



THE Simpson PRIZE

A COMPETITION FOR
YEAR 9 AND 10 STUDENTS

JOURNAL of TRIP to
GALLIPOLI

2010 Winner
Queensland

Maisie Biggs
Clayfield College



Simpson Prize 2010 – Journal of Trip to Gallipoli

Maisie Biggs
Clayfield College



Day 1/2

It was exciting boarding the plane for Sydney. I got the feeling that planes would become far less enjoyable once we reached the tenth hour of flight, but at that moment, it was a great feeling. Arriving in Sydney, Sharee and I were the first to meet Andrew, and we were there to greet and catch up with the semi-strangers we had met in Canberra as they all came off their planes. I hadn't seen Alex since Canberra so the rest got to watch in awe at our little meeting. Soon the mini-reunion was moved to the food court, the need for Krispy Kremes overwhelming some of the girls! I will spare the reader an account of the following plane trips. To be honest I was half conscious for most of the time so there is little to tell, though Andrew managed to snap a couple of flattering photos of us sleeping, and made us groan when offered a Singapore Airlines hot towel. I have learnt not to watch too many funny movies while on a plane; supposedly my laughter was a tad uproarious, garnering a number of stares from the other passengers. We saw Abu-Dhabi, even if it was just the lights that seemed to stretch on forever as we descended into the airport. Once we touched down in Istanbul, we all managed to regain our energy, the enormity of our situation seemed to hit us, our excitement at seeing the different dress of the men and signs written all in Turkish bordering on the hysterical – the suspense and long wait for the trip made our actual arrival hard to believe. On leaving the airport, we met Eser, our guide who told us to consider her 'our sister'. After arriving at our hotel, a beautiful place in the Old City on the European side (Eser made sure we know our location!) we unpacked and got changed (and may have had a quick nap). I was in a room with Sophie, the same girl I was with in Canberra so we got on very well. I think the plane trip acted as a kind of bonding experience, there is none of the awkwardness we experienced in Canberra, and the surreal nature of our experience seems to remedy this.

At this point, we left the hotel and Eser took us on a boat trip on the Bosphorus. It was a great way to see Istanbul, from the incredible number of palaces to the incredible fort. Eser told us all about the history, and Alex taught us some Turkish – bebek gibe means he/she's a babe. I get the feeling it will come in handy ... 'Aya Sofia' is the Turkish name of the church/mosque/museum we then went to. It is the fourth largest church ever built which was turned into a mosque. Today, after we left the church and saw an incredible brief view of the city through the windows of the bus, the students ran down to the place Eser had shown

us as an entrance to the Grand Bazaar near our hotel. Here we sampled our first Turkish delights, the shopkeepers I'm sure were laughing at us, and our shock at how cheap it was!

Day 3

Today was very eventful, this morning we went to the Hippodrome, where racing was held in the Ottoman period (I think). It now hosts a massive Egyptian obelisk and various other curiosities; all vary tall! We encountered our first bebes, and headed on the 'Blue Mosque', dubbed so by European tourists but actually called the 'Sultan Ahmet' mosque. It was beautiful; I can't describe it so took many photos! Though I think my lack of a headscarf garnered a couple of looks, woops! There were an uncountable number of cats lazing in the sun in the Topkapi Palace, where we visited next. It was a short walk from the mosque, a very picturesque one at that, that took us into the gardens of the immense palace, and after some grueling questioning by Eser (joking questions, of course), we were set free to explore the place. Encounters included that with a gorgeous but book-free library, glittering daggers and a hypnotic diamond, one of the largest in the world. On our way to lunch, we met a large group of school teenagers that was there specifically to talk to English-speaking tourists, so they had some fun practicing on us! After the exchange of Facebook information and a large number of photos, we headed off to lunch at a nearby restaurant, where the main topic of discussion was how enamored the teenage Turkish girls were with Dale's bright blue eyes! Following our visit to a smaller, but no less elaborate mosque, we walked through some crazy markets to reach the Egyptian Spice Bazaar! Here we picked up all manner of spices, including green apple tea (which we all fell in love with at lunch!) and sumac, sold by a very friendly shopkeeper! I also got some henna for Clare, and went halves with Sarah on Turkish delight for the bus trip to Gallipoli (smart thinking). Afterwards Eser showed us around the Grand Bazaar, what we were all looking forward to! The incredible maze is hard to explain, kilometers of stores all jammed in together in an insane but amazing shopping experience! We couldn't stay long, just long enough for Eser to cover the basics and for Alex and I to check out the silver section – I walked away with a turquoise bracelet and ring! The only downside was the creepy approaches of a certain shopkeeper who asked me if I wanted to 'grab a drink', I managed to communicate a no as I pulled Alex and Kimberley out of the Bazaar with me! We actually did go out to dinner as a group tonight, a restaurant serving traditional Turkish where all the girls (but Sarah) were given tulip folded napkins (the bebes waiter made her a special one to make up for it!).

Day 4

Today I was woken up for the first time by the 5 o'clock prayer call! It was amazing to hear but it meant I didn't fall asleep again until our alarm went off a couple of hours later! We spent five hours on the bus today, but despite how that sounds it was really fun. The girls up the back (Sophie, Sarah, Alex and I) must have shattered our reputations with the grown ups, we may have been a tad boisterous and loud, but it meant the trip was not the long slog we were expecting. I gave Alex a new look and we all fell asleep on top of each other after overdosing on European chocolate (and these incredible biscuits called 'Tutku' amazing!). Finally we reached Gelibolu, where we are staying at the Kum Hotel. Sharing a room with Alix (yay) we dropped our stuff (a kind hotel person was nice enough to carry my bag up the outside stairs to our 'mini-apartment') and then headed off to the ANZAC Cove 'Beach' cemetery after getting changed and having lunch. A Seven News crew met us there and did a series of cliché panning shots of our mournful scanning of the graves and interviews with a few students. I was filmed doing my memorial speech for a soldier. Aside from that, it was a very humbling experience; the place seemed too beautiful

to host the bloodshed that occurred there. At this cemetery we found Simpson's grave as well. Today we also visited Shrapnel Valley cemetery, featuring a blooming Judas tree, and climbed the terrain (myself in ballet flats) to Plugges' Plateau, where Andrew came into his own, recounting all manner of history and war stories that came alive in the peaceful place. From there we took the bus back to the nearby hotel, and raced to the beach to catch the sunset (chasing some ducks while we were at it). We are now in our journaling session, listing to music and other things. The girls want to go swimming at some point soon!

Day 5

Today is my birthday! We ferried over to Çanakkale (a city on the Asia side, we crossed continents) and drove to Troy. The ferry ride was freezing for everyone, though I felt a tad out of place in my bomber jacket while all the rest were flying the Simpson Prize flag in their jackets, it's ok, I was just as warm so no worries, it was my legs that were the issue! We did the obligatory poses inside the massive wooden horse and toured the ruins of a city thousands of years old (the place had a multitude of natural, and unnatural, disasters that kept destroying the city). Trivia time! Troy was rebuilt 10 times over 3000 years from 2500 BC until the last one, built by the Romans but never rebuilt after it crumbled. Cats now inhabit the site. After finding out about Trojan ancient history (and thanks to Alice catching up on some Greek legends) we had some more history from Eser in an amphitheatre and headed on to the hill from which the Turks shot at the British warships in 1915 on the Dardanelles. This was the sight of a major Turkish victory on the 18 March 1915. Afterwards we left for the Turkish Naval Museum, situated in a massive, and slightly war-scarred fort in Çanakkale. It was strange but interesting to see the Turkish side to the conflict. Though they won the battle, they lost so many more men than we did. As it is our aim to get rid of as many souvenir koalas and kangaroos as possible, I left one with the guest book at the museum, however I got chased by an employee who thought I'd dropped it, so I had to explain the concept of Australian generosity. Once he understood, he was very happy. At lunch Sarah and I tried Turkish coffee, was very nice but drank a bit much, got some of the sediment at the bottom! After all this, and a beautiful lunch, we were dropped in Çanakkale for an hour after Eser showed us some of the sights and we bought goods from a village woman – she had carpets, all hand woven and many different crafty things, bought some woolen socks for Iz from her! After the Grand Bazaar the shopping was nothing to speak of, however Sarah and I wondered around with Turkish ice cream and spied a multitude, of yet again, cats, everywhere. We left a koala in a tree in a main square for a lucky Turk to find and think of Australia! As we returned on the ferry to the European side, we sang songs (not so corny as it sounds) and laid bets on which tractor (red or green) would win the drag race off as we disembarked. After dinner, Alix took me to the café under some pretense, where every one was waiting, and out popped Sharee with a massive bunch of roses from my parents and a birthday cake! The group also gave me a shirt with a photo of the whole group on the front in the Blue Mosque and a mini-hookah they bought in Çanakkale! Overall was a very good day!

Day 6

Ari Burnu, the site of the colossal quote of Ata Türk:

*Those heroes that shed their blood
And lost their lives...
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly Country.
Therefore rest in peace.
There is no difference between the Johnnies*

*And the Mehmeds to us where they lie side by side
 Here in this country of ours...
 You, the mothers,
 Who sent their sons front far away countries
 Wipe away your tears,
 Your sons are now lying in our bosom
 And are in peace
 After having lost their lives on this land
 They have become our sons as well*

I thought the message was a really moving tribute to those that lost their lives, and it was an effective way of bringing home why we have come to this place. It is genuinely hard to envision war in a place like this. The Ari Burnu cemetery is by the beach, a rocky beach actually, and we were all encouraged to take stones as souvenirs. Since a stone from ANZC Cove had better look like a stone, I spent a long time looking for the most stereotypical stones I could find. My search resulted in two rounded, white and grey specimens of the most uncommonly common order. In this cemetery I read a memorial for a man named Stolz, whose picture was beautiful and who was very young. We then started walking up Artillery Road to Lone Pine. On the way we stopped at Shell Green, where we recreated the photo of the soldiers playing cricket. Unfortunately our special effects team was unable to traverse the terrain; otherwise we would have organized for shells to detonate around us, for historical accuracy of course. At Lone Pine crews were setting up for the service on Anzac Day, and we stopped to watch the military people practice their marching. Some people did their presentations, and we contemplated the lone pine. Afterwards we proceeded down the hill, along what was the front line of battle. On each side of the path we could occasionally see trenches, and took the opportunity to explore them. After a lengthy exploration, when Sarah and I tried to follow the paths to the cliff edge, we got called back and the party moved on. As we walked, a couple of gorgeous, very friendly and possibly stray dogs followed us down until we headed our separate ways, them to the road, us down a precariously steep set of stairs. Racing down, the path bore us on a twisting route that plunged downward, occasionally affording incredible views of the peninsula, before being obscured by waving branches overhead. It was a brilliant moment. The stairway took us down to the 4th Battalion Parade Ground cemetery, where after some more memorials in the shade of well-tended trees the Queenslanders ran off up another hill on a forgotten path to discover a view of Shrapnel Valley and the sea worth the risk of twisted ankles. The ascent up the stairs wasn't quite as joyful, however the end of our journey was the Nek, the setting of the final scene in *Gallipoli*. The space was so small; it was chilling to envision the scene of carnage that had occurred where we stood. Here I read a poem aloud for Sharee – her friend's mother had written the poem and had wanted it to be read in Gallipoli. I think my performance was ok and the poem itself was sweet. We then headed down to the hotel, and after lunch Alix, Sophie and I went for a swim in the Aegean!! It was freezing cold but exciting, we screamed our heads off and laughed the whole time, our final solution to the cold being a charge into deeper water. We then re-enacted the landing; Sarah and I were the casualties, tripping over for various reasons while others made it to the beach. After getting cleaned up, at 3 we had a rehearsal at Lone Pine for the service and became expert wreath-handlers. Afterwards we visited Baby-700 cemetery. Anzac'ed out, we travelled to a local Turkish village for afternoon tea, where we visited Atatürk's temporary home and drank tea in the main square.

Day 7

Wow last night I was extremely tired and felt sick in the stomach, so I went to bed and slept for 11 hours straight – missing the soccer game! My heart is temporarily broken. I will make sure there is a second

game at some point. Today we visited Memorials for the British, French and Turkish troops, which was fascinating. The British memorial is a minimalistic, but beautiful monument. It acknowledges all contributions of the British Empire, which includes us so we were flattered. The surrounding scenery was beautiful, a lighthouse in the distance capturing the imagination of the photographers among us! From there we walked to a second British memorial, though to get there we went through a popular Turkish spot, with many little make-shift stores of touristy items. Though nothing particularly struck my fancy, the place was eventful because the three boys who were stalking us got introduced to Will, and he introduced them to us. Not knowing what to say, I handed over a koala (we have way too many!) and the recipient ran off, returning with a necklace! These Turkish boys are polite. After leaving the group we ventured on, wondering down to a somber but bright British cemetery, then continued on, meeting our bus outside a café (home to a very angry cat). Today we also visited a French cemetery – so different to the Australian and British, and then a massive Turkish memorial that was obviously of national significance, for the place was filled with Turkish school kids and teenagers, all willing to practice their English! It was amazing; we met so many people that are so similar to us. The experience was so enlightening. It seems that no matter what we believe and know to be true, there is always a small expectation, not racism, but an expectation of what the people are going to be like. And though you know that we are all alike and that a person is not different because of their country, it is always enlightening to see it first hand, how similar and familiar we all are. The girls we met could have been speaking English; I knew what they were saying just as well as if I spoke Turkish. I may not know exactly what, but the way they say it, the expressions, even the way they dress is similar to how we do. It seems that no matter where I go we are all the same. I think that if everyone got to experience this, to quote a cliché, the world would be a better place. There is my little happy spiel, back to what happened:

After chatting, admittedly the language gap was a tad difficult, with a large crowd of Turkish girls, and getting our photos (and Facebooks) taken, we returned to the bus and headed to the hotel. During the afternoon, we took a boat trip with the War Widows and some other groups. I spent a while talking with a beautiful old Korean war widow, who had so much to tell it was almost overwhelming. We got to see the coastline as the Anzacs would have seen it when they arrived in Gallipoli, it was a beautiful day, and the sun was almost hot enough to counter the wind. I got some very sound advice from one of the widows, who gave me a rundown of how many melanomas she has had to get cut out, and she doesn't want the same thing happening to me!

Day 8

This morning we visited more a Turkish memorial, heading up to Ariburnu Yarlari and discovering the incredible view of back of Sphinx and out to ocean. The Turkish memorial was packed with Turkish people and friendly soldiers. The existing trenches had been supported by wooden structures, so we got some photo ops in the Turkish trenches while the school groups watched on (or jumped in the photo!) Before leaving, I gave koala to the soldier who allowed us to take photos with him and another to an organizer. Today was a very chilled day, the other major events being a soccer game (the girl's team won and I accidentally slammed into Andrew, making him fall over, woops!) and our swim in the ocean that afternoon. This time Kimberley joined us, and the boys swam up the beach. I shouldn't have mentioned sharks to Sophie ... turns out there are none in the Aegean! That afternoon we had an incredibly early dinner, as we were meant to be sleeping as much as we could before midnight. A teenagers, however, we were unable to sleep when we needed to most, so Alix and I, after an incident with Will's bag, ended up in Sophie and Sarah's room, planning the next day's hair and makeup (and checking with reception every five minutes for our over-due washing!). Eventually I laid down the law, like the responsible elder cousin I am, and we went to our room, finishing journals that needed to be written.

Day 9

On ANZAC Day morning the incredible loud ringing of the phone waked us, and after hastily getting ourselves dressed, we headed down to breakfast. The bus we took was with the war widows, and it was strange to see the peninsula in the moonlight along with the lights of countless buses. After we were ushered to our area, the group of us managed to settle in and met the other prize group, a competition from Tasmania, all decked out in akubras. Bundled up in sleeping bags we watched interviews and the Australian military band played. There was a large food area we went to check out, returning with hot chocolates, to watch Samoan dancers and singers perform on stage. We returned to our area, but at 4 am it was time for a kebab, an experience unforgettable. I'm not sure whether it was the time of the morning, or the incredible situation, or just some crazy kebab-making skills, but it was one of the best meals of my life (exaggeration? No ...). On our way back to our place Alice and I ran into the singer for the military band and possibly freaked her out by requesting a photo!

When the dawn service finally came, it was preceded by a presentation on the stories of those that lost their lives at the Cove. I honestly cried my eyes out; Sarah was sweet and patted me on the arm. In hindsight my reactions seems a tad strange but it was a combination of the moment and the history that hit me, as Andrew said, when I least expected it, sitting in the cold and dark with tears streaming down my face as they told the stories of the men (some as young as my own brother) who had died on the beaches and in the hills. During the service there was also a music piece played, composed specifically for the occasion and accompanied by a light display. It's hard to describe, when the dawn came and the bugle played as the massive form of the Sphinx slowly materialized above us, a feeling of awe came over us all in the face of the magnitude of the situation. This was followed by a silence observed even by the sea, barely a wave lapping the shore where we sat. What followed was standard procedure, we sang national anthem, got packed up, and then slyly ran out the GG's exit guarded by friendly soldiers, before walking up to Lone Pine. Suddenly the morning grew very hot, and as we climbed we shed all layers gained during service. Presenting wreaths at Lone Pine after surmounting the hills of Artillery Road was a great, unforgettable honour, as was the girls' trust in my styling skills before the service in preparation for TV. I am very thankful for all the practice we did the night before concerning hair and eyes, because no one wants to risk the dangers of an amateur wielding a mascara wand. The timely provision of a mirror by Eser elicited squeals of joy (my especially reflective phone wasn't cutting it). Making sure Alix's hair was perfect, and her eyes big but subtle was a proud achievement of mine, and I knew she was getting up on television looking the best she could in a school uniform (she looked gorgeous). The remainder of us changed into black, though I was a tad nervous about my boots, though my worries proved unfounded. When presenting, I felt as though the military representative and I had a moment of mutual understanding, he nodded, and I nodded. What we understood I have no idea, but it was fun. Oh before hand we met the GG, and she was happy to find out I was a Queenslander (I doubt she remembered the time she presented me with a prize at my school's speech night). We were also interviewed to keep the crowd entertained while waiting for the Lone Pine Service to start. By 12 we were heading back to the hotel, but only after Eser had us do some creative photography featuring her guns (arm muscles haha). Back at the hotel, we discovered my delivered washing (!) and Alix and I went to the beach to write and read. I slept; it was incredibly peaceful. The wind, however, meant that when we stood up, the sand had made a little wall against where I had been. That night we returned to the beach as a group to say goodbye. It was freezing and not the best memory of the last time there, but it was fun. I took the customary 'Toyota jump' photo of the group.

Day 10

This morning we bussed our way back to Istanbul, a much quieter journey than the last, but more relaxed and comfortable. It is insane how at ease we have all become with each other over these couple of short days. Our return to the Antique Hotel meant that after perusing the ‘main street’ of shopping (where Sarah and I bought the best Turkish Delight and some more turquoise) we were able to spend a couple of hours in Grand Bazaar before we had to return for a special, last dinner with the group. It was very touching, Eser gave a little speech, and we gave her a necklace of thanks. We were all slightly melancholy at the realization that this was our last night in Turkey, though it didn’t dampen the spirits of the night for too long. After a mini photo shoot, we took to the streets of Istanbul, myself a member of Dale’s four people strong ‘harem’ (the Western Australian ‘sultan’ in his fez and leather jacket). We saw the Blue mosque by night, and peeked into a room full of locals smoking from hookahs (we assume tobacco ...). It was a perfect ending to our adventure.

Day 11

Waking up this morning however, reading over last night’s tale, it should be noted that there are a couple of things left to be enjoyed, namely, the Grand Bazaar. I’m sure we will all remember the valuable life lessons we learnt in those few short hours plundering the six-kilometre maze of stores we were thrown into, whether it be to always have a male to help buy coffee grinders, or that a fez will always, I repeat, always be cheaper on the street than inside the Bazaar. The words “student discount” will work magic on an older male storeowner and ‘morning prices’ can always be halved. Never enter the store of a shopkeeper that starts his approach by commenting on your appearance unless you determine to turn this flattery into a large discount. Otherwise just pick up the pace as you hurry on past. Buy carpets with a local who knows everything (and is friends with the shopkeeper) and always remember that turquoise is a wise investment. I learnt these rules on the fly today, and in the past days of haggling. Out of it all I emerged with an incredible bracelet and a carpet, plus a mountain of turquoise to be kept and given away as presents. Turkish delight is adding 3 kilograms to my baggage weight, and a gorgeous, 100 per cent wool rug is also weighing me down. Today I shopped with Alice, which was another completely different experience. She is far more ruthless with haggling. Oh, I also bought a couple of fez’s and sparkly Turkish hats!

The hours that followed were ones of goodbyes, and it almost broke my heart to say goodbye to Eser, who turned out to be our sister, not a guide, and more than one of us wanted to take her up on her offer to adopt! By the time we reached Sydney, the good byes were flowing, though we spent most of the time planning our reunion – to be held in either Sydney or the Sunshine coast, we’re not sure yet!

Note: Thankyou to everyone who put so much time and effort into making the trip possible. It was an amazing experience, so much more than what is written above. I will be definitely urging those in grades below me to try out for the competition; it is such an amazing prize for writing an essay, and I think we all learnt so much more than we imagined we would, or could, in just eleven days.