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Gallipoli: The Australian Voices of World War 1

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The sole efforts Australians are remembered for within the war are on the Western Front and in Gallipoli, and these are certainly noble stories to tell: Men charging into the glory of battle, bravely facing their imminent doom. It is a legend repeated over and over again. However, the glorification of the Battle of Gallipoli and the battles on the Western Front overshadow the many other voices and efforts of Australia during World War 1. This begs the question: How much history have we buried under these two events? There are many perspectives and stories left untold by Gallipoli, such as the lives of those at home, the peace protests, rampant racism perpetuated by international tensions, and the lives of soldiers lost on other deployments.

106 years ago, on 25 April 1915, Australian and New Zealand soldiers landed in Gallipoli. The Gallipoli campaign was a plan for ANZAC troops to support the British to take Constantinople and aid Russia in battle. The events of Gallipoli should not be discarded completely, as it is an important lesson for Australians on war and national identity. Many Australians volunteered their lives for the cause, and it is a worthy legend. Over 8700 lives of Australian soldiers were lost in Gallipoli, and 46000 on the Western Front ([Australian War Memorial, 2020](#)), an event that has significant recognition, although is itself overshadowed by Gallipoli despite having 5 times the amount of Australian enlistments and deaths ([King, J. 2008](#)). Although not nearly as many soldiers lost their lives in Gallipoli than in the Western Front, Gallipoli is still widely regarded as one of the most brutal Australian campaigns of the war due to the harsh conditions and bloody conflicts - the battle at Anzac cove had come to a stalemate, forcing the Allies to mobilise soldiers and attempt to advance on the land, known as the Charge of the Daisy Patch/Second Battle of Krithia. However, the Turk soldiers were waiting: "the bullets and shrapnel came just like hail" and over 6500 men were lost despite advancing a mere 500 metres (Garipy, P, 2014, p. 148).

Whenever Australian war prospects are mentioned, Gallipoli is the first thing that comes to mind. This campaign shows a very limited viewpoint of the many perspectives and efforts of Australians in the First World War. However, it is a defining moment in Australian history for a reason. It is a symbol of the Australian lives sacrificed. It's a legend that needs to exist. The 'mateship', the determination, the bravery - They are symbols of the Australian identity. There is also a feeling that Gallipoli solidified Australia's independence as a nation - shortly after gaining independence from the British Empire, it proved that Australia was worthy of being its own autonomous country, ready to progress. But is it fair that the day that the first soldiers landed in Gallipoli, 25 April 1915, is the only thing we base our celebration and remembrance of Australian identity in the War off of?

Through their glorification, the events of Gallipoli and the Western Front often overwrite the stories of those at home. Throughout World War 1 many opportunities arose for activism and social change within Australia. World War 1 temporarily changed the gender dynamics of the home workforce - before the war, women were typically housewives who took care of children and looked after other domestic jobs. However, women were needed to cover men's roles in the economy. Women became war nurses and served on the home front, helping raise money for war efforts overseas. This pattern emerged in many countries as men were enlisted in wars, leading to major social change in Australia and around the globe. Women were perfectly capable of filling roles they were previously thought unsuitable for until necessary to keep Australia functioning under the stress of war. Afterwards, Australia regressed into its pre-war gender roles as there were even fewer women in the workforce in 1921 than in 1911 (DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs], 2020). This empowerment of women was closely linked to the women's rights and anti-conscription/peace movement led by Vida Goldstein, an internationally renowned, passionate suffrage activist, and one of the first 4 women to stand for parliament. After the breakout of World War 1, Goldstein formed the Women's Peace Army ([Brownfoot N., I., 1983](#)), forging a women's alliance across backgrounds and political views. The Peace Army campaigned against the 'ANZAC spirit' Australia sought from its people to support the bloody battles being fought overseas, contributing to the fight against conscription.

Australians' opinions on conscription during the Easter Uprising in Ireland: Many Australians had a strong Irish identity and protested in support of Irish independence from the British Empire, creating a negative atmosphere towards the previously unquestioned powerful influence of Britain on Australia. Revolting on the first ANZAC Day, the legend of Gallipoli that brought these soldiers together began to collapse - as worded by Jenny Macleod ([2016](#)): "An all-encompassing imperial identity began to atomize." Britain's nationalistic grip on Australia diminished as many Australians became unwilling to fight in the name of Britain. All Australian soldiers who fought in the war were volunteers, however this freedom of choice was almost overturned in 1916 and 1917 when 2 referendums were held by Prime Minister Billy Hughes, only prevented by the voices of these anti-conscription and anti-war protests. These efforts showed that the bravery of soldiers in physical battle were not the only sacrifices Australians made during the war: At home, people were fighting to get their opinions heard and changes to be made in the public arena. Without action, women's suffrage may have never gained mass recognition, and the war would have been significantly more devastating for Australia as more soldiers were forced into battle.

Other voices of Australia were suppressed in the politically charged tensions of war - very few Indigenous people, around 1000 out of 93000 ([Australian War Memorial, 2019](#)) served Australia in the Australian Imperial Force during World War 1 despite being barred from enlisting. Many hid their identities to serve, even though the nation did not serve them back: "We're not citizens, yet we're willing to die for this place, we're willing to die for non-Indigenous Australians, have a think about that one..." (Oakley, G, 2016, Australian War Memorial). There are also records of over 200 Chinese enlistments in the AIF. These Chinese and Indigenous soldiers went to Gallipoli, united in serving Australia, yet were completely ignored in its records. Upon returning home,

these people were not honoured for their service but yet again faced discrimination, even more intense than before due to Australia's new nationalistic ideals. Immigration was heavily restricted during the war and racial tensions were extreme, perpetuated by the enforcement of a 'White Australia' policy that looked to limit the immigration of non-white and primarily Asian populations to Australia since 1901. Even Europeans were restricted from immigrating later in the war, as around 7000 Germans were held in internment camps ([National Archives of Australia, n.d.](#)). Legislation was passed to discriminate against those who wanted to serve their country: The Defence Act of 1909 "declared that people 'not substantially of European origin or descent' were unable to enlist in the armed forces." ([National Archives of Australia, n.d.](#)) The very ideals upheld by the story of Gallipoli erased those who fought for it - The people Australia had a responsibility to care for, and those who chose to fight for us, were abandoned at their most desperate time.

Other important experiences and events have been left behind completely by Australia's retelling of the war: Many other campaigns tragically took the lives of Australian soldiers yet are completely unknown to the general public. This includes the first notable conflict Australia was involved in WW1, recapturing Germany's pacific colonies such as New Guinea and Toma on 11 September 1914 ([Australian War Memorial, 2021](#)), HMAS Sydney vs SMS Emden where the Royal Australian Navy fought and won its first naval battle of World War 1; the Sinai and Palestine campaign that happened during Gallipoli to defend the Suez Canal; the conflict in Semakh in which many Aboriginal soldiers fought; and the Battle of Fromelles on the Western Front that claimed 2000+ Australian lives and 400 prisoners of war, the greatest loss of a singular division experienced in 24 hours ([Australian War Memorial, 2021](#)) yet is not nearly as well known as Gallipoli: An account by the Sydney Morning Herald tells the story of a soldier who "was forced to say he was shot at Gallipoli as nobody knew of Fromelles" (King, J; 2008).

Overall, Gallipoli and the Western Front are looming figures that overshadow the rest of the Australian story of World War 1. It is a necessary yet tragic tale repeated so often that it has become disconnected from history; from reality. It is often forgotten that there was real suffering, real protests, and real people involved when it is upheld as legend. It is important to comprehend and discuss the events that transpired throughout the war from a wider range of perspectives - from those of the other side, from those that were oppressed and overshadowed by the glory of Gallipoli. If nothing else, Gallipoli is a necessary reminder for Australians: A reminder of the brave sacrifices soldiers have made for our wellbeing, of how we changed as a country over the war, of how we failed to fulfill the needs of our own, and to not repeat the mistakes of our predecessors. Lest we forget, and lest we fail to remember.

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