



THE Simpson PRIZE

A COMPETITION FOR
YEAR 9 AND 10 STUDENTS

JOURNAL of TRIP to
GALLIPOLI

2010 Winner
Tasmania

Sarah Reynolds
The Friends School



Simpson Prize 2010 – Journal of Trip to Gallipoli

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Day 1 – Sunday, 18 April

We arrived in Istanbul feeling exhausted after spending over 24 hours travelling, but also greatly excited knowing that our trip had truly begun and that we could finally begin to explore this strange and exotic country. We spent the entire bus trip to our hotel eagerly looking out of our windows, as our guide Eser pointed out the various landmarks. After freshening up we headed out to go for a cruise on the Bosphorus River. This was a great introduction to our trip as Eser was able to brief us on the history of Istanbul, and we were able to soak in the sights. Over a round of chai teas we relaxed and chatted with the group. Arriving back on land, we then proceeded to the Hagia Sophia, meaning “divine wisdom”. As a former church it was fascinating to see how the two generally opposing faiths of Christianity and Islam had been blended together. After driving back to our hotel we set off as a group to a shop Eser had pointed out to us, and bought some Turkish Delight. Standing in a circle, we used these as a toast to The Simpson Prize group of 2010 – a very befitting start to our journey together. Feeling exhilarated after our wonderful first day in Turkey, we enjoyed our first traditional meal, met up for a brief journal session and then headed to bed for some much-needed rest.

Day 2 – Monday, 19 April

Our first full day in Turkey was started in the traditional way, with a heavy breakfast of breads, cheeses, pastries and, of course, tea. We headed to the Hippodrome, which is the site of a massacre of 30 000 people, and the second largest obelisk in the world. There were three obelisks in total – one brought from Egypt and inscribed with hieroglyphics, one created from the melted weapons and armoury used in the 5th century BC in a battle against the Persians, and another made of stone bricks, which were once covered in bronze. We then walked over to the famous Sultan Ahmet mosque, known to the Western world as the Blue Mosque. Eser explained that foreigners created this popular name in reference to the 16th century tiles it contains. It was spectacular inside, with such a wide variety of patterns. I found it fascinating to learn about the carpets, as I had been told that all genuine hand-made carpets have stories behind them. The carpet was designed with flowers indicating where to place the hands, knees, and head

during prayer. This allowed people to position themselves without disturbing others, and also made it possible for to organise mass prayer in the mosque. After wandering around and taking plenty of photos we went to the Topkapi Palace, which was the residence of the Ottoman Sultans. We were all amused by the library, bookless as a result of the Ottoman's nomadic movements, and enjoyed looking at the jewellery contained in the treasury, especially the famous Topkapi dagger. Whilst we wandered around Andrew had been talking to a school group eager to practice their English, and so he brought us out to talk with them. We were excited to converse with locals, and although we felt slightly awkward at first we were soon exchanging details so we could add each other on Facebook. Leaving our new friends behind we had a delicious lunch at the restaurant and left so we could visit the Rustempasa mosque. We were then given time to do our first bit of shopping at the Egyptian/Spice Bazaar – an exciting experience. We didn't have enough confidence yet to attempt haggling, but we did enjoy chatting with the shopkeepers and looking at all the exotic spices and products. Dinner was an elaborate event with several courses, all of which were delicious. Afterwards each female was handed a napkin flower, which we took back to our hotel as a keepsake.

Day 3 – Tuesday, 20 April

We got up early in preparation for our long bus journey to Gallipoli. It was an enjoyable ride, as we all chatted and ate Turkish confectionary. Once we arrived at the Kum Hotel we dropped off our bags and went straight to Beach Cemetery to see Simpson's grave. It was incredible – I never expected Gallipoli would be so beautiful! The weather was lovely, with a warm sun and slight breeze, the gardens manicured and an atmosphere of tranquillity. It was surreal, leaving an overwhelming impression of peacefulness and haunting beauty. A Channel 7 news crew was there wanting to film us, and so we spent our first media experience walking amongst the graves and listening to soldier presentations. It took well over an hour, but finally we were finished and we moved on to Shrapnel Valley for some more presentations, and to pick rosemary, a symbol of remembrance. We climbed up to Plugge's Plateau and then on to a ridge from which we were able to view the Sphinx and the preparations for the Dawn Service. I was surprised by how small it was – I expected the area to appear much larger, as it was to accommodate 8000 people. We arrived back at the hotel in time to watch the sun set over Lemnos, which was a beautiful sight to behold.

Day 4 – Wednesday, 21 April

Today we crossed over from Europe to Asia on a ferry, as we journeyed to Canakkale. We drove straight to Troy, where we took photos inside the ridiculous imitation "Trojan horse". We were told about the Trojan Wars, which Alice was able to provide an abundance of information on. We then travelled to a hill overlooking the Dardenelles, where Andrew explained the naval strategies of 1915 with a plastic bottle and stick. Will then talked about the AE2 submarine that reached the Sea of Marmara despite the mines and anti-submarine nets placed by the Turks. Feeling in need of a rest, we went to a local restaurant to sample more Turkish cuisine. I sampled my first Turkish coffee – a strong yet delicious concoction "like fine mud", to use Andrew's words. After a tour of the Naval Museum of Cannakale, we headed back to the town where we saw the Trojan horse from the movie "Troy", and explored the bazaar before heading back to Gallipoli on the ferry.

Day 5 – Thursday, 22 April

We started the day at Ari Burnu, where I did my first presentation. It was on Lieutenant Colonel Albert Miell from the 9th Australian Light Horse. He served alongside his son Private Horatio Gordon Miell, and was killed in action on the 7th August 1915. After all the presentations were complete we went down to the beach in order to collect stones to bring home as souvenirs. Whilst the others searched for large, smooth stones I decided to collect more colourful and unusual ones, and ended up finding quite a nice variety. We went for our first walk up Artillery Road, hoping to find artefacts like the piece of rum jar found by Andrew during our descent from Plugge’s Plateau; alas, we were unsuccessful. Walking into Shell Green Cemetery, someone quickly found the grave for Jack Keith Bradley, and so I did my second soldier presentation. He was a Tasmanian tailor who served as a Private in the 12th Battalion. He was originally believed to be missing in action, however it was later discovered that he was killed on the day of the Anzac landing. We then staged a re-enactment of the famous cricket match of 17th December 1915, before heading back on to Artillery Road to continue up to Lone Pine. The rehearsals for the Australian Anzac Service were well underway, with the Catafalque Party practicing and various media personnel wandering around. I was surprised by how large and chaotic the area was, as just as I had thought the Dawn Service area was smaller than I had imagined, the Lone Pine Service area was much larger. We went behind the cenotaph so we could hold our presentations in relative peace. We were all moved by Kimberley’s presentation, which was very thoughtful and well planned out. Moving on to a major road we explored a series of trenches which had remained from the war, then walked on, passing the Johnston’s Jolly Cemetery, Courtney’s and Steele’s Post and Quinn’s Post. We also passed the Turkish memorial, a great yellow structure. We finished at the Nek, which, although we knew it to be a small battlefield, was tinier than we ever could have imagined. Back at the hotel we had another lazy lunch and then a small group of us decided to brave the waters of the Aegean Sea. After a refreshing swim we charged the beach in our own re-enactment of the Anzac landing. We then had to go back to Lone Pine for a brief rehearsal of our roles as wreath handlers, then after visiting the Baby 700 Cemetery we drove to a small Turkish village. It had made a name for itself by advertising the fact that Ataturk stayed there for a few weeks before the campaign. After visiting the house where he had stayed we went to a café for tea and coffee. During dinner at the hotel we debated over the words to put on our Simpson Prize wreath for the Lone Pine Service. We settled on an epitaph that Alix had found in Shell Green – “To live in the hearts of those we love is not to die”.

Day 6 – Friday, 23 April

We left early to go to Cape Helles, and visited the British Memorial. We then went to the French Memorial, which was fascinating as it had a completely different design to all the other memorials. Each grave was marked by a cross, with a simple plaque stating their name, number, and the words “Morts Pour La France”. It was interesting to learn that Jewish soldiers had their faith indicated by a single vertical stake. We then went on to the Turkish Memorial, where we talked to several groups of students and distributed the last of our Australia souvenirs. After lunch at the Kum Hotel we had a relaxing ferry ride with the War Widows Guild. I talked with two women about their experience in Turkey so far. We spent the rest of the afternoon relaxing at our hotel swimming and playing cards.

Day 7 – Saturday, 24 April

We spent the morning walking from the 57th Memorial to Chunuk Bair, which was full with crowds of Turks, despite being the New Zealand Memorial. This was because Ataturk was shot there during the Gallipoli campaign. After wandering around the trenches we had to drive back to the hotel as the roads were being closed at midday in preparation for the services the following day. Feeling sufficiently tired from walking around, as was intended, we napped in the afternoon, waking only for an early dinner and to buy chocolate supplies for the Dawn Service. We were all extremely excited – the day we had come for was finally arriving!

Sunday, 25 April

After waking up at midnight we made our way to the site of the Dawn Service and arrived in the early hours of the morning. It was an incredible sight to behold – thousands of people roaming around, and masses of people lying on the grass in sleeping bags. Time went quickly as we wandered about, eating kebabs and watching the entertainment. It was spectacular to see the Sphinx lit up, and with the fifth segment of the Gallipoli Symphony playing, “The Landing”, created a haunting atmosphere. By the time the service began we were all exhausted, yet at the same time completely exhilarated. Being placed where we were, so close to the landing site, made it feel very emotional. Especially considering that it was the 95th anniversary, being there was extremely moving as I suddenly realised the reality and impact of what had happened. It no longer had the sense of being surreal and disconnected from me as I had previously felt. Dawn soon broke, however, and we had to move on to Lone Pine for the Australian service. We were able to meet the Governor General before the ceremony, which was exciting, and after quickly going over our roles as wreath handlers the service began. It felt poignant in a different way to the Dawn Service as we were with fellow Australians. We listened to the speeches from our corner, and were all thrilled when Alix did her reading, as she spoke so well. We all fulfilled our roles of wreath handlers well, and soon after that the service was over and we left feeling pumped full of adrenalin. The rest of the day rushed by quickly as we were so tired, but it was a momentous event which left a great impact on us for being so remarkable and though-provoking.

Monday, 26 April

We woke up feeling ambivalent about the events of Anzac Day; depressed that it was over, and so soon our trip would be also, yet still high on the buzz of it. We went to the Turkish Memorial to lay a wreath before departing Gallipoli. Back in Istanbul we visited Istiklal Street, where we stocked up on Turkish Delight to bring home, then headed to the Antik Hotel. We spent our afternoon in the Grand Bazaar, buying souvenirs and becoming expert hagglers. Finally we met back at the hotel, and had our last dinner together in the restaurant at its base. It was both a jovial and depressive affair, as we suddenly realised that we would soon be parting. Andrew presented each of us with a Gallipoli Star, which we all appreciated. It was wonderful to be given such a unique gift which, after our journey together, held great sentimental value. After dinner we donned our recently bought fezzes and headed onto the streets for a final walk together. Chatting and singing, it was a great opportunity to properly savour the sights of Istanbul and the company of each other for the final time. It was wonderful to see the Sultan Ahmet mosque once more, as it was so picturesque at night, with the moon softly lighting the roof and the dove-like birds flying overhead. It was a truly beautiful sight, and a very befitting way to officially end our trip in Turkey.

Tuesday, 27 April

Breakfast held a melancholic atmosphere as we started our final day in Turkey. We decided to perform our Turkish Delight ritual from the start of the trip once more, so that we were able to end our journey as a group with a sense of camaraderie and accomplishment. We were able to spend some time in the Grand Bazaar buying the last of our souvenirs, before heading back to the hotel to present Andrew, Sharee, and Jackie with gifts to thank them for all they had done for us. We drove to the airport and sadly said our goodbyes to Eser, our amazing guide who had been our “sister” during the trip. It was painful to leave Turkey behind, knowing the experiences we had as part of the Simpson Prize group could never be repeated, but having made such wonderful friends and sharing truly unique memories.

