

The ANZACs and Australian Identity – Jill Curry

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F-10 Humanities and Social Sciences/Key Ideas/Who we are...values that have shaped societies

The ANZACs who joined the Australian Imperial Forces were all volunteers. The people who enlisted were willing to leave their families, homes, jobs and friends to serve in a foreign country in a war that was not even threatening their own country or livelihood. From a population of less than five million at the time, Australia had 416,809 men voluntarily enlist in World War I. Of these, 332,000 served overseas. Over 60,000 died and 156,000 were wounded, taken prisoner or gassed. From the total, 32,000 men and 40,000 horses participated in the Palestinian campaign which claimed 1,394 dead from injuries or disease and 4,851 wounded.¹ Almost half of all New Zealand's eligible men enlisted.



Sacrifice



John Simpson Kirkpatrick served in the field ambulance at Gallipoli as part of the Australian Imperial Forces Medical Corps. He is renowned for working day and night carrying the injured on his donkey from Monash Valley down to Anzac Cove. He was fearless in the face of bullets and machine guns, thinking not of his own safety but only those who were injured. He was only 22 years old when he finally succumbed to the deadly fire and is buried in Gallipoli.

Another who paid the ultimate price was Australian cricketer Albert 'Tibby' Cotter. He was in the 12th Light Horse regiment serving as a stretcher-bearer on the day of the battle of Beersheba. He was shot at close range while helping another injured man.

This costly sacrifice wounded the heart of the young nation. Practically every family was affected, and everyone knew someone who went to war. Many of those who did return came home with physical, mental or emotional scars that remained with them for the rest of their lives. It was an enormous cost. They paid the price - but they did it willingly.

The training in war and leadership spawned many leaders, especially those who had been generals in the army, who went on to be nation builders of the young Australian nation.

Sir John Monash, who led the forces in Gallipoli and on the Western Front, became Vice Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, head of the State Electricity Commission (he was an engineer), was a founding member of the first Rotary Club of Melbourne, President of the Zionist Federation of Australia and served on a number of other organizations. He



organized the planning of the Shrine of Remembrance, with its focal point of “Greater Love hath no man” – a verse from the New Testament (John 15:13), despite him being a Jew, and helped organize and lead the early ANZAC memorial services. Monash University and the Monash Freeway in Melbourne bear his name.



General Harry Chauvel, who led the ANZAC Light Horse troops, returned to be appointed Inspector General – the nation’s top army position. He retired in 1930, but never stopped his community involvement. He campaigned for veterans causes, was on the committees for the Australian and Victorian War Memorials, the Red Cross and Young Men’s Christian Association. He was a man of integrity and faith and was made a lay canon of St Paul’s Cathedral in Melbourne, where a plaque honours his memory to this day. He led Anzac Day marches until 1938, when he refused in protest to the Returned Servicemen’s League changing the service from a Christian service to a secular one.

Major General Sir Granville Ryrie commanded the 2nd Light Horse Brigade. After returning from the war he served as a Federal parliamentarian till 1927.

Forming the Australian Identity

Sir John Monash gave a speech on Anzac Day 1922 at Scotch College, Melbourne, his former school, which opened with the following words:

It was on this day, seven years ago, just as day was breaking, that the soldiers of Australia and New Zealand stormed the beetling cliffs of Gallipoli, and in so doing, *founded the tradition of the Australian nation.*² (emphasis added)



Since then, many a Prime Minister and Australian leader of all persuasions have echoed his sentiments. Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, at the Entombment of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial in 1993, said:

It is a legend not of sweeping military victories so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity. It is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs than from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity.³

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, in his speech at the centenary service at Gallipoli on ANZAC Day 2015, said:



Today, we do not glorify war but honour the values the Anzacs embodied in the most trying of circumstances. We acknowledge that the worst of times brought out the best in them – extraordinary courage, perseverance against all odds and

selflessness in doing their duty. In Murdoch's words, they had "the noble faces of men who have endured"...

In the magnificent failure at Gallipoli, the successful advances in the Middle East and the terrible victory on the Western Front, our soldiers embodied the commitment to freedom, the spirit of adventure and the bonds of mateship that we hold dear to this day. *Their values helped to forge our nation's identity.*⁴ (emphasis added)

Despite the fact that all the original World War 1 diggers have passed on, ANZAC day still attracts huge crowds of people including young people. Gallipoli has become a magnet for young backpackers, as has the Kokoda Track. What is this phenomenon?



In a day and age where young people are taking their own lives through suicide at an alarming rate, and the use of mind-destroying drugs is all too common, is there still a search for meaning hidden in the ANZAC history? The soldiers were attracted to a cause and proved themselves through adversity to find more within themselves than they could every have dreamt was possible. The ANZACs changed history by their victories. Our nation remembers the loss of lives but rarely acknowledges the achievements of those who fought and won. While war is always tragic and never to be glorified, it changes the course of history, defines character and has helped make our nation what it is today. May we be thankful for those who have gone before and made sacrifices so we might enjoy peaceful and prosperous lives.

Endnotes:

1. <https://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww1/>
2. Warhaft, S., 'Well May We Say: The Speeches that Made Australia', Black Inc, 2004, 90-91
3. <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/anzac-day>
4. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/anzac-day/tony-abbott-anzac-values-forged-our-identity-at-gallipoli/news-story/062c6cc7efef610cefe03bb37170c2d6>

Pictures:

1. Call from the Dardanelles – Australian War Memorial ARTV05167 Recruitment poster created by H M Burton, for The Defence Department of the Commonwealth
2. John Simpson's grave, Gallipoli – J Curry
3. Lt Gen Sir John Monash. Portrait photo by Swaine.– Australian War Memorial photo - cropped. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/A02697/>
4. Sir Harry Chauvel. Portrait by McInnis. Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/J06708/>
5. Anzac Day service at Gallipoli. <http://www.backpackerstravel.net/Anzac-Day-6-days-Turkey-Tour-kod5-tid10-turid72-backpackersmenu6876435897436>
6. The crypt at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne. <http://www.weekendnotes.com/shrine-of-remembrance/43404/>

7. Peter Corlett's Light Horse statue, Be'er Sheva – Jill Curry

Questions:

Australian cricketers talk about their trip to Gallipoli and the values and sacrifices of the ANZACs <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-04-20/anzac-day-cricket-special/3962992>

What is the Australian identity? What do we value? Where do these values come from?

Courage is not only a physical attribute but also moral value. Discuss.

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13). This is the quote is on the central stone of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. A ray of sun lights up the word ‘love’ on Nov 11th at 11am. How did the ANZACs reflect this?

What legacy would you like to leave at your life's end? How committed are you to see this fulfilled?

Powerpoint

1. <http://epublisher.net.au/public/subscriber/contactlists/archiveissuewebversionwithads?issueId=mMXrvVOZEgKuGPmku2Qa9uLYIIGQtJgfdQFnSAmZSnI>
2. Call from the Dardanelles – Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV05167> Recruitment poster created by H M Burton, for The Defence Department of the Commonwealth
3. Light Horse on the march to Jerusalem <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/B01619> Photo by Frank Hurley
4. Simpson and his donkey <http://teganbrunton.weebly.com/simpson-and-his-donkey.html>; Simpson's grave at Gallipoli – J. Curry
5. Albert ‘Tibbie’ Cotter – Stretcher bearer with the 12th Light Horse Regiment. Australian War Memorial Photo <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P04366.001> Photo by Linton Slide. Cotter's grave at Beersheba – J. Curry
6. Michael Shanahan in hospital – <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P03088.008>. 2nd Australian Light Horse, Cairo Sept 1916
7. Lt Gen Sir John Monash – Australian War Memorial photo - cropped. Portrait photo by Swaine. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/A02697/>; Stone of Remembrance at the Shrine, Melbourne <http://www.shrine.org.au/>
8. Sir Harry Chauvel. Portrait by McInnis. Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/J06708/>
9. ANZAC Cove <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/H02316/>
10. Tomb of the Unknown Soldier <http://www.smh.com.au/act-news/known-unto-god-to-remain-at-tomb-of-unknown-soldier-at-war-memorial-20131028-2wcnj>; <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/anzac-day>
11. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/anzac-day/tony-abbott-anzac-values-forged-our-identity-at-gallipoli/news-story/062c6cc7efef610cefe03bb37170c2d6>; <http://www.backpackerstravel.net/Anzac-Day-6-days-Turkey-Tour-kod5-tid10-turid72-backpackersmenu6876435897436>
12. <http://www.businessinsider.com.au/27-beautiful-images-of-anzac-day-dawn-services-from-across-the-country-2015-4#Sydney1>
13. Peter Corlett's Light Horse statue, Park of the Australian Soldier, Be'er Sheva – Jill Curry
14. Anzac Day Ode <https://au.pinterest.com/tarnyanew/teaching-anzac-day/>; 90th Anniversary Parade, Be'er Sheva, Israel – J Curry; Beersheba Day Service in the cemetery, Be'er Sheva, Israel – J

Curry; ANZAC Day Dawn Service, War Memorial Canberra,
<http://www.australia.com/en/news/2015/april/anzac-centenary-services-australia.html>