

Journal of Gallipoli trip 16-29 April 2011

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Day 1

It's our first day here in Istanbul and I can already tell that this is set to be an absolutely amazing trip. The long plane ride was very tiring, so to help our jet lag we set off on a short walk through the streets of Istanbul. Within minutes of disembarking we had found ourselves in a small market just outside the famous Grand Bazaar. It was our first real taste of a different society and it was mind blowing to see the amount of products for sale in such a confined area. We were very tempted to buy as shop owners offers seemed very generous but the experienced campaigner (Andrew) reminded us that it was only day 1. Taking Andrew's advice, we decided to hold off and not make any purchases until we returned to the markets again. Just past the market, we made a stop at a small mosque. It was really good to learn about its history and also the history of how the Grand Bazaar has grown and become the famous icon it is today.

The next thing on our agenda was a cruise of the Bosphorous. It was quite cold in the wind but we were soon able to find an ideal position on the upper deck that provided us with glorious sun but protection from the wind. We all loved marvelling at the brilliant architecture of buildings that had been constructed centuries ago. The military museum was the last visit of the day and it did not disappoint. The enormous collection amazed us and we were all very intrigued to look at the Gallipoli campaign from the Turkish perspective. We were then treated to a traditional military performance that was great to watch as it showed the culture and history of the Turkish military.

All our meals today have been outstanding. My personal favourite was cheese pastry as it was something I had never tried before but I will definitely be trying it again.

I am still coming to terms with the fact that this trip is actually happening. Today has been a great start to this trip and I can't wait to start another day in this beautiful country. The photo below is just one example of the architecture we saw on our cruise.

Day 2

Today has been a wet and cold one in Istanbul but we didn't let the bad weather dampen our spirits. With our warm jackets on and ponchos over the top we were set to face whatever was thrown at us. Breakfast was a typical one, made up of breads, pastries, cheese and washed down with some orange juice was just what the doctor ordered. We were dropped off just outside the Blue Mosque and braved out the rain as we stood at the site of what used to be a massive stadium that had the capacity of over one hundred and twenty thousand. Our guide Ozgur, put this in perspective for us by asking the capacity of Australia's largest sporting stadium. We realised that the MCG was the biggest with a capacity of one hundred thousand. To think that a stadium built over a thousand years ago was bigger than the MCG was simply unbelievable. I also found it hard to believe the age of Egyptian monoliths that still stood as strong as ever. Seeing and learning about the history of such an old country really makes me realise how short Australia's history really is.

An interesting fact was learnt while standing outside the gates of the blue Mosque, we started noticing a large number of stray dogs wandering around the city streets. Ozgur informed us that people in Istanbul don't own dogs because they don't like them in their houses. These 'street dogs' are caught by authorities, given immunisations and then stamped with a bright orange ear tag so people know they are free from disease. The dogs are liked by the locals and are often fed by them. It is interesting for me coming from a farming background to see the different way they treat their dogs.

After spending some time taking in the surrounding area, the rain began to fall even heavier so we were all quite glad when we were able to move into the famous Blue Mosque. As we moved into the Mosque we were witness to locals going through their

pre-prayer ritual of washing their bodies. We then learnt about the long history of the Mosque from our overwhelmingly knowledgeable guide. Standing inside the Mosque, it was easy to see why it is known as the Blue Mosque as the perfectly constructed walls were painted blue. Learning of the traditions and values of the Muslamic faith was interesting as it is very different to what I am used to.

After a short detour back to the hotel to change our footwear we then ventured to Topkapi Palace which had been the main residence of the sultan. It was a very open area with four court yards dividing the buildings. A wide variety of events happened at the palace such as military meetings, food distribution to the poor and it's even home to Istanbul's first mint. Our guide again amazed us with what seemed to be his endless knowledge of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire. Ozgur told us about the story of the spoon maker's diamond which we were also able to view in the palace. The diamond was found in the rubbish by a poor man and was traded for a mere three spoons. Obviously the diamond is worth considerably more as it is an amazing 86 carats!

Lunch in the Palace was very nice but JP was lucky not to have an allergic reaction as he was not to know that our meal contained pine nuts and started to eat until Andrew spotted nuts in his meal. Luckily JP had not yet swallowed any nuts at that point. After lunch we continued to wander around the Palace and marvel at the history of this wonderful country. The Bus rides today became a great opportunity for us to communicate with each other and share our opinions. I am definitely still feeling fatigued and I can't wait to nod off tonight.

Day 3

Breakfast was the same again but I am glad because it is much more interesting than the normal breakfast I receive in the boarding house. We left our hotel with the intention of visiting Chora Church first, but on our arrival at the church we found that the narrow street leading to the church was jammed full of buses. So instead of joining the huge flock of tourists we decided to re-arrange the days schedule and visit the technology museum first. As we had planned to visit the museum later in the day, when we arrived it was not open. Luckily the museum has a large display outside so we were entertained while we waited for the main part to be opened. The museum is set close to the water's edge and they have recently purchased a ship that was used for transportation between the small channel of water that separates the European and Asian sides of the city. This is no longer needed as a huge suspension bridge was built to enable easier access. It was interesting to find out that the family that owned the museum was one of the richest families in Turkey and last year they had paid a combined tax of over one hundred million dollars!

My favourite section of the museum was vintage cars. It was amazing to see such a wide collection of vintage cars dating back to the very start of motor vehicle history. However my favourite single item of the museum was a Second World War Liberator airplane. To see an actual plane that was used in the Second World War was simply stunning.

As we were leaving the museum the girls were working hard on their language skills but instead of taking the easy option and testing them on a young school group that was there, they decided to pick the meanest looking men that we had seen on our trip so far. This went better than I expected as one man did reply but the majority just ignored them and kept walking.

It was then almost time for lunch so we climbed back on the bus and set off for Taxim Square. Police attempted to stop us entering the square by bus but they were no match for our experienced bus driver. Just a short detour and we had arrived in Taxim Square. After we "de-bused" we made an attempt to walk through Taxim Square to Istiklal Street. However we were soon stopped by riot police so we had to again take a small detour to eventually get to our destination. We later found out that it had been a political demonstration and the police refused to let them march

through Istiklal Street. After these small dramas we finally made it to Istiklal Street. It was different to any street I had ever seen before. Anything you wanted to buy could be bought somewhere along the street although we held off buying anything because it was all retail prices and that simply wasn't what we wanted to pay when we could bargain at the markets and Grand Bazaar. My favourite shop along the street was an Adidas store that Gene and I found. It was four stories high and packed with all the latest Adidas gear. The only thing wrong with it was it didn't have any AFL apparel.

Istiklal Street stretches over 1.6 kilometres and on a Saturday night it is estimated that there are over two million people packed along the street. After a wonderful lunch at a local restaurant we all seized the opportunity to purchase boxes of Turkish delight for both ourselves and presents for our families back home. We then headed back to Chora Church and thankfully we managed to have better luck as the number of buses had significantly decreased. To see the mosaic covered walls of the church was fantastic and it was even better because Ozgur was able to tell us the stories that they represent. All the mosaics were made from glass that had been coated in pure gold. Some were starting to deteriorate but the majority were still mostly intact. The reason that they had been preserved so well was due to the plaster covering the Ottoman Empire had applied to them during their reign.

The last stop for the day was the spice market.

As I walked around, taking in the smells and atmosphere, I thought of how amazing this society is. Gene and I came across a few larrikin characters that didn't quite understand the concept of Simpson and his donkey. We tried to explain to begin with but we soon realised there was no point so we just laughed with them.

The bus ride home was a loud one as the girls decided to try and learn a song that Andrew had introduced on the first day. By the time we arrived back at our hotel they were finally starting to get the hang of it. I'm sure they are going to keep practicing as we have the five hour bus trip to the Gallipoli peninsula.

Day 4

Today started with a long but surprisingly eventful bus trip from the big city of Istanbul to the rural and remote Gallipoli Peninsula. We were kept entertained on the bus with a several in-depth discussions between JP and Stu that then turned into full blown arguments. There were several topics but somehow the burka always seemed to pop up again and again. There were some very passionate times for JP during his argument and both in the end still didn't see eye to eye on any of the topics. When we finally arrived at our new hotel just a mere 6 kilometres from ANZAC Cove we were all very hungry but also very excited. Lunch to no surprise, didn't take very long at all, so we were able to get to ANZAC cove as soon as possible. I am not really sure why, but as we were on our last bus ride before getting to the site I began to get nervous. When we arrived our first visit was to the Beach Cemetery. It was a beautiful cemetery, well, as beautiful as a cemetery can be. We found the headstone of John Simpson Kirkpatrick and I was amazed to learn about the misconceptions around Simpson and his donkey. From all reports Simpson was not the angel he is made out to be in today's society. In fact he caused his fair share of trouble aboard the ship to Egypt and Gallipoli that left him with few, if any, mates. Most work associated to Simpson was actually other men using donkeys. The misconception of Simpson cannot be blamed on him as he unfortunately wasn't here to tell his story.

Gene presented his personal soldier research at the headstone of his soldier. He told us of how he came to choose the particular soldier by the epitaph which was "Deeds not words".

It was fantastic to hear the story of a man that never did get to tell his. I found it really intriguing to just walk around the cemetery and read the epitaphs on headstones. It was our next stop that had the biggest impact on me so far on this trip. Setting foot on ANZAC Cove for the first time knowing that it was at that exact site

nearly one hundred years ago where our brave young ANZACs first landed on this beautiful beach was simply remarkable. As I walked onto the beach I could feel the hair on the back of my neck stand up and a shiver ran down my spine. I was really here. I remember dreaming as a child of the day that I would get to stand at ANZAC Cove and it was finally here. I picked up some rocks and let them fall through my fingers as Stuart told us about the objectives of the campaign. Stuart showed us a map of the Peninsula that would have been almost identical to those that the ANZACs would have been equipped with. We were told more facts and rumours about the campaign that I was unaware of and this gave me a great opportunity to gain a better understanding of what actually happened at Gallipoli. We felt the cold wind and icy water that the ANZACs would have been faced with. A selected few of the group are being interviewed throughout the trip as part of a documentary for the BBC. I am lucky enough to be one of those being interviewed and I find it a really good opportunity to speak about my feelings and views of the campaign and I am really keen to hear the documentary when it is completed next year.

After more of a look around we then headed back to our hotel where we enjoyed a great meal and then headed to the lounge bar to learn some Turkish card games and also my personal favourite, backgammon. Even though our bus driver spoke very little English he was not only able to teach me some helpful game tactics but he also taught me how to pronounce the numbers on the dice in Arabic. It was great fun to socialise with the bus drivers over a cup of traditional Turkish tea and a game of backgammon. Even though we couldn't speak the same language we just seemed to have an understanding.

Day 5

Today was a very educational day as we learnt a great deal about exactly what the ANZACs had to endure as well as other information about the campaign. We arrived back at the Gallipoli Peninsula relatively early and set off up what the Australian's thought was the first ridge when they originally landed, Plugge's Plateau. The track is now cleared and has steps for people to walk up but you get the picture of how hard it would have been when the ANZACs first climbed up it. Along each side of the path is lined with dense scrub with sharp spikes. After reaching the end of the plateau we then saw what the Australians would have been confronted with and after reaching the top, in a soldier's eyes I cannot think of much worse. Looking down the other side of Plugge's, the only way across is the razor back. To picture this, it's a narrow winding track that is approximately one hundred metres long and no wider than a shoe width. As bad as that already sounds, it is highly exposed to enemy fire but also weather conditions such as roaring winds that we were witness to. After photo opportunities we then ventured back down the steep track to Shrapnel Valley Cemetery. This is one of the biggest ANZAC cemeteries at Gallipoli and it was very touching to read the epitaphs on the headstones of fallen soldiers.

One in particular caught my eye in this cemetery that read "As the ivy clings to the oak, so will our memory cling to thee. Mother"

I liked this epitaph because it is a very good way of putting the message that nearly all families felt. A similar epitaph was "Though death divides, fond memory clings, gone but not forgotten. Tom"

While at the cemetery we sat down in the glorious weather and were treated to some hard tack and canned corned beef. We had this snack so we could have a real taste of the common diet for a soldier and let's just say that I'm glad I don't have to live on it.

After heading back to our hotel for lunch we then went to Lone Pine Cemetery and spent some time learning about the significance of this particular battle. One incredible fact that I learnt was that seven Victoria Crosses were awarded during the battle of Lone Pine out of a total of nine awarded for the entire Gallipoli campaign

and out of the nine given, only one New Zealander was awarded the prestigious medal. The other very interesting but extremely sad story that Andrew mentioned to us while at Lone Pine was that of Australia's youngest ever soldier to be killed on active service. James Martin is his name and it is found on the memorial wall in Lone Pine Cemetery. From Lone Pine we walked along the road to Chunuk Bair Cemetery, stopping along the way at various cemeteries. One of the cemeteries we visited was Quinn's Post Cemetery. This is where the soldier that I researched was killed and buried. Although when I originally started researching Lieutenant Arthur Hinman it had little significance to me, finding his grave and sharing his story with the group had a deep meaning. Lieutenant Arthur Hinman was from Tasmania, he attended Launceston Church Grammar School and moved to Victoria after school. He played football in the VFL with his brother Bill but gave it up to further his education in Geology. He was in the 15th battalion and was well respected. Rest in peace Arthur Hinman.

Also today Stuart introduced us to Rusty Richards who was a stretcher bearer with a rugby background. When we visited Baby 700 Cemetery Stu told us about Rusty's mentor and coach who had also come to Gallipoli and was tragically killed on the first day. His story was very interesting and is obviously of close personal importance to Stuart.

We got back on the bus and had a short drive before getting off again and going for a light walk to the site of the Battle of The Nek. When Stuart informed us of what had happened in the tiny square piece of ground that we were sitting in it was horrifying. To think that so many lives had been lost mainly due to watches not running on the same time was devastating. What I found quite remarkable was that there were only ten marked graves at the actual site where over one hundred ANZAC soldiers met their death. Just past where the ANZAC trenches would have been there was a small cemetery. In this cemetery is found a very famous epitaph on the headstone of Harold Rush that reads; "His last words, Goodbye cobber God bless you"

A remarkable last sentence of a remarkably brave man. The reason this is such a famous epitaph is due to the book written by John Hamilton about the life of Harold Rush.

Earlier today I was lucky enough to be interviewed by channel 9. I hate it how whenever you finish an interview, better answers to the questions asked come to your head than the answers you think of during the interview. I'm sure it will be fine never the less.

To top off another inspiring day we headed back to our hotel and had a great night playing backgammon and card games.

Day 6

Today started with a buffet breakfast at Hotel Kum. We didn't go to ANZAC Cove at all today, instead we went to the ancient city of Troy and we also ventured to Canakkale to learn more about the naval campaign. To get to our destinations we had to first cross the Dardanelles on the ferry. It was very cold on the ferry but we all braved the freezing temperatures and stayed outside on the upper deck and tried to enjoy the scenery as it was quite beautiful but to be honest I couldn't wait to get off the ferry so I could warm up! Luckily for me it was only a very short ferry ride and soon enough we were all back on the bus and heading off to the ancient city of Troy. It was on the bus to Troy when I foolishly made a bet with the girls that I was only just able to win. However I did receive several free drinks for winning so it wasn't so foolish after all! When we arrived at the city, the first object that we came across was a replica of the Trojan horse. Climbing it was a must, so we all handed our cameras to Stuart and Andrew and quickly climbed into the belly of the horse. I didn't think that the replica was overly impressive due to the fact that it was perfectly built and according to the legend of Troy, it would have been built out of scrap pieces of timber from old boats and weapons. So to me, this replica didn't really impress me. What did

impress me though, was the phenomenal stone work of walls and building foundations that are still in perfect position today.

It was during our time at Troy when I spotted a man in a full bright green Adidas tracksuit, bright green shoe laces and also green sunglasses to match. I couldn't keep this to myself so I pointed him out to Stu. Stu and I both shared the opinion that the man looked ridiculous and we had a good laugh about it. Gene was interested to know what we were laughing about, so Stu and I pointed the man out and asked Gene what he thought. To the surprise of Stu and I, he answered with; "That actually looks good aye?"

Stu and I burst into laughter and when Gene realized that we thought the outfit was atrocious, he made an attempt to cover his bad taste up by saying that he was only joking. We didn't believe him for a second when he said this and I think he will cop some flack over this for the rest of the trip.

On the way back to Canakkale for lunch we made a small stop at Dardanos Battery and began to broaden our knowledge of the naval campaign with the help of our wonderful guide Ozgur. The hill where this is positioned has a magnificent view of the main naval battle sites of the campaign and gave us a clear picture of how the battle on March 18 1915 actually played out. The fact that I found most interesting was the importance that the 18th of March has on the Turkish society due to the victory over the strongest naval fleet in the world (Britain). It was while we were here that Stuart began to tell us the story of Captain Henry Stoker. I found this story quite amazing and enjoyed hearing about Stoker's journey through the campaign and also through life. Stoker was the Captain of the AE2, the first submarine to make it through the maze of sea mines in the Dardanelles. Stoker was eventually taken as a prisoner of war but was lucky enough to survive the war. After the war Stoker became a tennis superstar and even managed to win a Wimbledon title but that didn't satisfy Stoker. He then went on to become an actor and also was a recognised sportsman in hurling and polo.

After another outstanding meal we then visited the Canakkale naval museum and went aboard a replica of Nusrat, a naval ship used to plant sea mines in the straits during the naval campaign against Britain in 1915. It was a beautifully constructed vessel and gave us an even better idea of how things were carried out during the campaign. A short but interesting stop was made at the old fort that is now a main part of the museum. It showcased a wide range of items used during the Gallipoli campaign and the walls of the fort still show battle scars from the ordeal including an unexploded bomb fired from a British naval ship some ninety six years ago that is deeply embedded in a wall of the fort.

The last stop of the day was made at the replica Trojan horse used in the Hollywood blockbuster Troy that is now stationed along the docks in Canakkale. As I am a big fan of the movie I enjoyed having a look at the horse and to me, it seems much more realistic than the other replica at Troy.

The trip back across the ferry was short and sweet again but luckily the sun was beaming this time so it was nowhere near the freezing temperature it was on the journey over.

Last night I was told of a Kum Hotel record and tonight I took it as my duty to break that record. The record stood at 12 honeycomb balls which seemed like a reasonable task to me when I started my mission but as I found out after eating about nine of these balls, it was not going to be an easy task. Somehow I managed to struggle through and beat the record by a single honey ball. I held it all in and to the surprise of everyone I did not vomit. I am now the proud champion of eating honeycomb balls at the Kum hotel. Good luck to any future Simpson prize winners who wish to try and take on this challenge!

Day 7

Well today was a pretty big day as we visited the British, French and Turkish memorials. The British Memorial at Cape Helles was first and I was blown away to see the magnificent view of the entrance of the Dardanelles from the high ground where the memorial is situated. Walking around looking at the names of soldiers that never got to go home was a very moving experience and it really made me think how great their sacrifice was.

As we finished looking at the British Memorial we wandered down to V Beach. Stuart and Andrew told us why this particular beach had importance to the campaign and that the British, French and few Australian troops that landed here were lucky to even make it off the beach alive. The V Beach Cemetery is not overly big but it contains some of the most moving epitaphs that we came across on our trip. One of the most touching epitaphs read; "A soldier in life, an angel in death, your sweet smiling face, I shall never forget".

The French Memorial was next and it was interesting to see as it was different to any of the other Allied forces. As I walked into the Memorial it brought a cold, dull and morbid feeling to mind. The reason for this is the style of the headstones which are very simple and stark and there is no green grass to soften the harsh colours of the headstones. Our soldiers are all buried in the same style graves no matter their rank but the French show importance of particular soldiers by giving them different graves. The photos below will give you a better understanding of what I mean.



Above: Graves of lower ranked soldiers
Right: Grave of a commanding officer.



The last memorial for the day was the Turkish and as it was a commemorative day for the Turks, it was packed with Turkish citizens. Today was the day that marked the anniversary of when Ataturk established parliament soon after the end of the First World War. Even though we have only spent seven days in Turkey we now have an understanding of how well respected Ataturk is to the people of Turkey. The only way I can think to describe their level of respect for him is that he is almost like a God to them.

While we were at the Turkish Memorial a young Turkish school group of girls were quite interested in us and seemed very keen to try out their English skills. Ozgur spoke to one of the girls and soon told us that they were not the nicest group to be talking to so we pressed on and found many other Turkish people to socialise with.

Looking at the different way the Turkish, French, British and Australians commemorate their fallen soldiers was really interesting but I have to say that I am glad Australia do it the way that they do.

For the afternoon we had planned to enjoy a gentle cruise along the Gallipoli coast. But much to the disgust of Andrew we were required to attend the Lone Pine rehearsal beforehand which could have meant we missed out on the cruise. So without making it obvious that we didn't want to be there, we practiced our wreath handling skills and watch as Tanvi delivered her reading with enormous confidence. Stuart took us through the process that we are to use during the service. I never knew handing out wreaths could be so complex! After we had finished practicing our roles we then set off on a mad dash to catch the boat. Luckily we made it and were able to enjoy the gentle cruise while seeing exactly what our ANZAC troops would have seen on that first morning when they landed. Along the way down the coast line we stopped at the site of a boat wreck from the campaign that casts a distinctive dark shadow in the water. We then continued on until we turned around and started to head back at the mouth of Suvla Bay which was a point that the British landed at towards the end of the campaign. Gene made great mates with one of the workers on the boat and spent a considerable amount of time trying to communicate with him and listening to 50 Cent on his phone (not that he could have possibly known what 50 Cent was rapping about). Just before we got off the boat I was quite horrified when Chelsea caused my pom-pom to be ripped off my beanie. Thankfully Lauren was able to repair my beanie and also added a small number 13 in the inside of it referring to my honeycomb ball record. Thank you so much Lauren!

A good day was finished with a fun trivia night organised by Geraldine. Tea was also very good as usual.

Day 8

Well today was only a short day as we have a very early start tomorrow. Everyone is beginning to flood in as ANZAC day approaches. Buses full of people of all nationalities are coming in and preparing for the big day. There must be hundreds of buses here as we were caught in a massive traffic jam as we slowly drove to the starting point of our walk. It was great to get away from all the traffic and crowds as we walked down the ridge marvelling at the spectacular view of Suvla Bay. We have been lucky with the weather during our time on the peninsula; although it has been cold at times but it has not rained once yet, unlike Istanbul. Our walk today basically followed the footsteps of the New Zealanders during the August offensive.

When we met the bus at the bottom we were unable to go back through the dawn service site due to authorities closing it for safety reasons, so we headed north to the small village of Bigali. In this village we were able to visit a house that Ataturk spent some time at just before the start of the Gallipoli campaign. It was great to learn some more about Ataturk but it also gave us an opportunity to see what living conditions are like for Turkish people in rural areas.

After a cup of Turkish tea and a bit more of a talk we then went back for lunch at the hotel and a relaxing afternoon before a sleep and an early rise to head up to ANZAC cove to wait for the dawn service. The afternoon turned out to be more action pack than expected when most of the group decided to head down to the beach for a "sea bathe". It was quite cold and everyone was glad to run back to the hotel and warm up. More backgammon was played throughout the afternoon and into the night for some as I am choosing not to sleep while I wait for the 1am departure.

I am very excited for the Dawn service and I think it will live up to all my expectations and more!

Day 9

Well today was the day I had been waiting for since I was only a child. I didn't sleep last night as I was too excited. I made sure I was wearing nice warm clothes and we

also had sleeping bags but we still felt the cold. It was a long wait for the Dawn service but the time seemed to pass relatively quickly as we watched several short documentaries about various parts of the campaign. One that I found very interesting was based around the AE2, the submarine that was under the command of Captain Henry Stoker. The documentary spoke about the ordeal that the men went through when they were forced to abandon the vessel and the courage the men had to get them through the toughest of times. Just before the dawn service was the coldest part of the wait but it was all well and truly worth it in the end. As the dignitaries spoke I began to feel weary but I fought off the temptation to sleep as I didn't want to miss a thing. When the last post was played all my feelings of tiredness disappeared and I could feel my heart beating in my chest. A shiver ran down my spine, it felt like the air was charged with electricity and in that moment I finally gained a true understanding of what it is to be Australian.

After the closing of the official dawn service, we had a decent hike up Artillery road to Lone Pine Cemetery for the Australian commemorative service. The walk was broken up into two parts as we had a short visit to Shell Green Cemetery. This is where the famous cricket match was played during the campaign and there is even photo evidence and scorecards from the match. As a huge cricket fan and passionate player of the game I struggled to make out how they played on such a sloped patch of grass but I suppose they had to make do with what they had at the time. We arrived at the Lone Pine Cemetery with a few hours to wait, so we decided to go for a short walk down to a small cemetery. After returning to Lone Pine we all were able to change into our more formal outfit for the official service. Everyone performed their duties with extraordinary pride and humility. There were no hiccups with the wreath handling and Tanvi spoke outstandingly well as we knew she would. I really enjoyed the Lone Pine service as it was a very personal setting as well as the fact that we were involved. I am still coming to terms with how amazing ANZAC day really was!

I was very relieved when I was able to climb into bed this afternoon and sleep for a good five hours but I would definitely do it all again if I had the chance. It was another late night as most of us gathered till late in Zoe and Chelsea's room to play truth or dare as we had done on numerous occasions already on the trip! We are heading back to Istanbul soon, I am definitely going to miss this beautiful place and it will be on my list of places to visit again in the future!

Day 10

We have made it back to Istanbul today. It was already mid-afternoon when we arrived so we just took it easy and had a few hours in the famous Grand Bazaar. I was very excited to go to the Bazaar and it did not disappoint. A lot of bargaining went on today and everyone seemed happy with their purchases. I think I could spend a fortune in the markets here if I had the luggage space to take it home! JP has bought an extraordinary number of pashminas already and we still have more opportunities to shop tomorrow.

Dinner tonight was very entertaining in our hotel restaurant. An elderly Turkish man played the piano for us as we enjoyed our meal. The gentleman seemed very impressed with Carol as she remarkably knew nearly all the songs that he played and even got up and had a dance at one point. As we were relaxing in the restaurant, four men came in dressed in traditional costumes and began to dance. They got everyone involved and it was great fun. To end the night we headed off on a mission to find belly dancers. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful. However it was still worthwhile as it was a great opportunity for us to see the city at night. The Blue Mosque was lit up and we enjoyed a delicious ice cream as we wondered aimlessly through the streets. As we walked through a garden area near the Blue Mosque we saw a woman sitting against a fountain with her legs crossed, head covered by a hood and she was fast asleep. We got even closer as we walked and we realized she had what looked like a toy baby in her lap. The supposed toy baby then opened its eyes and we were

shocked to find that it was real. This woman was obviously homeless and very poor as her clothes were ripped and dirty. It broke my heart to see this and reminded me of my time in Vietnam working in orphanages. We all were very moved by what we had just seen and I think everyone realized how lucky we really are to live the way we do.

Day 11

Our trip is almost at an end and what a last day we have had in this amazing country. A visit to the magnificent Basilica Cistern was first on our agenda and it was fascinating to think that it had been built so long ago. Ozgur told us of when he first came through the Basilica Cistern as a boy and that the tour was done in small boats at that stage. The remaining two feet of water left in the Cistern is occupied by an unbelievable number of fish.

A short walk from the Basilica Cistern and we were at Hagia Sophia. It is now a museum and no longer a church but if you were to consider it still a church it would be the fourth largest in the world! Hagia Sophia was built in 537 AD and it was the largest church in the world and remained to be for the next thousand years! One of the strangest facts that I found of the trip was about this church and it was that the church was converted to a mosque in the 1500s but it took the Ottomans one hundred years to figure out how to get to the dome to cover the Christian images. It was ridiculously high I admit, but seriously, one hundred years is very long time.

The recently opened Suleyman Mosque was the last Mosque we visited for our trip and it was definitely my favorite. The beautiful designs painted on the walls are stunning and along with the incredibly clever architect who left instructions for specific windows to be left open when the wind is blowing in certain directions so the soot from the hundreds of candles in the Mosque will all collect in one small room. It is quite remarkable.

Our last afternoon was spent shopping in the Grand Bazaar and I think everyone was struggling for room in their cases when it came time to pack but I am sure we will be fine.

To cap off an outstanding day we were treated to a wonderful farewell dinner at an old cistern. It was a wonderful last meal and I enjoyed spending the last evening together immensely.

Back at the hotel after dinner, we handed over tips to our fantastic guide Ozgur and our ever reliable bus driver. Presents were given to the chaperones and we received the prestigious Gallipoli star for completing the Simpson Prize trip.

The night was spent in the girl's room playing truth or dare and reminiscing about the wonderful journey we have had. The night was ended when Stu dared Tanvi to sing a particular song from the movie *Burlesque*. Tanvi did so with her outstanding vocals but we did not realize that the night had slipped away from us and it was one thirty in the morning. Shortly after Tanvi had finished her beautiful recital of "Tough Lover" by Christina Aguilera, a receptionist knocked on our door informing us of a complaint that had been made. We took the hint and headed to our own rooms for our final sleep in Turkey.

I don't want this trip to be over as we have all become like a close family. We are already talking about a reunion in the near future.

Summary

What an amazing journey we have just been given. I would like to personally thank the Simpson Prize and the Australian Government for giving me this wonderful experience. I haven't been home long and I already wish I could do it all again. A big thanks to; our amazing guide Ozgur, our chaperones; Andrew, Stuart, Carol and Geraldine and our ever trustworthy bus driver.

