



THE Simpson PRIZE

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The Anzac Legend, of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, does not accurately express the story of any one Australian soldier during World War One, because its most basic premise is instead to discuss their unification and mateship throughout battle. As a famed account of the Australasian military, it recollects and mythologises the incredible sense of camaraderie and collective military experiences at Gallipoli in 1915. The Anzac Legend became embedded in the Australian psyche during World War One, when news of great valour and self-sacrifice on the part of Australasian soldiers began to filter back to those still in the southern hemisphere. On the 25th of April, 1915, an Allied force including 50,000 Australians and 18,000 New Zealandersⁱ, landed on the Gallipoli peninsula, and were met by furious Turkish retaliation. Throughout the ensuing months, the 'Anzacs', as they had come to be known, were hailed by all who fought alongside and against them for their heroic displays of bravery and commitment to the Allies' cause. This sense of self-sacrifice and unity that was aroused in the "scruffy lot"ⁱⁱ during the Gallipoli campaign defines the Anzac Legend, and it is thus paradoxical to suggest that any of their individual stories is the sole embodiment of the overall Legend. The Anzac soldiers fought as a whole, for the "greater good"ⁱⁱⁱ, not for their own recognition or personal triumphs. This spirit of fellowship and collaboration has been integral to the Anzac Legend for almost a century, and remains equally significant in the collective celebrations of ANZAC Day today.

One of the most enduring principles of the Australian Army has been an emphasis on "selflessness and subordination to the greater good"^{iv}, on being prepared to forego one's notion of individuality in order to contribute to collective power. This concept was truly epitomised and heralded by the Anzac soldiers, who engendered international respect and recognition for Australia during the nation's "baptism of fire"^v, as they united to achieve "more than they were asked [by the British]"^{vi}. Anzac infantrymen proved that their intentions at Gallipoli were more honourable than satisfying their own potential ambition or egoistic natures when they discussed their experiences in Turkey; this is shown by the mentality of many Anzacs that "life was very dear, but life was not worth living unless they could be true to their idea of Australian manhood."^{vii} Horace Albert Parton was one such Australian. A member of the 8th Battalion, he wrote home to his mother; "I consider the time spent over here as going to help make the world a better place to live in... so I am satisfied"^{viii}. His views are further corroborated by *Sydney Morning Herald* war correspondent Ashmead Bartlett, who wrote of how the "wounded Anzacs...were happy because they knew they had been tried for the first time, and had not been found wanting."^{ix} As the Anzacs sacrificed their own sense of individuality, and even lives, for the "Old Country"^x, it was discovered that by combining their own units and skills, sometimes with soldiers from other Allied nations, their collective power far outweighed the impact any man could have had individually. The courageousness that resulted in the Australian soldiers dedicating themselves to such an incredibly unified military force was what eventually enabled their successes and longevity at Gallipoli. The Anzac Legend, then, which recalls such heroism and sacrifice, does not tell the individual

stories of Anzacs, because their strength in togetherness, not individuality, was what created the enduring memories of their wartime efforts.

The palpable companionship present amongst Australian military ranks was crucial to this united force at Gallipoli being developed, as soldiers willingly dedicated themselves to their 'mates'- men who were friends simply by virtue of the fact that they shared geographical origins. Mateship provided an enduring and everlasting Australian bond, and was recognised even by the country's official war historian of the time as a characteristic fundamental to soldiers' lives- Dr C.E.W. Bean specifically described the "comradeship"^{xi} of Australian servicepeople. The Australian soldiers at Gallipoli desired only to honour their sense of obligation to their peers and country, as was displayed when they described wanting to "revolt and cry out in anger"^{xii} at the eventual orders to leave behind the bodies of fallen Anzacs and evacuate Gallipoli. The intense and protective emotions that Australian soldiers imparted upon their friends and peers were far greater than any notions of self-preservation or narcissism. As such, the Anzac Legend was born almost entirely from the collaborative strength of the "raw colonial troops"^{xiii}. Its focus was, and remains today, not in exaggerating individual feats, or telling individual stories, but in reminding Australians of their potential for achievement when acting as a collective power.

The Anzac Legend, in addition to outlining the heroism of the Anzacs, also refers often to the horrific conditions at Gallipoli; this is dissimilar to many other military tales of gallant fighters and romantic crusades. The Legend's honesty in relation to the War's atrocity, and simultaneous discussion of the way Australians banded together to make life more bearable, shows how the Anzac Legend is at heart a narrative of cooperation and unification. While the Anzacs were "lousy, stinking, ragged, unshaven and sleepless"^{xiv}, and themselves expressed that "it is horrible"^{xv}, with an "ever-pervading stench of rotting corpses"^{xvi}, these embattled soldiers are still reported to have portrayed a "boundless (and groundless) optimism"^{xvii}. The Australians coped as a collaborative force by supporting each other with a spirit of larrikinism and mateship, embodied by such efforts as "putting bush carpentry skills to good use"^{xviii}, and displaying this resourcefulness even when faced with the adversity of utilising limited resources in an unfamiliar country. The Anzac Legend does not seek to hide this trauma, but speaks instead of how the Anzacs united in order to overcome hardships. When soldiers returned home, the psychological trauma that many had developed was a further testament to the sense of belonging and mutual dependence they had enjoyed. Although the veterans "didn't want to seem weak"^{xix}, 8000 of their military colleagues had been felled in just one campaign^{xx}, often under inhumane conditions and right before a mate's eyes. When soldiers returned to Australia, one Victorian doctor noted the "terrible effects of the Great War on the physical, nervous and mental condition of the soldiers"^{xxi}, where a sense of isolation pervaded for many upon returning home; this was caused largely by the sudden loss of the intense relationships that were experienced by servicemen on the battlefield. One of the reasons that the Anzac Legend is not one of individual narratives, then, is because it cannot describe one soldier's

journey without referring to the support he received from - and gave to - other Australians during times of adversity.

The Anzac Legend has always been, and remains today, a story of the collective power of Australasian soldiers at Gallipoli. This unified nature is portrayed clearly, even in the 21st century, by our tradition of celebrating April 25 as a nation, not just individually. ANZAC Day is a time to congregate and remember *all* Australian soldiers, not just one individual. We celebrate our Anzacs together, since their stories, experiences, triumphs and failures were all shared as a unified force. This sense of collectiveness in the Australian psyche is highlighted by the attendance of over 52,000 people at the Australian War Memorial services on ANZAC Day 2013^{xxii}. We celebrate Australian infantrymen and women young and old, because the Australian military culture is one of continuity, lifelong dedication, collaboration amongst forces of every generation, and togetherness. As such, the Anzac Legend's sense of unity and nationhood cannot describe individual stories of servicemen during World War One, because the primary themes of the Anzac Legend remain to this day themes of wholeness, collaboration and the supporting of others.

The Anzac Legend was created in 1915 as a result of the unimaginable dedication and bravery shown by Australian soldiers at Gallipoli. The primary values evident throughout each retelling of the Anzac Legend are those of mateship, commitment to the 'greater good', selflessness and a unity amongst all Australasians. British Poet John Masefield said that the Anzacs were the "finest body of young men ever brought together in modern times."^{xxiii} This is ultimately the essence of the Gallipoli campaign: ordinary Australians were brought together, and fought together, rather than being individuals in an individual war. The Anzac Legend cannot accurately tell the individual experiences of Australian soldiers during World War One, because this notion of self-expression and personal interest is directly opposed to the collective power and value of togetherness inherent to the Legend itself.

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- ⁱ (Stephens, 2002)
- ⁱⁱ (Bowers, 1999, pp. 8-9)
- ⁱⁱⁱ (John, 2013, p. 189)
- ^{iv} *ibid*
- ^v (Swifte, 1985)
- ^{vi} (Swifte, 1985, p. 115)
- ^{vii} (Australian War Memorial, n.d.)
- ^{viii} (Australian War Memorial, 2013)
- ^{ix} (Australian War Memorial, 2013)
- ^x (www.anzacs.net, n.d.)
- ^{xi} (Bean, 1983, p. 181)
- ^{xii} (Swifte, 1985, p. 112)
- ^{xiii} (Australian War Memorial, 2013)
- ^{xiv} *ibid*
- ^{xv} *ibid*
- ^{xvi} (Swifte, 1985, p. 75)
- ^{xvii} (Swifte, 1985, p. 4)
- ^{xviii} (Swifte, 1985, p. 71)
- ^{xix} (Pascale, 2013)
- ^{xx} (www.anzacs.net, n.d.)
- ^{xxi} (Australian Government: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2006, p. 82)
- ^{xxii} (Australian War Memorial, 2013)
- ^{xxiii} (Stephens, 2002)

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