



THE Simpson PRIZE

A COMPETITION FOR
YEAR 9 AND 10 STUDENTS

2010 Runner-Up
Northern Territory

Emily Ball
Palmerston High School



The Missing Voices of the ANZAC Legend

Emily Ball
Palmerston High School



Many voices are missing in the ANZAC legend and the two I consider to be least acknowledged are Turkish soldiers and nurses. In Australia the ANZAC legend is always told from the point of view of the Australians, New Zealanders and the Allied Forces, who are always portrayed as heroes. We must acknowledge heroes on both sides, something I have come to understand through my research. The ANZAC legend is a series of true stories about the ANZACS that highlight the mateship, daring and bravery of the ANZAC soldiers. One of the best known parts of the ANZAC legend is the Gallipoli Campaign.¹

Australians call the landing and following campaign Gallipoli, but the Turks call it Canakkale Savasi or the Anakkale War. Not many Australians seem to realise that the ANZACS were hostile invaders, landing illegally on Turkish shores. Can you imagine the terror the Turks felt at seeing soldiers come ashore? The Turks, with no time to prepare, went out to face the enemy. So why are Turkish soldiers not seen as heroes in the ANZAC legend? They were the saviours of their country.

At least eighty-five-thousand Turkish soldiers lost their lives defending against the invading ANZACs. While many Australian films and documentaries of Gallipoli state the number of ANZACS killed and wounded, few acknowledge Turkish sacrifice. The Turks fought in trenches, were poorly fed and were forced to fight day and night to protect their country – homes, families and friends. The Turks fought for exactly the same things and for exactly the same reasons as the ANZACS did. The Turks have memorials for the Anzacs who died, but it has taken until this year for Australia to create a memorial for the Turks who were killed during the war.²

The Turks had no preparation, no uniforms; they fought with anything they could get their hands on. Between the two armies was little hatred, someone shouted an order, and they fought. I believe this should be no reason to belittle their sacrifice, nor an excuse to ignore their bravery, mateship and determination. Every soldier was equal on the battlefield.

¹ Broadbent, Harvey, *Gallipoli: The Fatal Shore*, Viking, Melbourne, 2005

² Information from *The Memorials of Anzac Parade*, pamphlet produced by the National Capital Authority, Canberra, undated. *Canberra Times*, 8 May 1993. <http://www.skp.com.au/memorials2/pages/00012.htm>. ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee (QLD) Incorporated.

In one sense the Turks had more to lose than the ANZACS. While both sides risked their lives, Ottoman soldiers risked the loss of their country. This fact is rarely mentioned in the ANZAC Legend as told to Australians.

The Anakkale War was a very important point in Ottoman Empire history. Shortly after the campaign, the Ottoman Empire was recognised as a country in its own right. Turkish soldiers had proved themselves by protecting their country but are never mentioned in Australia. One soldier, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was recognised for his valour and leadership and he became the first president of modern Turkey. His words recognising ANZAC sacrifice are inscribed at the entrance to ANZAC Cove. To Australian mothers grieving their lost sons, Atatürk wrote:

‘... After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.’³

I believe that the voice of the Turkish soldiers should be heard equally. They were as brave as the ANZACS, they fought for their country against hostile invaders but they are never acknowledged except as ‘the enemy’. I think this is atrocious. They are merely mentioned as details to make the ANZACS look more heroic. It is heartening to see the Australian Government beginning to redress this imbalance in creating a Turkish war memorial in Australia.

Another very significant voice, almost never heard, is the voice of the nurses. They were out in the line of fire during every attack and many, such as Sister Daisy Richmond were shot at while tending their many patients.⁴ The nurses often had hundreds of patients to tend to at once. Sister Lydia King on the nurse ship Sicillia recorded having over two hundred and fifty patients in her care during one night shift. Hospitals were bombed and often the nurses’ tents, where they lived and worked, collapsed with the wind. It is astounding that they continued their dedicated work in such hardships.

Nurses helped hundreds of wounded soldiers daily. They saved thousands of men’s lives, working for hours each day with a never ceasing stream of new patients. Nurses carried the wounded off the battlefields, through mud and over bodies, into their hospitals.

Imagine your guilt if a soldier you were trying to save died. Nurses wrote down soldier’s last words and often told soldier’s families and friends of their deaths. Yet nurses bore the burden and continued their work. I feel that if I had been a nurse, I would not have been able to continue. The hopelessness of the task and the constant stream of wounded would have overcome me. Sister Ella Tucker wrote:

‘The wounded from the landing commenced to come on board at 9am and poured into the ship’s wards from barges and boats. The majority still had on their field dressing and a number of these were soaked through. Two orderlies cut off the patient’s clothes and I started immediately with dressings. There were 76 patients in my ward and I did not finish until 2am.’⁵

In books and poems the ANZAC soldiers, the diggers, are spotlighted. Their courage and determination are always noted. In all my school years I never heard a teacher talk about nurses who served during the war, neither Turkish nor ANZAC. ‘They are barely mentioned except when referring to a wounded soldier in their care. Nurses took an important role in the war, without them far more soldiers would not have come home. They saved thousands of lives. Nurses deserve more recognition. They were as determined to save wounded soldiers as the soldiers were to fight for Australia. Without them, the war would have taken many more lives. Every year Australians mourn dead soldiers but there is little public recognition for the nurses who served’.

³ <http://www.anzacday.org.au/education/tff/rememwords.html>

⁴ Australian Government, Department of Veteran’s Affairs, 2009, internet [Accessed 15.11.09] <http://www.ANZACsite.gov.au/5environment/nurses.html>

⁵ *ibid*

The voices of nurses and the voices of Turkish soldiers should be heard just as much as the voices of ANZAC soldiers. They were as crucial to the war as ANZAC soldiers; all defended their country and saved lives.

Why are those who saved lives ignored? Why have we shoved aside the brave Turkish soldiers who defended their country against invaders? These are just two of the many voices that have been ignored by the ANZAC Legend.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cable News Network, 2009, internet, <http://www.ireport.com/docs/DOC-340337> [Accessed 18.11.09]

ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee, (QLD) 2009, <http://www.ANZACday.org.au/education/afor/afor-n.html> [Accessed 22.10.09]

Australian War Memorial, 2009, internet, <http://www.awm.gov.au/events/travelling/gallipoli.asp> [Accessed 22.10.09].

Michael Duffy, 2000–2009, internet, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/weaponry/index.htm> [Accessed 26.11.09]

The National Archives, 2009, internet, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/aftermath/p_turkish.htm

ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee (QLD) Incorporated. <http://www.anzacday.org.au/education/tff/rememwords.html> [Accessed 1.12.09]

Information from *The Memorials of Anzac Parade*, pamphlet produced by the National Capital Authority, Canberra, undated. Canberra Times, 8 May 1993, <http://www.skp.com.au/memorials2/pages/00012.htm>

Australian Government, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2009, internet <http://www.ANZACsite.gov.au/5environment/nurses.html> [Accessed 15.11.09]

Ataturk.com, 2009, internet, <http://www.ataturk.com/> [Accessed 26.11.09]

Rees, Peter *The Other ANZACS: The Extraordinary Story of our World War I Nurses*, Allen and Unwin, Crows' Nest, Australia, 2008.

Oppenheimer, Melanie, *Australian Women and War*, Dept of Veterans' Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Australia, 2008

