



THE Simpson PRIZE

A COMPETITION FOR
YEAR 9 AND 10 STUDENTS

JOURNAL of TRIP to
GALLIPOLI

2010 Winner
Western Australia

Dale Atkinson
Wesley College



Simpson Prize 2010 – Journal of Trip to Gallipoli

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Saturday and Sunday, 17 and 18 April

I awoke at three thirty Saturday morning, physically drained yet immensely excited about the experiences ahead of me during the next twelve days! My flight from Perth to Sydney was due to leave at five forty five. I arrived at the airport with my parents where I would meet Jacquie Bolt who would be one of the two teachers accompanying us to Turkey. Tensions were kept high as Jacquie only arrived at check-in about thirty seconds before the flight closed!

The flight across Australia to Sydney was fairly uneventful, only interjected by the periodic turbulence that frequents flyers travelling to and from the west of Australia are a custom to. Arriving in Sydney Jacquie and I met up with Andrew and some of the other winners who had arrived before myself. Jacquie, William and I then went to collect our luggage and move onto the international terminal as we had been unable to check them all the way through to Istanbul.

After a brief wait Andrew and Sophie arrived and with Will we went off to get some lunch. Afterwards the others began to appear. After a bit more waiting Alice arrived, we were all here. We checked-in for the flight. On Thursday and Friday there had been quite a lot of concern whether the flight to Istanbul would be cancelled after the eruption of the Icelandic volcano (which still nobody can pronounce!) cancelled all flights in the north and west of Europe. In fact, the only flight to Europe that Singapore Airlines hadn't cancelled was to Istanbul! After check-in the rest of my companions feasted on Lunch while I enjoyed a delicious Krispy Kreme Donut which is a special treat for any West Australian as they are not available in WA.

We went through customs, uneventfully and boarded the plane which would ferry us to Singapore. It was slightly annoying that it had been necessary to fly to Sydney first rather than straight from Perth to Singapore as it meant instead of six hours flying it actually took 12 hours. The aircraft we travelled on was almost brand new and relatively empty due to the natural disaster covering most of Europe. It was heart-wrenching walking past the fabulous first and business class cabins to the very back of the 777 where our group had seats assigned. On the enjoyable flight I sat on the window seat next to Alix who busied herself on the flight endlessly giggling to the glee marathon. After a small coughing fit caused by my asthma Alix and I developed a plan to get us upgraded up to Business Class by faking another attack.

Our landing into Singapore was extremely turbulent. Alix and I agreed that we must have landed sideways as we were almost able to see the centre of the runway! An hour long stopover in Singapore allowed a chance to stretch my legs and fill up on food before the seven hour flight to Dubai. Unfortunately the plane that was to shuttle us from Singapore to Istanbul through Dubai was considerably older and outdated than the plane we travelled on from Sydney to Singapore but we were all too excited to really care. Once again we took to the airs. By now I had been awake for nearly twenty four hours straight and was getting extremely tired.

After eating a small portion of the disappointingly tasteless meal I quickly fell asleep. Fortunately my slumber was quite deep and gave me a chance to rejuvenate before our arrival. A much nicer landing at Dubai ensued, however it was a disappointment when we found out that we were to remain on the plane during the stop-over.

The final leg of our journey was considered a fairly long one for the rest of my companions, four and a half hours. For me this is a normal flight being an inhabitant of the world's most isolated capital city. After little excitement on the flight we began our decent into Istanbul. Instantly everybody in the group suddenly perked up as excitement for the adventure ahead of them reached an all time high! Flying through the seemingly endless clouds my first view of Turkey was the Sea of Marmara, full of huge ships waiting for their turn to travel up the Bosphorus to the Black Sea. Going through customs was an enjoyable event in Eastern European countries as soviet style stamping made us all have a silent giggle.

Even from inside the terminal building it seemed as though outside was very cold. We weren't wrong. For a spring day it was colder than a Perth winter, but that's Turkey I suppose. We met our tour guide Eser and our driver Ondur and progressed on to the hotel. Speed limits in Turkey seem to be optional as speed trumps safety. After a brief introduction to the city from the confines of the bus we arrived at our hotel. Will and I were to share a room. Our hotel room was very nice and modern, small as all European hotels are but pleasant none the less. However it seems the check-in staff thought Will was a chain smoker because our room smells as though somebody lit a campfire in it.

After over 36 hours without a proper sleep or a shower, I along with all the others was desperate for a shower to freshen up. The shower did its magic and I instantly perked up and was now ready for an almost full day of sightseeing under the guiding hand of Eser.

Istanbul is a peculiar place. It is full of ancient buildings and towering mosques at every corner but is also a bustling mix of diverse, modern culture and society. The border between Europe and Asia creates a spectacular mix of East and West that can be found nowhere else in the world.

Our first activity was a cruise up the Bosphorus. We arrived at the embankment and were startled to find that a huge tourist barge had been hired for the eleven of us. We began our interesting journey up the channel learning much from Eser about Istanbul and Turkey. It was amazing to see some of the buildings that lined the banks. We were told that 50 million lira would just be enough to buy a small property! We learnt about the two bridges that link Europe and Asia and how the strong channels that are caused by the salty Marmara Sea and the fresh water Black Sea meeting are powerful enough to carry over a kilometer in a matter of seconds.

After bearing the strong winds to take photos of the incredible vista we retired inside for traditional Turkish Tea which was very, very strong and needed copious amounts of sugar to lessen the blow.

Soon after we finished our tea we arrived back at the port where we once again boarded the bus and moved on to the Hagia Sophia. Along the way Eser continued to enlighten us about Istanbul. The Hagia Sophia is currently a museum but for over a thousand years was the largest cathedral in the world. We learnt how the mosque actually began life as a Pagan church before being burnt down and rebuilt as a

Christian church. After the Turks invaded Turkey it was turned into a mosque until finally in 1934 when it was closed as a religious site and opened as a museum. When the mosque was turned from Christian the walls and roofs which were covered in intricate mosaics were plastered and painted over but in places these beautiful creations were still visible. The main dome was simply mindboggling and certainly left an impression with all of our cameras considering the copious amounts of photos we took of it!

After a group photo in-front of the mosque we returned to the hotel. The eight of us soon moved off again in search of Turkish Delights with Alix only just missing a car speeding towards her. After purchasing eight we raised our delights and toasted to Istanbul. The delight was, funnily enough, delightful and extremely delicious. We walked back to the hotel without incident and journeyed up to the fifth floor where we had lunch earlier in the day. The view from this floor is absolutely amazing. From it you can see a great expanse of ocean and also much of Istanbul! Dinner was a three course traditional Turkish feast. The entrée was a quiche like pasta and pastry dish which was very tasty. Next came another delicious meal which was a lasagna like dish with lamb, peas, potatoes and mushrooms. After dinner we returned to our rooms before all moving to Alix's and Alice's where we wrote our journals and chatted about the day we had just experienced.

Monday, 18 April

Everybody who travels to Istanbul warns you about the prayer calls that begin at dawn which are absolutely impossible to sleep through. I managed to. Awaking rejuvenated we went up to breakfast which was a huge affair with various cereals, breads, yoghurts, eggs, cold meats and much more. Feeling full to the brim we went down to the bus to begin our second day of sightseeing.

The first place we went was the now non-existent hippodrome. In its place stand two towering obelisks and a metallic serpent pole. Eser explained the origins and meanings of each of them before the ritualistic photographing began.

The group then walked over to the Blue mosque, famous for its blue tiles and six minarets where we had to bow our heads under a chain in respect and take our shoes off in order to enter the mosque. Sophie, who was wearing leggings, was made to put a scarf around her waist. Coupled with her ski jacket (needed due to the dramatic difference in temperature she was used to as a resident of Darwin), huge sunglasses and a scarf covering her head she was one of the funniest things any of us had ever seen! The size of the mosque is certainly impressive and the intricate decorations are even more so! Eser told us all about the history of the mosque and the protocols and traditions associated with it. The carpet was particularly interesting as upon closer inspection all the intricate floral pictures on them were actually deliberately arranged into a place where one could pray.

A brief walk to Topaki Palace followed. Separated into four courtyards, Eser once again enlightened us about the interesting history of the palace. We then went off as a group and explored some of the buildings including a bookless library and an ex-treasury building now full of priceless treasures. After an explore, Andrew collected us and brought us to a group of Turkish students who wanted to practice their English. They were all fascinated by us and asked us several questions. We then went to lunch which was just below the palace and looked out onto a magnificent vista of the Bosphorus Strait.

After lunch we once again hopped back onto the bus and travelled to the Rustempasa Mosque which while much smaller than the blue mosque is certainly more beautiful due to its complete covering in magnificent 16th century tiles which according to Eser are worth \$80,000 each. After more photo's we walked down to the Egyptian Spice Bazaar where we all separated into small groups eager to spend some

of our lira on the magnificent spices that seem to plague our noses as soon as we reached the entrance of the bazaar. I must admit that Alix and my haggling skills leave a lot to be desired as they didn't really work that well. Although I still walked out with a bag full of spices, soaps and other goodies!

Our final activity for the afternoon was a brief trip to the Grand Bazaar. While, the huge spice Bazaar is 500m long, the Grand Bazaar is 6000m long. The place is simply cavernous! While we only had a short amount of time to spend there I still managed to buy a few things including a Turkish Fez which was a source of much amusement for the group.

Our last outing for the day was to a restaurant in Istanbul before we returned to the hotel for our last night in Istanbul before we travelled down to Gallipoli. Our dinner was very nice and included at least six different courses which left us bulging!

Tuesday, 20 April

Once again the infamous dawn prayer calls which are known for ruining travelers slumber failed to wake me. Today we were to travel down to Gallipoli, a four hour bus ride. After another magnificent Turkish breakfast in front of our magnificent Turkish vista I returned to my room to begin packing an already full bag with even more stuff.

Fortunately the bag managed to expand the necessary amount to fit all my newfound spices and other things that I had purchased. We then boarded the bus and began the journey to Gallipoli. The highway was relatively smooth but once we moved off it and onto the B roads it became a lot more bumpy and lurchy. In the back seat Sophie, Masie, Alix and Sarah mucked around and joked endlessly which was a source of much amusement. Halfway through the journey we stopped out at a service station and went to a shop where we bought an assortment of peculiar Turkish chocolates and biscuits.

After we set off again Andrew briefed us about the people we would be presenting at the different cemeteries and memorials in Gallipoli. After a least another two hours of travelling we caught our first glimpses of the Gallipoli peninsular. Andrew began pointing out some of the sights we would be viewing in the coming days. After more driving we turned off into the hotel where we immediately went over to have lunch even though it was about 3 o'clock. Instead of four hours it had been more like six!

We hopped back on the bus and drove to Beach Cemetery where we would be meeting a channel seven news program for an interview about the Simpson Prize. Beach Cemetery is a literal explanation of this cemetery, it's on the beach. Facing directly out onto the ocean the small cemetery almost made me slightly jealous of the soldiers who bravely gave their lives lying in the ground beneath us because I truly believed that there would be few better places to lie for the rest of eternity.

The Channel Seven crew recorded us walking around the cemetery looking at the graves before some of the others presented the soldiers they had been given by Andrew. Afterwards Will, Alice and I had private interviews. I was asked by the presenter about my thoughts of Gallipoli and how they were similar or dissimilar to what I had believed they would be. After the cameraman had gotten enough footage we moved onto the Shrapnel Valley cemetery which is the largest in Gallipoli. It was still tiny in comparison to the normal cemeteries in Australia. In the centre of the cemetery stood a large, extremely beautiful Judas tree with exquisite purple and pink flowers. More presentations ensued and once again I felt slightly jealous knowing they were few places as beautiful to be buried. Having travelled through the Western Front it was interesting to see the differences between the commonwealth cemeteries between the different countries. In France they are literally hundreds of tiny crematories dotted around the country side in people's farms, all over the place. All the graves are almost pure white rounded tombstones, in

Gallipoli they can be better described as stone plaques rather than traditional tombstones. However both are equally beautiful and daunting. It is incredible walking around Gallipoli because it is impossible to forget the horrific and infamous events that happened on the hillsides and valley's all around. One of the things I pointed out to the channel seven presenter (who we called Ken Doll as in Barbie Doll because the girls though he looked just a little bit too perfect!) was that despite being told by almost everybody about the extreme terrain it was still a shock to see just how steep and how difficult it would have been for the Anzacs especially if they were being subjected to a constant barrage of bullets, motor shells and other forms of fatal attack. At this stage, because I had forgotten to bring my jumper, I was getting very cold. This coldness quickly dissipated after we began our hike up to our final sight for the day, Pluggies Plateau. 750m of muddy, steep, unsurfaced track is very good at warming you up even in bitterly cold wind. As we slowly climbed up the hill the views of the ocean and surrounding countryside got better and better. By the time we had reached the summit the sphinx could now be seen along with several kilometers worth of scenery which was simply amazing.

Finally we arrived back at Kum Hotel (as we had stopped off there earlier for lunch) where we all ran down to the beach to see the sunset and then had dinner and then moved to our room for journal writing time.

Wednesday, 21 April

After a night at the Kum, which was much less luxurious than the Antik (our hotel in Istanbul), I went down to breakfast which, like Istanbul, was a large affair, although not quite as good as the Antik! Today we would be travelling over from the European side of Turkey to the Asian side where we would be visiting Troy and Çanakkale. We all boarded the bus and drove over to the side of the peninsular that faces the Dardanelles. There we caught a ferry over to the Asian side. Put simply, the journey from Europe to Asia seemed as though it passed through Antarctica as well. It was very, very cold! Having come from the hottest summers ever in Perth to extremely cold and windy weather, no jacket, beanie or scarf was ever going to keep me properly warm. However the views that could be seen from the ferry were extremely beautiful and worth the cold and the wind!

We arrived in the Asian side of Turkey and re-boarded the bus where for the first time the trip was silent as everybody was struggling to keep their eyes open and Sophie, Masie (whose birthday was today) and Sarah were all tightlipped due to exhaustion. We arrived in Troy, the ancient city and were immediately greeted by a ticket gate and an extremely fake and tacky climbable model of the Trojan horse. Off course we all felt the need to climb it and have our picture taken. We then began our tour of ancient Troy; Alice and Sharee both assisted Eser with her explanations of Troy which can be separated into ten different levels because they simply built a new city upon the foundations of the one before it.

I found Troy extremely fascinating as I am interested in Ancient History. It was fascinating hearing stories such as how an uninvited dinner guest managed to start the war which lead to the downfall of Troy and how a man in the 1800's was so obsessed with proving the existence and truth of the book Amadeus he effectively ransacked Troy. After a giggling fit caused by an American women who said in her Texan drawl from over two hundred meters away, "Oh my gawd, it's soooo beautiful!" We left for our next destination, a hill.

The hill in question however was far from dull or boring as it looked out onto the entirety of the Dardanelles, an incredible view. There Andrew told us about the initial naval attack by the British and French up to and on the 18th of March 1915 where the Turks had come of instantly victorious. Then Will spoke about the courageous and daring efforts of the EA2, and how they managed to get past the Turkish

fortifications and sea mines and how in doing so assisted Commander George Hamilton in making the infamous order to “Dig Dig Dig.”

We then moved down to Çanakkale for lunch which as always was a huge affair. Afterwards, feeling full we continued onto the Naval War Museum where we were given a tour by a native Turk who was doing his national service. Being led round the history of the Dardanelles campaign through the eyes and voice of the Turkish instead of Australian’s was an extremely interesting insight. Unlike places like the Australian War Memorial, while trying to remain fairly impartial it is still quite biased towards Australia, the Naval War Museum was strongly in favor of Turkey. While it is common to hear phrases like gallant, daring and brave being associated with the Anzac’s it was a surprise to hear them being related to Turkish soldiers. In places like Villers-Bretaneux in the Western Front Australians are worshiped because the Anzacs saved them. Even the primary school there has a huge wall covered in bold letters spelling, *Never Forget Australia*, and its main street, which was named by the Anzacs, *Rue de Kanga* (Rue in French meaning Street). However in Gallipoli, while Australians and Turks are extremely warm and generous to each other, it is still extremely apparent that Australia was the enemy in the eyes of the Turkish people.

After leaving the museum we went to the Trojan Horse which was donated to Çanakkale when the movie Troy was made. An old lady selling homemade knitted items then turned up and managed to pull Will, who is a complete sucker for any salesman or saleswomen, in to buying most useless things in the world including ugly slippers made from a hemp-like material that were too small for him anyway, several useless bag tags and an apparently mystical wooden necklace charm (of which he could of chosen at least twenty different types).

We then were given a bit of free time to wander around Çanakkale. Alex, Sophie and I couldn’t find anything we wanted to buy so ended up wandering the streets for an hour eating Christmas cake flavoured ice creams to keep us entertained and laughing over the Twilight books that had been translated into Turkish. Finally we re-boarded the Ferry for the trip back to the Kum Hotel where we would be having a birthday dinner for Masie. At the hotel we gave Masie her presents, a flower arrangement, a tee-shirt with a picture of us at the blue mosque (with Sophie looking like a terrorist covered up a scarf over her head) and a hoochie (which we gave her). We then logged onto the internet and watched the channel seven news which featured a forty five second article about the Simpson Prize in which an interview with myself was included which was extremely embarrassing. The final thing for the day was once again the journal session along with a small celebration of Masie’s birthday.

Thursday, 22 April

Today it was planned for us to walk along the front line. Put simply I am now very sympathetic towards the Anzac soldiers who had to walk up and down the cliffs to the front line in boiling hot and freezing cold weather while being shot at and bombarded with motor shells. We started our day at Ari Burnu Cemetery which along with the other cemeteries I have seen it was one of the most beautiful ever. All the graves face the water which is extremely graceful and serene. Looking out into the never-ending horizon it is possible to believe that the dead soldiers have an uninterrupted view of the home, Australia. After we concluded our visit to Ariburnu we began our walk up Artillery Road where we stopped off at Shell Green Cemetery. There I presented one of the dead soldiers to the rest of the group, Guilford resident Douglas Lennard-Bartlett. We then continued our walk up the road, stopping occasionally to photograph the amazing views which seem to surround the entire peninsular. Finally we reached Lone Pine Cemetery, extremely hot and tired from the long walk up the mountain like hill.

On Anzac Day, Lone Pine is the host of the Australian ceremony. This is one of the most attended events apart from the dawn service itself and requires immense amounts temporary infrastructure like seating and audio-visual displays. When we arrived at Lone Pine, they were still setting all this up which meant it was very noisy! Two of the soldiers I would be presenting had no known grave so their names were on the memorial at Lone Pine. I took an etching of their names. Kimberly presented her piece about an aboriginal soldier who had died in the war, which was very detailed and moving. Afterwards we continued our hike, now along the front line itself. From all around the views were simply jaw dropping, at stages it was possible to see both the Dardanelles and the Aegean Sea at the same time. Along the way we stopped at various commonwealth cemeteries where Australians lay, all of them extremely humbling and beautiful. By now the sun had reached the peak of its ferocity and was bearing down on us with all the force it could muster. Along the way we stopped on the side of the road where Andrew pointed out the Australian front line trenches which hadn't been filled in, like it had been in the Western Front, simply left for nature to try to cover it up. We all had a walk along them. While they had lost some of their original depth they were still extremely well preserved and gave an incredible idea of the conditions of Trench Warfare. Across the road, only about twenty meters was the Turkish front line trench, it was mind blowing to properly understand just how close it other was. We stopped at Quinn's Point where the views looked down the Artillery Road Ridge down into the Ocean below. Finally we arrived at our final destination before we would leave for lunch, the Nek. It is common knowledge that the Nek was one of the worst and most devastating offensives by the Anzacs during the Gallipoli campaign. Very few men survived. However I was shocked when we arrived at the cemetery to find only about fifteen tombstones. The fierceness of the battle meant many fell and died in no-man's land where they couldn't be retrieved which meant there are no known graves for them. At the Nek I presented about two tenth light horseman soldiers who had fought and died at the Nek. They had been West Australian brothers. Charles Bean recorded one of them, "Running like a schoolboy" towards the enemy fire. This quote was the inspiration for the character of Archie in the film *Gallipoli*.

We all hoped on the bus, stinking after our long hike, which for the soldiers at Gallipoli would have been considered a stroll considering we didn't have to lug several kilograms of heavy and bulky equipment and weren't constantly bombarded with enemy fire. After an extended lunch break which gave us a chance to have a rest we returned Lone Pine where we practiced our formal role in the proceedings for the ceremony, we were to be wreath handlers, carrying the wreaths to the selected dignitaries who would be laying them.

After this we once again boarded the bus to Baby 700 where a presentation was made for Commander Swannel who had been killed trying to teach his men to fire properly on the first day of the Gallipoli campaign. Our last destination for the day was a small town where Ataturk had resided leading up to the campaign in 1915. There, we visited the house he had stayed in and had another delicious Apple Tea.

Returning back to the hotel there was still time before dinner. To fill the time we decided to play some volleyball and then some soccer. After a while we all faced the facts including Andrew, we were useless. We had won a national essay writing prize not by being good at sport! Earlier in the day a reporter from the Perth newspaper, the West Australian had contacted Andrew wanting an interview. The reporter was covering Anzac Day in Gallipoli and was short of material so he came to the hotel and interviewed me about my essay, the contest and my experiences in Turkey. Afterwards I had dinner before having a game of cards before retiring, exhausted after a long day.

Friday, 23 April

Yesterday we toured most of the Australian cemeteries and war areas, today we were going to travel around the Turkish cemeteries and the other allied cemeteries. Our first port of call was Helles where we visited the British memorial which is a great monolithic obelisk much like the war memorial in Kings Park, Perth. Helles is the very point of the Gallipoli Peninsula and yields almost 270 degree views of the ocean and the Dardanelles which is extremely beautiful. More and more the idea of living in a place like the peninsula is growing on me due to the fabulous beauty of it. Here three teenage boys bumped into us and were smitten with the girls which was very funny to watch their displeasure!

We then walked down to a British Cemetery before making our way to the French cemetery and memorial. Unlike the commonwealth cemeteries which are very bland and somber, the French memorial is quite Mediterranean with whitewashed, uneven walls and various, mismatched plaques on the main memorial. We then moved onto the Turkish Memorial which is a truly huge monument to fallen Turks. Unlike the Australian monument at Lone Pine which is designed to be part of the surrounding environment unlike the Turkish monument which almost seems as though it was built to trump any commonwealth monument by being so vast it can be seen from almost every hill in the surrounding area!

Today was Turkish Children's Day which meant a lot of schools had the day off or were having things like excursions. This meant the Turkish memorial was full of Turkish students. We were introduced by Eser to a group of at least forty to fifty Turkish girls who seemed to swamp the eight of us asking us for photos and facebook addresses!

After leaving the main monument we went to another Turkish cemetery that Jacquie wanted to see. All the tombstones were stones in the shape of the Turkish helmets used during world war one which was a novel idea for a tombstone.

After lunch we once again boarded the bus, destined for a port where we would catch a ferry along with several other groups who had their travel organised by the War Memorial. The ferry was to travel along the Gallipoli beaches from beneath Anzac Cove up to Sulva Bay. The ferry, in my opinion, was absolutely essential to the trip as it allowed me to 'connect the dots' as to where all the cemeteries, memorials, battle fields and tracks are in relation to each other. The cruise also allowed me to appreciate the extremely steep and difficult terrain the original Anzacs had been forced to cover.

During the cruise I was introduced to several people from different groups which was interesting because it allowed me to talk to other Australians about their personal opinions and experiences of Gallipoli. In particular I talked to two widowers from Western Australia who were making the pilgrimage to Gallipoli, they had both had several family members who had served in Gallipoli, all of whom had survived!

When we got back to the hotel we all decided to go for a swim in the Aegean Sea. Coming from Perth, Western Australia where, while being fairly south, the ocean is still extremely warm compared to the rest of the world and the rest of Australia which meant the water was freezing. Putting my head under was like falling onto concrete as my entire body seemed to spasm due to the unexpected cold. Eventually I got used to the water and soon started enjoying my swim in the sea. After cleaning up, we went down to the café where we meet up with everyone else. The day before we had given some washing to be laundered by the hotel. Alix and Masie had done the same but today not yesterday. While at the café Alix told us that their washing had been delivered earlier that day. Ours hadn't, and I was getting desperate as I was running out of clean clothes. Will and I decided to go to reception to query this. From the time we dropped the washing off we had been to reception eight times. When we got there we were told to check again, so after we checked again we came back. This time one of the managers came to check for us. When we came back the other manager was screaming on the three different phones trying to find where

our clothes were which was quite funny watching some lost washing starting what seemed like the third world war. After about ten minutes of continuous anger they managed to work out that the washing had been delivered to room 416 instead 316.

After dinner we returned to the café where we played several card games. It was very funny and very annoying to watch the others like Alix who didn't know a thing about cards. For her the suit of clubs was called three leaf clover cards.

Saturday, 24 April

Today we were allowed to sleep in a bit as we weren't planned to leave until after 9:00 instead of the usual 8:30 which was a nice treat. Andrew hadn't planned anything in advance for us to do today so it was decided we would walk from The Nek to Chunuk Bair. The weather in Gallipoli, except the day we went to Troy has been superb; hot and sunny. Unfortunately this made the walk, despite its shortness (only about half an hour) slightly un-enjoyable. The other problem was that it seemed all the visitors arrived and were traipsing about in huge coaches which meant we had to walk in single file along the very side of the single way road as not to be run over!

Chunuk Bair is the New Zealand memorial to the fallen Anzacs. Preparations for the ceremony were well underway which meant we couldn't get very close to the monument itself although we were able to get our picture taken underneath a huge statue of Ataturk. The place the statue stood was the exact spot he was hit by a piece of shrapnel above the heart. I learnt there that he was saved by his pocket watch which was in his chest pocket and acted as a shield against the small piece of shrapnel. We were then allowed to have our photo taken with two of the Turkish soldiers guarding the area (as sometimes they do not allow this).

When we got back to the hotel it was only 11:00, however we had finished for the day and had the afternoon free to do what we please. Alix, Kimberly, Eser, Masie, Andrew, Will and I all played a game of soccer which we weren't very good at. Afterwards we had lunch and then chilled in the café waiting for an early dinner at five o'clock and then an early sleep in order to be well rested for the dawn service which would require us to be up at midnight! We also bought a huge load of chocolates and treats for us to enjoy while waiting for the services to begin, in total it cost 52 lira between the eight of us. It was decided the chocolate would remain in my room but when I was out the others snuck in and stole it off Will who caused a huge debacle, resulting in the others being told off by another guest!

Eventually I went to bed and fell asleep very quickly.

Sunday, 25 April

For me Anzac Day only just started on Anzac Day as I got up at five past twelve in the morning in order to get down to the dawn service in time. Will is not very good at getting up in the morning and the daily routine is normally me eventually telling him to get up; however today I had to effectively push him over to make him get up before the bus left. I had been warned that it can be very, very, very cold so I made sure I rugged up with plenty of layers before I left the room. In actual fact the temperature was fairly decent, certainly above ten degrees which is similar to a normal Perth winter day. However I knew this could be deceptive as it was only going to get colder all the way up until dawn and the sea breeze blowing in over the ocean onto the memorial where the dawn service was going to take place would make me quite cold.

We all met up in the café where we picked up our breakfast, a cheese sandwich (which I didn't eat because I don't eat cheese), some fruit and a juice box. We made sure everybody was organised and then hoped on the bus that would be taking all the war memorial travelers' to the memorial. Luckily we were waved through the initial checkpoint which meant we were able to disembark incredibly close to the set up itself. After making our way through security which was separated into male and female sections (as normal the male side was quicker). We then collected a gift bag with a poncho, program and other documents that were being offered and pushed our way through the crowd to the stand we would be seating in. As the Simpson Prize was travelling as part of the war memorial tour we were given V.I.P seating and security passes which meant we had reserved seating in the closest stand to the water and stage which was excellent. Sitting a row in front of us was the Frank Macdonald Memorial Prize recipients which is a Tasmanian only version of the Simpson Prize. We soon found out the Tasmanians were going to be travelling further onto the Western Front which we made us all extremely envious and jealous. However we managed to comfort ourselves by making sure it was known that we were the eight best high school history writers in a nation of 20 million instead of just the smallest state in Australia.

We arrived around 1:30 and the ceremony itself wasn't due to start until about 5:30 which meant we had a lot of time to spare. Throughout this time a series of audio-visual displays were broadcasted. Comedian Warren Brown. After a bit of shivering and wolfing down pieces of chocolate that we had bought earlier, we decided to go for a wander. The memorial area was a sight to behold. Most of the seats were beginning to fill up, but in the middle grassy area there was a sea of multicolored sleeping bags full of Australians, New Zealand's and a few Turks. We walked past this fascinating view and entered a shanty market which had popped up to service the needs of the visitors. There were jumpers, jackets, blankets, drinks, foods and many other things. After walking the length of the stalls we decided a hot chocolate would be the best option to satisfy our thirst to spend money. When we arrived back in the central memorial a New Zealand Military Maori dance began which was interesting to watch. When we got back to our seats we sat and chatted for a bit more before once again getting bored and desperate for food, this time kebabs (which we had yet to eat in Turkey). Put simply it was delicious!

When we returned to our seats we were just in time for another audio visual display, this time a slideshow of several different soldiers who had fought in Gallipoli and who had made the ultimate sacrifice which was extremely moving. Afterwards another video began about a Gallipoli symphony which was being progressively composed by writers from Turkey, Australia and New Zealand. A new part made by an Australian Russian composer was being played for the first time. We were told that the piece was called the landing and represented the initial Anzac landing on the 25th April 1915. The music was to be accompanied by a light show. The music started off fairly innocent although with undertones of danger, exhilaration and risk which was meant to represent the first part of the landing into Gallipoli before the Turkish retaliation began. Suddenly the dynamic of the piece changed dramatically as it became obvious that the Anzacs had started its attack and was being attacked by the Turks as well. Progressively the music got louder and louder and more intense and the Anzacs made their actual landing and their run towards the immediate mountains where the Turks were stationed. Throughout the piece several lights illuminated the water and then the Sphinx which was really fascinating to see.

After this the final video show was broadcasted, an update on the ceremonies in New Zealand, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Canberra. After this the officials and dignitaries started to arrive and started to take their places in their designated V.I.P seating. This took some time but once they had all sorted themselves and were seated the proceedings began!

The official ceremony was, this year, being run by New Zealand which meant many of the military figures who took part in the commemorations were New Zealand although Australia also took place in several aspects.

The ceremony started with the entrance of the catafalque, who would be standing as symbolic guard over the proceedings. Then began a series of speeches from dignitaries including her Excellency Quentin Bryce Governor General of Australia, John Key (Prime Minister of New Zealand), The Chief of the Navy and the Minister for Veteran's Affairs. By now it was getting quite light which gave another interesting view of the peninsular. At this stage it was time for the last post, two minutes silence and reveille. It was fascinating looking out onto a vista different coloured jackets, beanies, scarves and sleeping bags. However despite their differences they were all here for a single, solitary reason; to remember and commemorate those who had fallen before us in the ultimate act of selflessness.

After the reveille had finished the three national anthems were played. Turkey's eastern European background based on soviet custom despite their continued defiance to Russia up until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their national anthem, unlike Australia and New Zealand which are reasonably light and pompous, gives an impression of grandeur and seriousness. It was funny to watch Australians flounder and struggle with the second verse of Advance Australia Fair.

After the memorial had reached its conclusion we all got ready to leave as soon as possible. Luckily, because we were seated nearby the official dignitaries we were able to walk down the sectioned off pathway they walked along. The result was that we were able to begin walking towards Lone Pine far before the rest of the group. The walk up Artillery Road was a long one. It was funny walking past some of the medics who were posted on the track when they looked at me funny because I was wearing dress pants and dress shoes for an early morning hike. When we arrived at Lone Pine, there was hardly anyone there which meant we were given front row seats right up close to the main memorial area.

After we had freshened up and changed into our Simpson Prize polo tops we still had around two and a half hours before the ceremony began. Once again Warren Brown acted as host to keep the crowd occupied before the official memorial started.

One of the officials came and told us that the Governor General wanted to meet us which sent Alix into a frenzy of excitement. While we were waiting to meet her Warren Brown invited us up onto Camera where he interviewed Andrew, Alice and Kimberly. By now the Governor General had arrived at the sight and was slowly walking around the area talking to different people. Eventually she arrived; she asked us a few questions and was particularly interested in the Queenslander Masie and Sharee who teaches at the GG's old school.

Almost immediately after the Governor General left us she was whisked away by her immense security detail so she could be seated for the ceremony. We also made our way to where we would be seated, close to the wreaths we would be presenting. The ceremony followed a very similar format to the Dawn Service except instead of the muted tones of New Zealanders; the strine of Australia could be heard far and wide.

After addresses by the Governor General and other important dignitaries including Alan Griffin (who presented our awards in Canberra). Alix then stood to read a poem, which she did extremely well (except for one slight hitch).

Then it was the rest of the groups turn to become part of the limelight. Alice was the first to present a wreath to Quentin Bryce, and then I presented one to John Keys. In all I presented four different wreaths. It was originally planned for Turkey to go after myself (as two soldiers presented and laid the wreath instead of us) but literally minutes before the ceremony began the order was changed so Turkey went before New Zealand. Andrew hadn't been told this and so after Alice and presented her wreath he tried to push me in front of the Turks. Luckily he realised what was happening before we caused any major diplomatic incident.

After the official ceremony was over William and Kimberly presented a wreath on behalf of the Simpson Prize group. We then made our way back to the hotel where after lunch we had a sleep.

After awaking from at least two and a half hours of sleep, Will and myself went down to the café where Jacquie and Sharee were having a drink watching the rowdy Australians in the pub playing two up and drinking shots, etc. Eventually we all arrived and we went over to our last dinner in Gallipoli.

Monday, 26 April

Today was our last day in Gallipoli. It was certainly sad to see it go. Before I came to Turkey, I had been most looking forward to Istanbul, the stories I had heard about the Grand Bazaar and the other sights had dominated my mind considerably more than Gallipoli. On reflection, I am not so sure I was right. Gallipoli astounded me; I never expected it to be what I had seen. There are many reasons for this; but I think it was a unison of all of these that made Gallipoli what it was for me.

It is safe to say, everybody was amazed at the Australiana quality that Gallipoli is bestowed with leading up to the end of April. The Hotel Kum, for example, sounds as though it could be a normal summer holiday resort in Australia. I certainly had no difficulty understanding the thick Turkish accent for the plain and simple reasons that it is impossible to hear it over the Aussie twang.

But, for me, what made Gallipoli one of the highlights of my trip would have to be the incredible beauty of it! It seems as though from wherever you are on the peninsula, whether that be on the top a ridge, or the very bottom, the sights are quite simply mindboggling! Despite its small size, the views over the Aegean Sea and the Dardanelles are both amazing and unique every time (It is especially incredible to be able to see both at the same time which is possible at the top of the ridges).

Furthermore, the peace and tranquility of the peninsula, even when it is plagued by hundreds upon hundreds of Australian tourists, is like nothing I have ever seen. In the Western Front, my recollections are of a farming region dotted by historic cemeteries where it is obvious that great atrocities have occurred but everybody seems almost reluctant to accept that it did happen. In Gallipoli, the lack of arable farming land in the areas where most of the Australian fighting occurred means little is available to mask the truth of history that occurred. Each and every cemetery is unique and different but all extremely beautiful. Personally, I think Ari Burnu Cemetery is the most picturesque. The notion of eternal rest lying directly onto the sea is extremely symbolic and poignant for me. Following a close second is Shrapnel Valley Cemetery where the beautiful, old, lumbering Judas Tree acts as a beacon of peace and serenity in a battlefield still scarred by the horrific events that occurred 95 years prior.

We left the hotel, excited to be returning to Istanbul where we could once again release with some retail therapy. However, it is safe to say, each and every one of us felt a pang of disappointment to be leaving Gallipoli. As mentioned above, it had been a surprise in only the very best ways for me.

A long, fairly dull trip back to Istanbul ensued, interrupted by a break for lunch it what we decided was a completely wood paneled Scandinavian Ski Lodge that had somehow drifted from the slopes to a motorway in Turkey! Everyone was beginning to feel slightly down-hearted as they knew we only had a single sleep left before we would be forced to once again re-board the airplanes that would bring us, not to a new exciting land, but to a normal one we call home.

We arrived in Istanbul later than what we had hoped for. This caused a great panic for all of us as it meant we had less time for shopping! Andrew had requested we stop at a special street called something I can no longer remember (I think it was Ishtick Lal or something like that). Put simply, it was the main shopping

street of Istanbul – much like the Champ Élysées in Paris but less expensive. Although I must admit it was still very nice and the Turkish delight shop Andrew pointed out sold us only the very best delights the great land of Turkey had to offer!

Alix and I separated from the group while here and went off to look at some of the shops. While walking with the group, Andrew had offered us a piece of bread, a delicacy in Turkey covered in sesame seeds. It had left us very, very thirsty so we decided to pop into only the most traditionally Turkish shop in the entire street for a light refreshment, Star Bucks.

Emerging with our delicious vanilla frappachinos, we ventured on. After about an hour of shopping the group re-converged and boarded the bus and made our way back to the hotel we had spent our first two nights at. From the street, I had bought my history teacher, according to the girls, an extremely soft and elegant pashmina scarf.

We dumped our bags in our hotel room, which luckily wasn't suffering lung cancer from a lifetime of heavy smoking like our first one, and rushed back down to reception overly eager to jump into the bargains we could find at the Grand Bazaar.

Once again, Alix and I slipped away from the main group, to be later joined by Sophie and Alice. I must admit I was extremely happy with my takings at the Grand Bazaar. By the end of our two hours under the cover of the six kilometers plus worth of undercover shops I exited with a collection of interesting goodies.

I had managed to bargain half a dozen small boxes of Turkish Delights into my possession which were to become presents for my friends upon my return to Perth. I also ended up with a Istanbul Tee-shirt, some more scarves for my mum and sister, a turquoise bracelet for my sister, an Aladdin Genie Lamp and a Turkish Rug. I had decided that with my new Genie Lamp and Turkish Rug I could become Aladdin himself. My suggestion was buoyed by the fact that while purchasing my carpet, one of the old salesmen called me a Sultan with my three Harems (Alix, Sophie and Alice!).

We all returned to the hotel triumphant and happy with our takings. We got ready for a farewell dinner and once again regrouped at Reception. The location of our farewell dinner I felt was somewhere as grand as the trip had been for us, the sewers!

When the hotel had been built, the excavations had discovered a huge Cistern underneath the site where water had been stored ready for use. During the construction, the hotel turned this cistern into a restaurant which is where we really had dinner. The meals as usual were all delicious and extremely filling. After we had all finished our desert, we gave Eser her present from us, a Turquoise Necklace. She responded by thanking us all by giving a moving speech. Andrew followed by also presenting a speech which was as well extremely heart provoking. He also gave us all a small gift. A recreation of the Gallipoli Star that was intended to be a medal awarding those who had served in Australia's baptism of fire.

We ended our night together by taking a final walk through the streets of Istanbul. We had all dressed for the occasion, wearing our Turkish Fezzes and I adorned in my stunningly Turkish leather jacket. As I told everybody, I am amazed people aren't asking us for direction because our disguise could trick even the greatest detective to mankind!

Andrew managed to push us into a Hooker bar, where the main attraction was the hundred or so Hookers that covered every surface, floor, bench and couch. A long walk eventually ended up at the Blue Mosque where we had some final photos of us as a group before we were pushed out of the mosque by security which signaled to us we should return to the hotel.

After arriving back at the hotel, we stayed late into the night packing our bags (no, sorry, make that stuffing our bags) with our newfound collections from the trip. After spending a week in a hotel where there were no English channels, only the word of drunk(ish) Australian tourists, I was ecstatic about having the BBC World News Channel to bring me a constant update of ENGLISH news that I had missed. For example, I had no clue what day the great ash cloud that had almost ruined our trip had passed and when airports once again started accepting airplanes instead of just angry, trapped passengers! One of the main items on the news was the British election that was coming up. I ended up explaining to Will most of the workings of democratic government as he began learning a brand new topic called politics! Finally at about 1:30 in the morning I retired to my bed for the final sleep!

Tuesday, 26 April

Success at last! The prayer calls finally woke me up! The one problem I did have however, was that I had thought the Grand Bazaar opened at seven thirty (instead it opened at ten!) so I got up really early in preparation for that. I forced Will up and we went to breakfast where I found out from Alix and Sarah that we had another three hours to waste. Luckily I had some (actually a mountain load) of homework that I had been putting up with to complete which I was able to make a dent in!

After more BBC World service and a lot more procrastination on the homework front, it was 10:00 and we made our way to the Grand Bazaar for the final time. This time I went off with Sophie because we both expressed interest in going to the silver and antique section of the Bazaar. On our first day in Istanbul when we went to the Bazaar I had noticed a particularly beautiful antique pocket watch. Upon our return the day prior I had once again returned to the same shop where I was once again transfixed by the simply elegant time keeping instrument. It was then I asked the price, \$300 US! This of course was way to much for me to swallow so I moved on.

However, through the night, my mind kept wandering back to it. So we returned to the same shop to reconsider it. In total I think I must have stopped at it at least ten times weighing up whether I wanted it or not! Eventually Sophie pulled me away and we ended up getting her a nice ring and silver bracelet. Slightly disappointed about not getting the watch I ended up buying a Backgammon Set, a Turkish Key ring and a Turkish elephant (to complement my growing collection of Aladdin Goods!).

By now Sophie and myself had run out of things to buy and we were boarded, still with half an hour to go before we had to even consider returning. During this time we somehow made our way back to the antique section where after at least fifteen minutes of hard thinking on my behalf, Sophie shoved me into the shop and told me to buy it. After a lot of bargaining I got the watch for about 60 Euros and 135 Australian (still an impressive deal). However what was even better was that I got my pocket watch, which was a simply spectacular 1940's Omega wound up watch. In my opinion it was my best purchase and has buoyed me to pursue a collection (which now numbers two!).

Returning to the hotel, I stuffed my new goods into the bulging and certainly overweight suitcase into the bus and waited to head off to the airport. On the way there, we all joined in on some last sing-along's, including a rendition of Istanbul (not Constantinople). Eser gave us all a little goodie back with an eagle eye and a Turkish flag in it as a farewell gift. We arrived at the airport we where went through security and lined up at the Singapore Airlines check-in, all dreading how much we would have to pay in additional baggage. Fortunately, Andrew (with an overweight baggage pass) and Eser (with her natural Turkish) managed to get us all checked in with no additional charge. We then bid our final farewell to our excellent guide and made our way through customs.

After dumping our bags at the gate, all the winners made our way to the food court where we all enjoyed another traditional Turkish dish, Burger King. After an extended lunch we began a leisurely stroll back where we stopped off duty free to make fun of the stupid, pointless products (that we recommended Will buy as he truly would buy anything and everything if he could). It was here one of us looked at one of the departure screens and noticed our flight was boarding!

We all rushed back along the seemingly endless corridor to get to our gate. We all boarded on time, fortunately. The airplane, unfortunate, was just as old as the one that had taken us from Singapore to Istanbul. Walking through Business Class (which is always a disappointment) we said a quick hello to Warren Brown (who we had also seen at the Ishtick Lal Street!).

We then began our long trip back home. The first flight seemed to go extremely quickly and after only a single movie we found ourselves in Dubai where we would have to wait on the airplane, this time for about two hours (it seemed) waiting to take off again! Our longer flight to Singapore went by uneventful. The food was decent enough, although for in my seat the entertainment screen wouldn't work (but that gave me an excuse to finish my homework!) Sitting next to Alix and Andrew meant that there was always a chance to chat as well. We spoke on length about the possible emergencies that Singapore Airlines should plan for in their safety demonstrations (such as an Arctic crash, or a jungle crash and how each passenger should react. For example, we were all supposed to use Sarah's soft air as pillows on the hard ice/jungle floor).

Arriving in Singapore, I was ready to be home. While I can only estimate, It is my belief that somewhere roughly over the centre of India I completely and utterly accepted that our trip to Turkey was over. I was no longer sad, I only wanted to be home. On the plane, Alix, Andrew and I had talked about what we were all looking forward to most at home. For Alix it was her mum. Andrews and my responses weren't as sweet. For Andrew it was his pillow, for me: my bathroom!

Arriving in Singapore, I wasn't physically tired for some reason but I was mentally dead. What this meant is I got rather annoyed at every body at stopped talking. As I said several times, I wanted to be home and I wanted to be home now! What was even worse for people like Sophie, Jacquie and myself is that instead of just travelling direct from Singapore to our respective home ports of Perth and Darwin (which would take at max five to six hours) we would have to fly to Sydney (an eight hour flight), spend the night in an annoying, dirty, small hotel on the outskirts of the airport and then get up early in the morning to see the others off, wait around to midday for our final flights home (a four and a half hour flight to Perth from Sydney) on ancient, small planes before finally arriving back home.

A flight to Perth was due to leave from Singapore about five minutes after the flight to Sydney. I was about a millimeter and a half away from 'accidently' missing the flight to Sydney and having to fly to Perth instead. I knew fully well that if I was to fly to Perth direct from Sydney I would be home ahead of everybody by at least two or three hours plus instead of being dead last by about twelve hours (save two others)!

Jacquie and I were at a loss why Boronia travels were unable to fly us straight home. We eventually came to the decision that the travel agents (that we now hated) who lived in Melbourne had no idea how ideal Perth is located for travel compared to other cities such as Sydney!

Well back to the story and a normal temper level! We arrived in Sydney late at night where we ended up waiting the longest for our bags to arrive before having to explain every single item of our bags to quarantine. We then said our goodbyes to Will, Alice, Alix, Masie and Sharee who were going to be flying back that night, while the rest of us would be forced to endure one final night away from our quite frankly superb beds at home!

The hotel in Sydney was hardly comparable to Istanbul (it seemed as though us hanger-oners had been forgotten about by the travel company)! That night I called my parents, which was nice to speak to them again. Every other time I had called them had been in the morning, just before we were about to leave (which meant I didn't even have a chance to properly miss them). However being back in Aus meant I could call them at night after we had finished all our activities. When I spoke to them I really missed them because I didn't have anything to take my mind of it. I think knowing that I could have been home with them made it even worse!

The next morning we all got up early, Andrew and Sarah had already left because Sarah's flight was leaving early. We all had breakfast before catching the shuttle to the airport. It was at check in we said our goodbyes to Andrew as he was about to fly out himself.

On collection, I don't think the trip would have been even a single bit as good without Andrew, I simply believe nobody could take his place. Yes, while Turkey provides the excellent sights and experiences, Andrew always was able to put a happy, fun, enjoyable side to all of it. His knowledge at Gallipoli was also outstanding and made the trip one of the best things i have ever had the opportunity to experience!

At the airport, Jacquie and I checked – in through Qantas Club (of which I had passes to) in the hope that we would avoid the excess language charge. Fortunately we did, with only a slap on the wrist instead of a monstrous fee! We then walked around the airport waiting for Sophie's flight to Darwin to leave. We all bought a box of Krispy Kremes, which is a must for any student living in Perth (as we don't have a Krispy Kreme in Perth). When Sophie's flight was called we said our goodbyes and moved to the other end of the terminal where Kimberly's flight was due to depart next. After Kimberly left, Jacquie and I went up to the Qantas Club where we spent the next hour waiting for our flight to leave.

Finally, our flight began boarding and we made our way to the gate. The flight over had been in an ancient plane that seemed less to fly through the air than jump up and down in it. Fortunately we were to be flying on one of the international jets which meant it had screens in the back of the seats (which gave me something to do!).

After another four hours of flying, our plane landed in home sweet home, Perth. I was put simply ecstatic to be home. After leaving Istanbul almost three days earlier I had finished travelling and was back home. It was fantastic to see Mum again and I was looking forward just as much to see the rest of my family. We collected the luggage and I said goodbye to Jacquie who had been an excellent traveler to journey the world with. But at last, I was home.

As I said earlier, this trip is the best thing I have ever done. I am struggling to think of much that could beat it. Of course Gallipoli was the highlight; it was nothing like what I had expected it to be. Even though I had heard the stories, it was still a massive shock and a pleasant surprise to be greeted by what I would now consider to be one of the most beautiful places on Earth.

It is also impossible to Forget Istanbul; it really is a mix between the grand, classical imposing European Architecture and the slightly grubby, mismatched Asia. Having been to all the impressive ancient sights and amazing market places, etc. I have been inspired to continuing travelling to places like that. I now have an overwhelming urge to travel to places like Egypt and India.

Finally, the aspect of the trip that makes the Simpson Prize, the Simpson Prize; the people. It will certainly be impossible to forget any of my new friends. It is amazing to see how but even before the first flight out of Sydney which was so, so, so, so long ago, we were all already best friends even though we had only met each other once before for the briefest of brief encounters in Canberra. Everybody (including Eser, Andrew, Sharee and Jacquie) brought a different, exciting attribute to the table which made the trip such a world wind delight! I struggle to see how anything will ever beat it ever again.