end until 1922 for Turkey. It's an important war. It's a war in which the Turks experience 250 000 casualties. That's a generation in Turkey – all of these young people aged 15 and up, and Turkey lost a lot of young men to the war. It really affected the country for the next 30 to 40 years, and arguably still today. In that sense, it's a small battle, which was





Had hundreds of thousands of young Turkish men not joined the army and headed to Gallipoli, it's without doubt modern Turkey would not have been formed.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial used under PDM 1.0

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part of this grand war, which also gave birth to the first president and the modern leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who went on to win the war for the Turks and established some sort of modern Turkey that still exists today.

**MS:** It's amazing that that perspective is so often left out of it, especially from Australian coverage. I'd never heard of that name for the battle, it's always been the Gallipoli Campaign to me from this perspective. The number of casualties is so much bigger than the attacking force, and that it is the battle of independence, all of that is just lost in the Australian perspective.

**EK:** It really is. What we often associate in Australia with Anzacs and Anzac Day, and we hear this a lot and no doubt will continue to hear it for years to come, is that the Anzacs sacrificed their lives for the freedoms that Australians have today. That's actually more true for the Turkish side, because the Turkish soldiers went over to sacrifice their lives so that current Turks in Turkey could enjoy the land and the freedom that comes with that.

There was no threat to Australia's national security, there was a threat to Australia's political interests, because we obviously had close ties – and arguably continue to – to the United Kingdom. We do forget that. Another thing we forget is that 'ANZAC' sounds great – Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – sounds fantastic, it sounds very sort of patriotic. But they were also fighting as the Australian Imperial Force – they were fighting under the Union Jack, and that in itself gets lost, let alone starting to think about the fact that we went over and invaded another country.

**MS:** So how does Turkey remember the event? I imagine that Anzac Day definitely doesn't have the same significance that it does in Australia.

**EK:** Well, the day the final Allied forces left Gallipoli in 1916, that's the day that victory was declared by the Turks. So 25 April was actually largely insignificant because, again, it was the invasion of 10 000 Anzacs that lost their lives. Obviously, several more came. It's a sombre day, but it really is left alone I suppose for the Australian and New Zealand visitors to – I hate to use the word 'enjoy', but that's what it's turning into – commemorate. In that sense, it's a largely insignificant day. It's become a commercial day, which I have personal problems with.

**MS:** Do you mean over here or over there?

**EK:** Well, over there because of what's happening over here, if that makes sense, because of the large contingent that goes over.

**MS:** How about how the entire campaign is remembered in Turkey, how different is that?

**EK:** It is more so about the larger War of Independence rather than the actual campaign. The actual campaign was obviously a successful one for Turkey – if you can call the death of hundreds of thousands of people successful – but it's that campaign that also gave rise to Atatürk, who I referred to earlier. He was a general in the campaign at the time; he'd led the campaign and he'd led the Turkish side, and he went on to then become the mastermind behind the War of Independence. So the battle of Çanakkale is then closely associated with Atatürk and he's remembered in Çanakkale.

The campaign is also remembered in terms of the casualties and the number of people that died because of the invasion. Turkey has always had strategic importance because of its location, and still does to this day. Because of the objective to capture Istanbul, which would give access to the Black Sea and therefore to Russia, it was a big deal. The fact that the Turks fought this off and maintained that land is something that's obviously looked on with pride, but reluctant pride, or reserved pride perhaps, because of the deaths.

**MS:** We revere our soldiers that fell over there; how do the Turkish people remember their soldiers?

**EK:** Oh, much more than that. The Gallipoli peninsula is seen as sacred land. You kind of feel that when you head over there. There are many more Turkish graves than there are Australian, New Zealand or British graves over there, and there's multiple graves as well. There's 1 gravestone for, say, 30 people who were buried there, and it is seen as a sacred place.

**MS:** Is it martyrdom?



For Turks, every piece of soil on Gallipoli is sacred.

PHOTO by Tolga Bozoglu, EPA

**EK:** It is.

**MS:** To what extent?

**EK:** To the extent that the soldiers were remembered as people who would hold up the Turkish flag and run to their death. There's a famous quote by Atatürk that he supposedly told his soldiers, 'I am not ordering you to fight; I'm ordering you to die and die for your country'. There is the same story on the Australia and New Zealand side. All these soldiers just ran to their deaths, that's all they did, because it was that poorly conceived. From a Turkish perspective, it was also a battle in which so many soldiers just basically ran to their deaths, and that is seen as the ultimate sacrifice and therefore it is martyrdom to that extent.

**MS:** Has the Turkish perception of the Gallipoli Campaign changed, say in the past 20 years?

**EK:** It has because of Turkey's domestic politics, not because of anything else. The Battle of Çanakkale is associated with Atatürk, who was a secular western-style leader, but the current government in Turkey – the government that has been in power

since 2001 – is a conservative government. It has its roots in Islamic thought and belief, and there is a growing perception (and I'd argue, personally, a reality) that Turkey is moving more towards Middle Eastern-style politics and lifestyle in the traditional sense. What we see in countries like Iran and Iraq. That's always been a fear with this government, this hidden agenda that supposedly exists and because of that, because Çanakkale was associated with Atatürk, secularism, and defending one's nation. The perception has changed to more of an Ottoman perception rather than a modern Turkish perception, if that makes sense.

**MS:** So how has it changed then?

**EK:** Çanakkale is now viewed as the battle in which modern Turkey was formed, and there is a growing movement in Turkey that is largely unhappy with modern Turkey because modern Turkey is associated with being a secular state. So, that push and that divide, the Çanakkale battle is seen as one where it was the final days of the Ottoman Empire and we should not be celebrating that victory, because the Ottoman Empire dissolving was in no-one's interests. That is what that push is.

It's all tied into the domestic political force, and no-one denies that it was a victory, it's just that, was victory actually a good thing, should we be celebrating or not?

**MS:** So what is the Turkish perspective on Anzac Day itself, and the activities that Australia takes part in and encourages? For Turkey, is it a new Australian invasion every year?

**EK:** Yes and no. I think we've seen in the past the people who would go and make – what we now bizarrely refer to in Australia as 'the pilgrimage' – but it is largely welcoming, I think. In 1934, Atatürk wrote the words 'those who have lost their lives on this land are now our sons as well', and now, through that, Australia and Turkey have a serious friendship. I can't imagine us ever being this close and having these ties with Afghanistan or Iraq.

The campaign was such a unique battle in that sense. There are stories of the soldiers sharing cigarettes and food at the end of the night after a day full of battle. We can't make it too romantic because they were fighting and they were at war. There's a lot of those romantic stories that have come out from this battle, so in that sense it's remembered in a way and it's perceived like 'well these are now our friends. Yes our grandfathers fought against one another but they are our friends'.

I can't say it's seen as an invasion. I think Turkey has much bigger problems on its hands that have been worrying for quite some time. With the world focusing on the Middle East right now, and everything



that's happening in countries like Syria, which is obviously on Turkey's doorstep, Turkey has bigger fish to fry, if I can use that saying. Turks are largely quite welcoming, and I understand that it's important for Australia.

**MS:** As an Australian with Turkish heritage, what's your perception of Anzac Day then, and how is it seen in the Australian Turk community?

**EK:** I've always had an issue with how Anzac Day is largely celebrated, rather than what should be commemorative events. I say that with some reluctance, because I understand young nations (although Turkey is a younger nation than Australia) need identities and values that bind it, because that's how you achieve national unity. That's difficult in a country like Australia, where we have a largely multicultural society, but do we pride ourselves on this national identity because of the fact that we fought under the Union Jack for a country that still had control over young Australia's foreign policy?

But is that where we want to be going? These are questions that I've battled with for a really long time. Turks have been pretty amazing in how they've dealt with it, I think. The Turkish community in Australia has always wanted to be part of the Anzac Day commemorative ceremonies, mainly to push the view 'let's not forget that we are currently in a country that invaded our own, and we've put that behind us and we've moved on'.

We have to remember that we can't keep doing this, and we do keep doing it, that's the problem. I can't remember one invasion that's actually worked in Australia's favour, and we keep doing that when our national security isn't necessarily under threat, or it is under threat vicariously through our alliances. These are questions that I think a lot of Australian Turks have to deal with. I never felt like this was a conflict because a lot of people ask me 'do you feel more Australian or do you feel Turkish?' The answer to that is I feel both and I'm not unique in feeling that way – I'm neither one nor the other. At home with my grandparents, with relatives, at work in the mainstream community, I'm always both and I'm always a bit of both, and that's ok.

But the question always comes down to, which side are you on on the day? And I felt that when I went over to Gallipoli for the first time. You stand on the shores on Anzac Cove and forget everything. It's geographically spectacular, and I remember standing there looking over to the hills and to the trenches. I remember feeling a sense of pride for my Turkish ancestors and then looking at the waves that crashed before me, and for my Australian ancestors I thought, 'what on earth are we doing here?' A lot of people have thought that.



Lone Pine Cemetery, Gallipoli.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission

It is interesting as an Australian Turk, especially the fact that Anzac Day is a big deal. I have more problems on Anzac Day, in the way it's remembered, as an Australian than a Turk – that's where I can distinguish my identity. Yes, a lot of Australian soldiers died there, and we should learn from that. We have better values in Australia than just celebrating the fact that we sent all these soldiers to invade another country for the purposes of another country. We forget that, it gets lost a little bit.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't remember our dead and our fallen, but they didn't fight because Australia's defence was under attack. Turkey's defence was under attack and Australian soldiers fought, so Turks probably have more right to celebrate, and that's where I have a problem with it all.

## Tomb of the unknown soldier



An abridged **interview** with Bart Ziino

The 'unknown soldier' is a phenomenon that is replicated quite widely, especially across those who were on the winning side of the war, but not exclusively. We first see it in France and in Britain on Armistice Day in 1920. The body of an unknown soldier was selected and then interred in London, in Westminster Abbey, and another was interred in Paris under the Arc de Triomphe.

The thinking here is that – given that so many people do not have a body over which to mourn, and will never have a body over which to mourn –



Westminster Abbey's tomb of the unknown soldier.

PHOTO by Lindsey Parnaby, EPA



Australia's tomb of the unknown soldier.

SOURCE: teejaybee/Flickr; used under CC BY-NC-ND

they might go to this place to grieve. In the belief that this body represents my lost loved one, or, in fact, that this body could be my lost loved one.

*The unknown soldier is a very powerful symbol. The thinking here is that – given that so many people do not have a body over which to mourn, and will never have a body over which to mourn – they might go to this place to grieve. In the belief that this body represents my lost loved one, or, in fact, that this body could be my lost loved one.*

So the unknown soldier is a very powerful symbol. We see this in the numbers of people who walk past it while it's an open tomb in 1920. In London, you have both the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Cenotaph, which literally translates as 'empty tomb'.

These are 2 symbols of the body that doesn't return. It's extraordinarily powerful. We see that happen again in the United States. They have a tomb of an unknown soldier in Belgium, in Italy and elsewhere; very quickly across all these countries. The symbolism remains appropriate. To all those countries that had lost so many thousands of people, and whose bodies don't come back.

There is one in Canberra. It isn't instituted until 1993 – the 75th anniversary of the end of World War I. There had been hopes and requests that an unknown body could be returned to Australia after World War I. In fact, one body had come back during the war in 1915: General Bridges, who had been commanding the Australians on Gallipoli. He was killed, very early in the campaign, and his body was buried in Egypt. He died on a hospital ship. And then, some months later, the government decided that he's an important enough man. They brought him back, they had a big funeral service, and then they buried him at Duntroon in the Australian Capital Territory.

*The unknown soldier in Canberra wasn't instituted until 1993 – the 75th anniversary of the end of World War I.*

General Bridges' grave can't have the symbolism of an unknown soldier. So, what we find is that, in Australia, from the early 1920s, there are requests for an unknown soldier to be brought back to



Australia, so people here could have a body to visit and grieve over.

The counter-argument to having an unknown soldier in Australia was that the representative body of the British Empire was in Westminster Abbey. If a body were brought to Australia, it would degrade or devalue the symbolism of that body. This is because the rhetoric is that the British Empire is now indivisible, and what's symbolic and appropriate at the centre of the Empire is symbolic and appropriate at the outskirts of the Empire in Australia.

The same thing happens elsewhere: there is no unknown soldier returned to New Zealand, no unknown soldier returned to Canada, and none that I know of in South Africa. But, during the 1920s and 1930s, there are persistent requests from families.

There was resistance at the federal level, even though there were parliamentarians who would have happily seen this occur. Requests are denied, and denied all the way through the 1930s. There is a request to have one brought to the Shrine of Remembrance (Melbourne) by a woman writing to a newspaper. After World War II, the requests are renewed, because then there was an additional generation of people who are bereaved by war.

There are those who think it's distasteful to challenge the centrality of the one in London. However, in 1970, the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) said we should have an unknown Australian soldier. It's not until 1992, when certain people at the Australian War Memorial start to get the ball rolling and say it really is time for this to happen. From the 1970s onwards, the rhetoric surrounding Australia in World War I does take on certain more nationalistic overtones in terms of saying that Australia should be separate from Britain. And this is where we get the idea that the British sold us out in World War I, that they used our boys for cannon fodder. That sort of rhetoric then helps to suggest that maybe we ought to have our own symbols, our own unknown soldier.

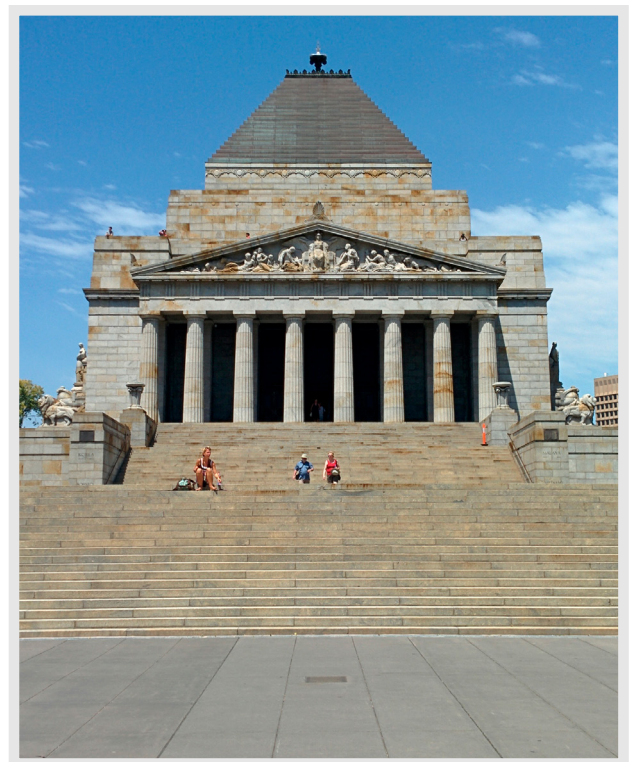
National identity has been growing, developing and changing since World War I. What was also becoming quite clear by the early 1990s was that the last veterans of World War I were almost all gone. Here was an opportunity, and a very powerful opportunity, to acknowledge that those people were almost all gone. One of our highly regarded historians called this a kind of communal farewell to the Anzacs, to bring this body back. It's 1993 in Australia when that occurs. You know there were

still some people around in 1993 who were grieving for brothers who had been lost, parents who had been lost in World War I. Not a lot, but they were still there.

*National identity has been growing, developing and changing since World War I.*

The body was selected from a cemetery near Villers-Bretonneux in France. What we know about the body is that it's an Australian man, and he was killed in all likelihood in 1918, probably in the fighting in April. Beyond that, officially we know nothing about him. There are rumour-mongers about, who say they have figured out who it is, but the whole point of the exercise is to say that this is a representative body of an Australian soldier of World War I. That's where all the symbolism flows from. This is the one that we could return in lieu of all those that we couldn't.

Clearly, it still has potency. Canada and New Zealand both followed the example in the 2000s, in repatriating an unknown soldier. It might be that it is simply a way of saying we're beyond the British Empire now, and we have our own symbols and so forth. Or you might say that



Shrine of Remembrance World War I Memorial, Melbourne.

SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons

it has deeper meaning to those who were never able to say goodbye to their loved ones. It may be that those who lost loved ones in World War II or Vietnam also get some sense of fulfilment from that symbol. But it is certainly potent, it's certainly the place where foreign dignitaries who visit Australia will, as a matter of course now, make a trip to the Australian War Memorial and to the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier.

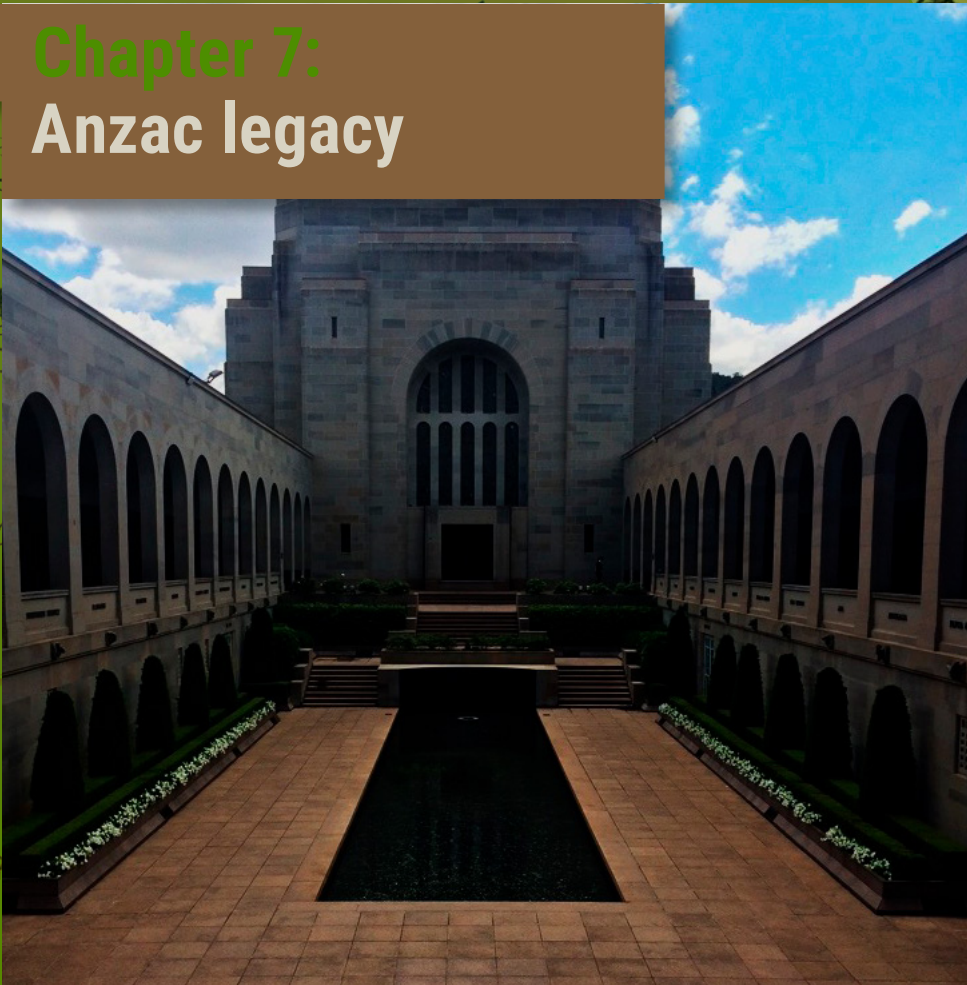
It's right up there in terms of the pantheon of national figures. It's where you go to pay tribute, if you're going to pay tribute to Australia and Australians. But just exactly what it means, if it means the same thing to people today as it would have to people in the 1920s or 1930s, is really an issue for debate. There is a debate about whether people today can actually feel grief for someone that they never actually knew. If you discover Great Uncle Bert had served in World War I and died on the Somme, can you feel the same grief that his mother and brothers felt, or are you feeling something that's a bit manufactured and comes from somewhere else, apart from actually knowing a person? That's a debate that's going on, and one that will play itself out in the future. There are certainly politics that attend to bringing back unknown soldiers today.

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## Chapter 7: Anzac legacy





## 7 Anzac legacy

**T**his chapter focuses on the Anzac legacy and considers why a national fascination with the Anzac legend has endured for more than 100 years. From the pilgrimage to Gallipoli, to the suggestion of a reconstruction of Anzac Cove on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, we examine the sacred and the commercialised aspects of the Anzac legacy. Understanding the reasons for the longevity of the Anzac narrative will lead to a better understanding of Australian identity more broadly.

### Anzac Day: past and present

The first Anzac Day ceremony was held in 1916. The difference between the wartime ceremony of soldiers commemorating those who they had fought alongside and young Australians who have no personal connection to the Great War is significant. As time has passed, Anzac Day ceremonies do not simply commemorate the dead, but have come to incorporate the celebration of national character.

Anzac Day has existed almost as long as the Anzacs themselves. One year after the Anzac soldiers landed on the Gallipoli peninsula, 2000 Australian and New Zealand soldiers marched through the streets of London. The Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes and King George V both attended the event, indicating its importance. Small parades were held in Australia, and, in Egypt, the Anzac forces arranged a day of sports to remember the dead.

On 25 April 1916, the Gallipoli Campaign may have been over, but war was still raging on the Western Front and ramping up further east, as the Anzacs defended the Suez Canal and fought for control of the Sinai Desert. The commemoration of the landing, which began a campaign that would end in defeat, recognised the Anzac's entry into the war and a moment of national importance. From this time on, Anzac Day has been commemorated on 25 April each year. Many believe that this is because it remembers Australia's first military engagement and therefore the birth of the nation.

### Chapter questions

To comprehensively understand the legacy of the Gallipoli Campaign and the Anzac soldiers, consider and answer the following questions:

1. How has the way we remember the Anzacs and their deeds changed between 1915 and today?
2. The Anzacs were fighting for the British Empire in World War I, so how can the anniversary of the landing on Gallipoli serve as a national day?
3. As a national day, how does Anzac Day accommodate the multicultural nature of Australian society?
4. How do subsequent conflicts (World War II, the Vietnam War, Afghanistan, Iraq) fit into the Anzac legend?
5. How have politicians (especially prime ministers) contributed to the construction of the Anzac legend in Australia?
6. Why do politicians seek to align themselves with the Anzac tradition?
7. What are your thoughts on the validity of former prime minister John Howard's claim that Anzac Day occupies an 'eternal place in the Australian soul', and that Gallipoli has shaped the Australian character and destiny 'more than any other tradition or influence'?
8. For how long have Australians and New Zealanders been making the pilgrimage to Gallipoli?
9. What purpose does pilgrimage to Gallipoli serve in the 21st century?
10. What is thanatourism? Would you consider the pilgrimage to Gallipoli to be thanatouristic?
11. Do you think that Anzac Day will feature less and less prominently as a part of Australian nationalism now that the centenary has passed?

However, Australia's first military engagement was during the Boer War. In 1899, forces from 6 Australian colonies were sent to South Africa. Before they returned in 1902, the colonies had united to form the Australian nation. One reason that this military endeavor is not remembered in the same way as the Anzac landing might be





Anzac landing on Gallipoli, 2015.

SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons

that colonial (later national) contingents were spread among British units and didn't fight as an Australian force.

The Anzac landing was not even the first action the Australian forces had experienced during World War I. At dawn on 11 September 1914 (7 months before the Gallipoli landing), the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force successfully landed at Rabaul in German New Guinea, capturing 2 wireless stations. By 17 September, Australian forces occupied most other German territories in the southwest Pacific without resistance – German New Guinea was under Australian control. Journalists did not witness or report on this successful entry into World War I, and therefore this military achievement disappeared into historical obscurity.

*Anzac Day has been commemorated on 25 April each year. Many believe that this is because it remembers Australia's first military engagement and therefore the birth of the nation. However, Australia's first military engagement was during the Boer War.*

## Formalisation of Anzac Day after the war

Once World War I ended, Anzac Day became a more formalised commemoration. By 1927, the day was marked with a public holiday in each Australian state. The rituals we observe during Anzac Day ceremonies today were established before the onset of World War II. In Australia, Anzac Day ceremonies now incorporate the commemoration of all Australian soldiers who have fought, and died, in every war (even, retrospectively, the Boer War).

Anzac Day services are held at dawn because that is when the Anzac forces landed on the beaches on Gallipoli. The sombre ritual of the Dawn Service includes wreath laying, the recitation of odes, playing of the Last Post and contemplative silence. The year of the first Dawn Service isn't known. There are accounts of dawn services during the war, but they weren't common practice until the mid-1920s. Traditionally, only veterans attended the Dawn Service; however, today, it is open to anyone wishing to attend.

*Anzac Day services are held at dawn because that is when the Anzac forces landed on the beaches on Gallipoli.*



Recruitment poster, 'Enlist in the sportsmen's thousand'.

SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under PDM 1.0



Roll of Honour, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission

Later in the day, after the Anzac Day march, less formal commemorations take place, including games of two-up, football matches and socialising with former comrades. These aspects of Anzac Day honour the dead in a way that observes the joys of life.

These events later in the day are why Anzac Day has come to be thought of as a celebration as well as a commemoration. One might think about the 2 aspects of the day along the same lines as a funeral followed by a wake. The funeral is a formal and ritualistic farewell to the dead, but the wake is a reunion and an informal celebration of the dead's life.

Anzac soldiers have always been associated with sport – whether it be the cricket match on Shell Green that was played to fool the Ottoman forces into thinking that everything was normal before the Allied evacuation of the peninsula, or recruitment through the Sportsmen's Thousand because it was believed that the skills of a good sportsman were transferrable to war. However, before 1960, people were not permitted to play sport on Anzac Day, because the day was reserved to honour the soldiers. If Anzac Day coincided with a scheduled match, that match would have to be moved. The former Essendon Football Club coach Kevin Sheedy proposed the Anzac Day match, which continues today, as a way of honouring Australian service people. In 1995, the Australian Football League introduced the Anzac Day match. This grudge match between the Essendon and Collingwood football clubs includes awarding the Anzac Medal to the player considered best on-ground for exemplifying the Anzac spirit (skill, courage, sacrifice, fair play and teamwork).

*Anzac soldiers have always been associated with sport.*

Because there are no surviving World War I veterans – and those from subsequent wars are also disappearing each year – the children and grandchildren of those who served often march in their place. This serves as a way of connecting the living and the dead, and the past and the present – perpetuating the Anzac legacy through generations of families who take pride in the actions of their ancestors.

A number of symbols accompany Anzac Day. The poppy is the international symbol of Remembrance Day, which commemorates the end of World War I (11 November 1918). The poppy was the only thing



that grew in the mud on the Western Front. The red flower came to symbolise life, but also the dead soldiers who lay in the earth beneath. Major John McCrae wrote the poem 'In Flanders fields' to be recited at the burial service of his friend and former student, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, who died in the Second Battle of Ypres on 2 May 1915. McCrae was a Canadian military doctor in command of the 1st Brigade Canadian Field Artillery, and it is his poem that is thought to be responsible for the red poppy becoming a commemorative symbol.

*A number of symbols accompany Anzac Day, including the poppy and rosemary.*

## In Flanders fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.*

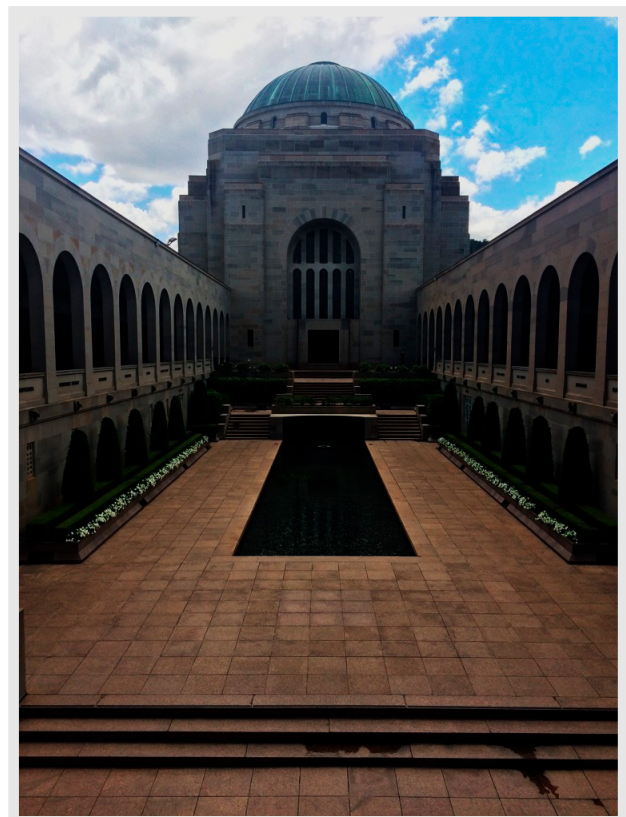
Poppies are commonly left on soldiers' graves around the world. The Honour Roll at the Australian War Memorial is brought to life with thousands of poppies affixed next to the names of Australia's dead soldiers – left as a mark of respect.

Although it is a less recognisable symbol of remembrance, Anzac Day is specifically associated with rosemary, which grew wild on the Gallipoli peninsula. As early as 1916, returned veterans would often wear a sprig of rosemary with their medals or in their breast pocket. For those who served on Gallipoli, the herb's smell would have been a powerful reminder of their time there. Rosemary also has ancient funerary connotations and associations, with memory and commemoration dating back to ancient Greece. The herb is planted throughout the Australian War Memorial to identify its function as a place of mourning.

Anzac Day is the only day of the year that it is legal to bet on the game 'two-up' outside a licensed gambling facility. This traditional Australian game involves 2 coins, placed on a wooden board, and then flipped. As the coins spin through the air, punters have to call whether they will land heads–heads, tails–tails or heads–tails. Two-up was commonly played by soldiers during World War I; permitting it to be played on Anzac Day is a means of remembering them and reliving the good times they had while overseas.

*Anzac Day is the only day of the year that it is legal to bet on the game 'two-up' outside a licensed gambling facility.*

Another Anzac Day tradition is Anzac biscuits. Women on the home front wanted to do something for the soldiers. They knew that they weren't eating as well as they would have at home, and they wanted to send them something nutritional, that could travel for at least 2 months and still be all right to eat when it arrived. What they came up with was a hard biscuit that used treacle or golden syrup rather than eggs to bind the batter. During



Pool of reflection, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission

the war, these biscuits were known as 'Anzac tiles' because they were so hard. They wouldn't have been as sweet as they are today. To eat them, the soldiers would wet them to break them down into an Anzac porridge. It is thought that they are derived from an old Scottish recipe, but the origins of the Anzac biscuit are obscure. The first recipe was published in 1917, but a consistent recipe wasn't agreed to until the 1920s.

## Pilgrimage to Gallipoli

Travel to Gallipoli for the Anzac Day Dawn Service has become an act of pilgrimage. Each year, thousands of Australians and New Zealanders attend the Dawn Service. The largest recorded crowd assembled in 2005, when 20 000 non-Turkish nationals made the journey to Gallipoli for the Dawn Service. In 2015, the Turkish, New Zealand and Australian governments devised a complicated ticketing process for the centenary event for fear that more people would make the journey than the peninsula could physically accommodate. Numbers were capped at 10 500 attendees: 8000 places for Australians, 2000 for New Zealanders, 250 for official guests from nations involved in the Gallipoli campaign and 250 for Turkish guests.

In addition to Anzac Day, thousands of visitors walk through the cemeteries and battlefields each day throughout the year. Actual numbers are not known, but a reasonable estimate is that, on average, 2500 people visit each day. This means that approximately 1 million people visit the peninsula each year from other parts of Turkey, Australia, New Zealand and many other nations.

*In addition to Anzac Day, thousands of visitors walk through the cemeteries and battlefields each day throughout the year.*

Mass travel to this site of national significance – for at least Turkey, New Zealand and Australia – is a form of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is the journey from one's home to a sacred place that has personal or cultural value. The fundamental difference between tourism and pilgrimage is that tourists travel for pleasure, whereas pilgrims travel to a specific destination because of the sacred value it holds for the pilgrim or their community.

Gallipoli pilgrims are all positioned variously along an imaginary pilgrim–tourist spectrum. However,

whether they travel to the battlefield for pleasure, to fulfil a spiritual need or for some combination of the two, Australians and New Zealanders have continually visited the Gallipoli peninsula since World War I ended. Participation in an Anzac Day Dawn Service at Anzac Cove heightens the experience of a Gallipoli pilgrim. While on Gallipoli, pilgrims say they get a deep sense of what it meant to be an Anzac soldier. This reinforces their sense of national belonging, which is something politicians want to harness – hence, the resources spent on dawn services at Anzac Cove and why the Australian Prime Minister attends each year.

The rituals associated with Anzac Day, including the Ode of Remembrance, the Last Post and the recitation of the refrain 'Lest we forget', provide pilgrims with an opportunity to express emotions, awe and reverence. The result is a sacred, almost religious, experience that promotes feelings of national pride and collective identity. In his book *Sacred places* (1998), Ken Inglis argues that the rituals of Anzac Day are part of a civil Anzac religion.

*The rituals associated with Anzac Day, including the Ode of Remembrance, the Last Post and the recitation of the refrain 'Lest we forget', provide pilgrims with an opportunity to express emotions, awe and reverence.*

## Anzackery

In 2005, the Liberal Federal Minister, Danna Vale, was pushing an idea to then Prime Minister John Howard to create a memorial park on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. Vale wanted to recreate Anzac Cove, effectively so that educational groups could be brought through and veterans could be taken there rather than travel all the way to Turkey. The idea was panned; Steve Bracks, who was the Victorian Premier at the time, called the idea 'tacky' and said that it wasn't going to happen.

The importance of Anzac Day to Australians might be somewhat quantified by examining the money being spent on commemorating the centenary of World War I. The Anzac Centenary Fund was established to commemorate the centenary of the war between 2015 and 2018. It holds contributions from local and federal governments, and private





Simpson and his donkey, 1915.  
Bronze, 1987–1988, Australian War Memorial,  
ART40993, P Corlett, Meridian Sculpture Founders  
SOURCE: Australian War Memorial; used under CC BY-NC 3.0 AU

sector donations. The fund's website names 6 major projects that it will contribute to, costing \$52 million. It also names numerous local grants that are being awarded, one for each federal member of parliament in Australia. There are 150 members of federal parliament, and each received an equal amount to support projects in their electorate commemorating World War I, which adds up to \$18.75 million. The ANZ Bank has committed \$10 million to the fund and Woodside \$10 million; there are smaller donations by Aurizon and the Commonwealth Bank of \$2.5 million and \$2 million, respectively. If we add up just those contributions, we know that at least \$95.25 million will be spent on the centenary. The total figure being spent on everything from educational programs to monuments is closer to \$300 million; however, there is, as yet, no single document that outlines the total.

There is concern that Anzac Day is becoming commercialised and that businesses are trying to profit from the commemorative day. Attempts to make profits from Anzac commemoration have been called 'Brandzac' and are a form of 'Anzackery'. The Australian National Dictionary defines Anzackery as 'the promotion of the Anzac

legend in ways that are perceived to be excessive or misguided'.

*Attempts to make profits from Anzac commemoration have been called 'Brandzac' and are a form of 'Anzackery'.*

These changes are, in part, because there are fewer Anzac soldiers around. Because of that, the function of Anzac Day is shifting its focus from the veterans to those who wish to keep their legacy alive. The core of Anzac Day is still reverence and respect, but other layers are being added, and it is worth noting how, why and what they mean for the future of the Anzac narrative.

## Anzackery: Camp Gallipoli

In 2015 and 2016, cities across Australia and New Zealand hosted Camp Gallipoli. This event involved sleeping overnight with fellow campers as historical information was delivered on television screens and entertainment was provided on stages. It was also possible to purchase themed meals ('tucker'), which represented the food the Anzacs ate (although these were much more balanced and luxurious meals than a frontline soldier could ever have hoped for). Iconic Australian entertainers performed – such as Evermore, Shannon Noll, James Reyne, Christine Anu and Jo Camilleri. Participants slept together on a field in their sleeping bags, just as those who travel to Anzac Cove for the Dawn Service do.

For those who wished to tailor their Camp Gallipoli experience and connect more closely with an individual Anzac soldier, campers could purchase a limited-edition swag (\$275 for a single or \$375 for a double) with the actual service number of an Anzac; 50 000 unique numbers were available. If you had a relative who served, you were able to request that number. If you did a school project on a particular Digger, you could choose his number. Ironically, it wasn't permitted to erect a swag overnight at Camp Gallipoli, because the tent poles obstructed others' view of the entertainment.

Tickets to the event ranged between \$55 and \$123. Food was an additional cost. It is free to attend the Dawn Service at Anzac Cove. The Returned and Services League of Australia, and Legacy were involved in Camp Gallipoli, and the Australian Government Department of

Veterans' Affairs initially endorsed the event. In April 2016, Camp Gallipoli came under fire for misappropriating funds. Only days before Anzac Day, the organisation was stripped of its permit to use the word 'Anzac' (which is protected under the *War Precautions Act Repeal Act 1920*).

Camp Gallipoli is a clear example of an organisation attempting to capitalise on the emotion of the Anzac narrative. The website, now unavailable, stipulated that participating would offer 'a once in a lifetime emotional rollercoaster', and in several places it was stated that those who attended would have an emotional experience and shed tears.

Approximately 40 000 people attended a camp in 2015 to experience what it was like for the Anzac soldiers who landed on the Turkish shores at dawn on 25 April 1915. Although the Camp Gallipoli experience would have been vastly different from that of the original Anzacs, the desire of young Australians and New Zealanders to make a connection to their national ancestors indicates that the Anzac legacy remains strong.

## Films about Gallipoli



Podcast: [Gallipoli in film](#) —Dr Sarah Midford and Matt Smith.

**MS:** Matt Smith

**SM:** Sarah Midford

**MS:** When it comes to Gallipoli and Australia's contribution to World War I, how we perceive the Anzacs is influenced by how they're represented in television and movies. Here to discuss how the portrayal of Gallipoli has changed over time and how movies are influencing our perception is Sarah Midford, Lecturer in Mediterranean Studies at La Trobe University.

**SM:** When I think about Anzac and film, my thoughts go straight to *Gallipoli*, Peter Weir's 1981 film starring Mel Gibson and Mark Lee. *Gallipoli* was an international blockbuster; it was Australia's most successful film at the time.

It was made at a time when the perception of the Anzac legend was shifting. In the late 1970s to early 1980s, the Anzac narrative stopped being something just for veterans and started being for the people and for the Australian nation. This was because the veterans were starting to get old and people were

starting to realise that their story needed to be told before it was too late.

The Australian historian Bill Gammage recognised that the veterans were slipping away and wrote a book called *The broken year*, based on the oral histories of the Anzacs. This book was published in 1974, and it really kicked off a renewed interest in Anzac history and the Gallipoli Campaign. Peter Weir worked with Gammage as he was making his film.

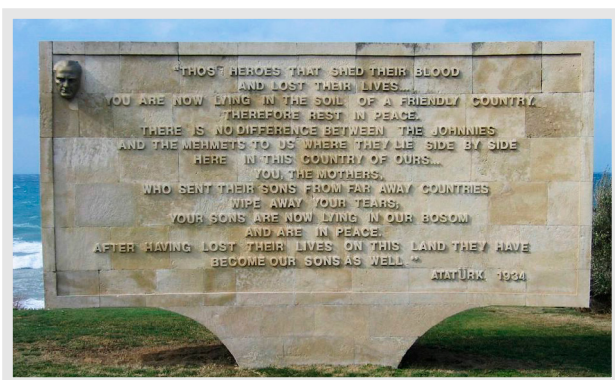
Although Weir had worked with Gammage, his Anzacs were not the regular Private Bills of history. The reality of war is almost completely omitted from the film. There is no fighting in Gallipoli, at least until the end, and that is more running than fighting. It is actually not about the war at all; it's about mateship, the qualities of the Digger soldier and the journey of the two protagonists into maturity. The film focuses on the journey of 2 young men from the Australian bush to Turkey. They are very excited about going overseas and participating in something much bigger than themselves, but this comes crashing down when they are presented with the harsh realities of war after they land at Gallipoli. The film is not about war; it is an iconic representation of Australia's loss and sacrifice during the Great War. The British are portrayed far more negatively in this film than the Turks are, because it is made at a time when Australia is trying to establish a national identity that is independent of Britain. At the time, Britain is moving away from their Commonwealth, and is starting to focus more on establishing links with Europe and being part of the European Union.

Before Weir's film, Anzacs were being represented in a negative light. A good example is Alan Seymour's play *The one day of the year* (1958), which portrays the veterans as terrible drinkers and presents their pride in war as old-fashioned and irrelevant. Shortly after this play was written, the Vietnam War broke out and war became a very unfashionable topic in Australia. Considering how unpopular the Anzac narrative had been in the decades preceding *Gallipoli*'s release, Weir was taking quite a risk making a film about the Great War. However, the risk paid off and this film really marks a new starting point in the history of the Anzac legend. From this point onwards, the Anzac narrative takes on mythical qualities and forms the basis of popular understanding about Australia's involvement in the Gallipoli Campaign.

**MS:** So as well as reflecting a changing attitude towards Anzac Day and how we remember Gallipoli, does Peter Weir's film also influence it going forward?

**SM:** I think so, I think it canonises the projection of what an Anzac is supposed to be. If you think about the character Archie, he is the absolute iconic Anzac – fresh-faced Australian from the bush, a genuinely good human being and great mate. He exemplifies





Memorial at Anzac Cove.

PHOTO by Sarah Midford; used with permission

Anzac characteristics and dies for his country. That's how we want to remember the Anzacs that died in that campaign, and I think that's exactly who we commemorate. Whether Peter Weir's version of events is accurate or not isn't really relevant, because he depicted what most people want to believe the Anzac experience was like. Because of that, the story ceases to be historical and becomes mythical.

**MS:** More than 30 years after Weir's movie, we no longer have any living memory of the Gallipoli Campaign and World War I. What are more recent versions of the campaign like and what are they now reflecting? Are they presenting the campaign more or less accurately?

**SM:** The horror of war is represented in more recent portrayals of the Gallipoli Campaign. Some of the gore in recent films and television programs is quite confronting. Russell Crowe's *The water diviner* includes some harrowing scenes of slow and painful deaths on the Gallipoli peninsula. It also, interestingly, represents the Anzacs as an invading force, which is something that is almost completely ignored in any earlier representations. The 'birth of a nation' narrative so common in earlier versions of the story, including Weir's *Gallipoli*, is silenced in this film in an attempt to be more historical and less mythological. However, Crowe's Anzacs, just like Weir's, are innocent, fresh-faced boys from the bush and perpetuate the archetypal Anzac warrior stereotype. The memorialisation of these lost boys remains a feature of Crowe's version.

Although it appears that Crowe is taking a more historical approach to his version of the narrative, the film is not very historically accurate. Like Weir's film, it presents a somewhat plausible story, but tells it in a context that is constructed to suit the filmmaker's needs, and so the comment that they want to make about the Anzac narrative takes precedence. For Crowe, it seems that his comment on the narrative was that there were 2 sides to the campaign and that there is a universality of wartime experience.

It focuses on the experience of the Turkish people as well as the Australians. This reflects the way Australians like to think about their relationship with the Turkish nation and the Turkish people – we are friends and have a special bond that was formed on the cliffs at Gallipoli. When we think about Atatürk's words, immortalised in stone at Anzac Cove, the plight of the Australian, New Zealand and Turkish soldiers unite, and any animosity that was once felt is replaced with friendship.

**MS:** So if I was comparing the 2 films, I would say that on the surface the difference is that we are now looking at Anzac experience on Gallipoli objectively without as much emotional investment in it.

**SM:** Anzac has always shifted with the political climate. It's a story that's embedded with nationalism, so it has to reflect what the nation wants and feels beyond the Great War and the Gallipoli Campaign. For that reason, the representations of Anzac and how we commemorate Anzac have shifted accordingly with the changing ideals, and the changing wants and needs of the nation. Right now, it is important for the nation to remember the Anzac Campaign as an event in which we were culpable. We need to remember that we invaded Gallipoli, because we've got a very strong diplomatic relationship with Turkey now, and people want to go there and experience the Gallipoli peninsula. When they do that, they encounter Turkish people, and the Turkish people are lovely, they're very hospitable and they're very welcoming, and the mistakes of the past need to be recognised.

The national experience that occurs in Australia and New Zealand is magnified, and complemented by the Turkish experience on the other side. What we have done, effectively, is absorb their perspective into the narrative and into the legend. We've accommodated the Turkish experience because it's become necessary to do so, and because Australians and New Zealanders don't want to see the Turkish people as enemies any more.

**MS:** It does show a level of removal though. That we don't need to be sensitive about the realities of war, that we can just use the entire war as a backdrop for period drama – like they did in the television show *Anzac girls*. That was essentially *Sex in the city* set in the 1910s. We've removed a lot of that emotive sensitivity as well.

**SM:** I don't think personal emotion is relevant to the Great War anymore. Collective emotion is, but that actually helps filmmakers engage an audience and is something they can use to drive their plotlines. When I went to the Dawn Service at Anzac Cove in 2011, I was struck by the number of young women and men crying. I just couldn't understand why, while at the same time knowing exactly why. Part of the appeal of a Dawn Service (or a narrative about Gallipoli)

is the story's capacity to reach us emotionally. At the Dawn Service, the crowd experienced, en masse, a ritualistic (almost religious) ceremony. We heard heart-wrenching stories, recited refrains and odes together, listened to a trumpet playing the Last Post in utter silence (there is something quite spine-tingling about utter silence in the presence of 10 000 other people). All of this contributes to an emotional experience and encourages that emotion to be expressed. There is no need to be related to Anzac to experience this emotion; being an Australian or New Zealander is enough of a connection.

The emotion is not connected with personal experience – it is connected to collective experience. The Anzac legend is bigger than any individual and it taps into something nationalistic. It is for that reason that people are so defensive and protective of it. It may have emotional resonance for people, but it is no longer possible to be personally connected in any meaningful way to an Anzac who fell at Gallipoli.

**Gallipoli and The water diviner are two Australian films about the Anzacs.**

## FURTHER INVESTIGATION

### Russell Crowe's Water diviner tries to question history, but misses the mark



By Alexander Scott (Researcher in History, Lancaster University) and first published on [The Conversation](#) on 8 April 2015 3.22 am AEST; used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#)

#### Disclosure statement

Alexander Scott does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

April 2015 marks the centenary of the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign, the failed invasion of modern-day Turkey by British and French imperial forces. Remembered in Britain mainly for the failings of Winston Churchill, Gallipoli has enormous significance in Australian national culture. The death at Gallipoli of 8,000 members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs) overshadows memory of other World War I battles. The campaign is remembered as helping forge a distinctly "Australian" (as opposed to British-colonial) identity.

Russell Crowe has capitalised on the centenary and its Australian importance with *The Water Diviner*, his recently released directorial debut (in which he also stars). Set in the war's immediate aftermath, *The Water Diviner* follows Joshua Connor (Crowe) as he visits Turkey attempting to locate his three sons, all killed or missing-in-action at Gallipoli.

Cinema has transmitted knowledge about history since the medium's late 19th-century origins. Films have long played a role in romanticising national myths and landmark events – the Hollywood Western and World War II combat movie being seminal examples.

Historical films are thus barometers of the collective stories that patriotic filmmakers and audiences like to tell about the past. One consequence is that they often elicit commentary from historians like me.

A standard academic response is to dismiss historical films as hackneyed or inaccurate. More thoughtful historians – foremost Robert A. Rosenstone – take a different stance, viewing cinema as a legitimate and potentially liberating medium for "doing history".

So how does Crowe do?

### Divining the Anzac spirit

Joshua is – as with the central character in Peter Weir's *Gallipoli* (1981) – the Australian archetype. A gruff bushman with an elemental appreciation of the outback (the film's title refers to his ability to source groundwater), he is even seen with a cricket bat several times. Joshua's "Anzac spirit" is defined against the clipped accents and officiousness of British (English) officers who repeatedly obstruct his endeavours throughout the film.

Some aspects of Turkish society are represented with similarly broad brushstrokes, risking Orientalist cliché. Images of whirling dervishes and allusions to polygamy recur. Extracts from *The Arabian Nights* – magic carpets and all – act as an important plot device.

So *The Water Diviner* is not sophisticated enough to completely pass muster in this regard. The film is heavy-handed at points and features one of the worst love subplots I've seen on screen in a while.

But Crowe does make concerted efforts to nuance the image of Australia's onetime enemy – at least they're not the faceless foes of the 1981 *Gallipoli*. It begins with a set-piece shot from the perspective



of Ottoman troops at Gallipoli, and much of the ensuing drama revolves around a friendship forged between Joshua and their commander Major Hasan (Yılmaz Erdoğan).

Indeed, its emphasis on Gallipoli's status in Turkish memory lends the film novelty – at least to an Anglophone audience. Several characters speak reverentially of Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic which was forged in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's post-war collapse. Mustafa Kemal's reputation as a national hero was established by his military leadership at Gallipoli. And the action in the film's (weaker) second half is propelled by Joshua's journeying around Anatolia with Hasan and a band of Turkish nationalist troops and their resistance to British occupation in Istanbul.

## Hit and miss

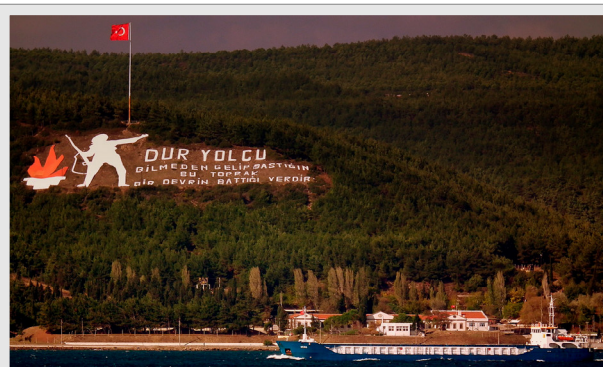
While showing a Turkish perspective distinguishes *The Water Diviner* from traditional Australian views of Gallipoli, it is also the most controversial aspect of its treatment of historical events.

The film has been a box office hit in Turkey and Australia. But it has attracted criticism from the Australian-Greek community for negatively portraying Greek soldiers pitted against Hasan's nationalists in scenes dramatising the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922). It has also been accused of eliding the Armenian genocide.

Certainly, the depiction of Greeks is extremely two-dimensional, though the second criticism has less validity from a purely chronological standpoint – the genocide is not immediately congruent to the post-war events played out onscreen. That said, considerations of this ilk doubtless factored into calculations about how *The Water Diviner* might play in Turkey, where labelling the Armenian atrocities "genocide" is deemed a crime against the nation.

So in effect, after laudably balancing prevailing Australian memories of Gallipoli (itself not without opposition from Anzac veterans groups) Crowe then undercut these admirable efforts with insufficient scrutiny of the contentious (official) Turkish version of the past he implicitly endorses.

The film ends up merely supplementing one nationalist history with another, leaving fundamental questions unaddressed. These issues of identity, ironically, are not entirely alien to Crowe: a New Zealander by birth, he claims to have twice had applications for Australian citizenship turned down.



Dur Yolcu Memorial on the hillside above Kilitbahir, Gallipoli. The translated text reads: 'Stop wayfarer. The ground on which you tread is where an epoch lies'.

SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons



Weblink: **'War' by Thomas W Shapcott**, from *Inwards to the sun*; **A memorial to soldiers who fell in the Dardanelles in 440 BC**; and **Australians in action; the story of Gallipoli**, by Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett

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