



THE Simpson PRIZE

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With the landing at Gallipoli of ANZAC troops on April 25th 1915, history was made. Not only was this struggle one of the first battles in which the Australian Army had taken part in since federation¹, it can be argued that it is the most important battle in Australian history. Although Australia and the Allied forces didn't win, and achieve the goal of freeing up the Dardanelles for the Russians, it forged what was going to be one of the most significant aspects of Australian culture: The ANZAC Legend. The great Australian spirit of mateship and egalitarianism, fighting for freedom, mateship and larrikinism all either had beginnings or were solidified in Gallipoli. However, as important as it may seem to us now, many people were not represented in this image. Women, Aboriginals, Quakers and other minority groups who participated both at Gallipoli and the Western Front are not seen; whereas nurses or non-combat roles such as orderlies seem to be excluded from the legend, one that was meant to represent the whole Australian community. This great indifference to individual people, by stating that all Australians were white, brave, tall, athletic men, demonstrates that the individuals were not included. However this does not matter. The Anzac legend, although not representing all sectors of the community, was meant to solidify the nation in times of war and thus served its purpose as unifying propaganda, meaning that Australians, although horrified by the nature of the war were proud of their involvement. The ANZAC legend thus while not always telling the individual story did reflect the dominant social values of the period and played a role in preserving the individual stories of those who participated.

The ANZAC legend was mainly created by two newspaper writers: C.E.W Bean and Ashmead Bartlett. These two men wrote for different purposes, and came from different backgrounds, however both had a nationalistic and imperialistic flair, which provided the unity needed to stir on the war effort and gather popular support. Both through their writing helped develop a sense of national pride and identity. However, one of the side effects of this nationalism was that people that didn't fit the image were neglected from the legend. People of non-British descent were ignored, Aboriginals were excluded (this can be seen with source 2 with the non identified Aboriginal 'Ear Wigger' thus proving that Aboriginal men fought at both Gallipoli and the Western Front however are not recognised in the legend.²) Women also played an important role in WW1 with 2139 serving, with 29³ not returning home, however the ANZAC legend does not include their story. These newspaper articles did not provide an accurate description of individuals, but provided a general description of the Australian troops. The writing of Ashmead Bartlett and CEW Bean however do reflect the dominant social values of the time, as in Australian society Aboriginals did not have a voice, society was very patriarchal and Australia perceived its self as white. The legend, which evolved from the Bush myth, gave the Australian soldier a

¹ The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force had landed at Kabul in Sept 1914 and took possession of German New Guinea six days later. In November the Sydney destroyed the German raider Emden.
<http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww1/>

² <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P02360.001>

³ <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/women-in-action>

rural voice⁴. The strong and rugged country soldier was good with his hands, loyal and ingenious, having already survived the bush. In reality, however, only 1/6th of the enlistments were from the country, and thus the legend was not reflecting the individual soldier's story, rather a social construction.

Bean however had one surprising impact on the individual soldier. Bean was influential in setting up the preservation of war relics, calling them in 1917 "sacred things"⁵. This meant that items that previously may have been discarded or left behind were sent home to family members and friends of the deceased. These items became important sources for future generations to gather information about WW1 and by the preservation of mementos and war relics the individual stories of soldiers could be recorded. Such items include the personal letters and diaries of soldiers, such as the ones by Norman Bayles⁶ or Corporal Inglis Smith⁷. These letters through their description and emotions support the sentiment of the ANZAC legend. They depicted the harshness of the conditions and support the visual pictures created through Bean's and Bartlett's words. After the war finished, Bean was also instrumental in the creation of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Chairing the Memorial Board in 1952, he worked tirelessly to create one of the only ways in which all individual soldiers of all wars are recognized. In this way, the ANZAC legend helped recognize individual soldiers as without Bean and the ANZAC legend the project may never have happened, thus not recognizing the sacrifice by thousands of Australian men and women. As Norman Bayles said: *'It is horrible, but why should you people at home not know?'* Without Bean and Bartlett and the ANZAC legend the individual stories may have been lost as public pride and interest in the stories may have declined over time.

Even though the ANZAC legend doesn't represent every single individual soldier, it wasn't created to do so. William Hughes' government wanted more people to enlist, and the legend encouraged people to do so by increasing Australian's sense of nationalism and pride. It could however be argued that the legend is successful in depicting the story of the individual soldiers as the enlistment figures rose as the tales of the hardship and horror returned home, thus demonstrating that Australian were supporting their 'mates' and not afraid of adversity. As shown by enlistment figures⁸, enlistments peaked for WW1 in July/August 1915, as the information and reports filtered back and people were able to digest the information. The rise in enlistment figures supports the assertions that Australians are brave and willing to do what was needed.

The degree in which the ANZAC legend tells the story of the individual soldiers is complex. The simplistic and accepted viewpoint is that it does not tell the story of the individual soldier well, as it is missing many voices. The legend neglects to include women, Aboriginals and those who did not reflect

⁴ <http://newsweek.com.au/article.php?id=5251>

⁵ <http://www.awm.gov.au/people/20388.asp>

⁶ <https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/2DRLO481.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/PR-01323.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/Enlistments-1st-AIF-1914-1918.jpg>

main stream white males. Also that the legend was based upon the bush legend, itself a false construct. However, when examining primary sources it can be seen that the conditions were appalling, that mateship did exist and that much of what Bean and Ashmead Bartlett wrote is supported by individual accounts of events. Therefore the ANZAC legend although missing parts of the story, does tell the story of some of the individual soldiers well. The legend also played a significant role in allowing the individual voices to continue to be heard and their stories to have ever growing audiences as the legend helped develop and maintain the interest in the events of WW1 nearly one hundred years after the event. It is because of the legend and the role it played in developing national pride that the thoughts, feelings and stories of soldiers such as Bayles and Smith are remembered today.

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