

## **Are the qualities that make up Anzac Spirit still alive in society today?**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1915, the spirit of a nation was born with the landing of the first Anzac troops. The diggers, as they came to be known, came to symbolise the qualities that Australians value, and that have become known as **the Anzac spirit** – mateship, tenacity, innovation and healthy disrespect for authority. These are the qualities that have been adopted by people throughout the nation as defining the Australian Character. They have been demonstrated many times throughout our short history, especially in times of crisis and hardship. Their example was the legacy that the Anzac's left for all Australians today. It is this challenge that Australians strive to meet.

The young Australian troops that became known as the Anzac's, showed intense national pride throughout their time at Gallipoli. This, in itself, is the nationalism expected of any army fighting for its country. However, it was the way in which the Anzac's conducted themselves – their commitment to mateship, their tenacity in the face of horrible adversity, their bravery and innovation, that made their place in history and developed a sense of national character. It is often said that this is when Australia came of age as a nation. It was not just the soldiers that demonstrated their national pride but also the civilians back home in Australia and New Zealand. The same national pride is still apparent eighty-three years later. It was what drove over 60,000 Australian volunteers to give their time and labour to help their country in the Sydney Olympic games; performing tasks without financial reward – to contribute to an event of which all Australians could be proud. It is a similar commitment that drives the army of volunteers who work tirelessly for charity and community groups. It is in times of need, pain and suffering as well as in times of joy that Australian's, who have previously had nothing in common,

band together to achieve a common goal for the good of their country and its international reputation.

The bond between mates is at the very heart of the Anzac tradition and spirit. Mateship means watching out for, and taking care of your friends, sometimes at personal cost. John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the soldier with his donkey came to symbolise this providing an example with which others could identify. Commitment to helping out those less fortunate is at the core of the Australian national character. This was apparent in the aftermath of the recent bombing in Bali. Australians from all walks of life came together to help those affected by the tragedy. Not only did the Australian Government send specialist medical and humanitarian teams, but there was also a large contingent of volunteers who gave their talents and time to help the wounded and the many people adversely affected. It was not only the people who went to Bali to help that demonstrated the nation's capacity to work together to help others, but it was also the people who organised the fund raising initiatives in Australia that supported their work. Mateship still means the same thing that it did ninety years ago; mateship is going above and beyond the call of duty to help another without regard to the personal cost involved. Beginning with the Anzacs, this enduring quality is a cornerstone of Australian culture and society.

During the Anzac's time at Gallipoli they demonstrated innovation and endurance. The soldiers were given the name diggers because they dug so many trenches so quickly at Gallipoli and they kept digging despite the terrible conditions. The trenches stretched over many miles and were all completed while under attack from the Turkish troops. The same qualities of tenacity and innovation have survived to modern day Australians, in the farmers facing ongoing drought, in whole communities rebuilding after fires and floods. This is just the kind of tenacity that was showed in Gallipoli ninety years ago as modern day Australians show time and time again the ability to endure and fight on through, pain, discomfort and hardship with a little bit of help from their mates.

The Australians at Gallipoli also found resourceful alternatives to the sometimes dangerous and risky tasks. One such invention was that of the periscope, which enabled soldiers to see out of the trench while staying safely hidden. Another famous innovation was the self-shooting guns that enabled the Australians to successfully retreat without losing a single soldier. There are many examples of this innovation and resourcefulness today. Howard Florey who isolated mould and made it into penicillin made one of the most notable and important Australian discoveries. Another example is the bionic ear developed by Professor Graeme Clark in 1983. These innovations helped to improve the quality of life for many people not only in Australia, but all around the world.

In World War One the Australian soldiers were just one of many contingents fighting under the British flag. However, there was something different, something uniquely Australian about these soldiers. They were not obedient and restrained soldiers like their British cousins. They did not base their respect for a person on his rank alone. Australians were not accustomed to the rigid class based society of Britain. The egalitarian society from which they came meant that respect had to be earned and demanded merit. They also, to the British officers dismay, brought with them their larrikin behaviour and healthy disregard for the (British) establishment that became the hallmark of the Australian Character. These characteristics were well known to the Australians at home; however, the experience of the Anzacs was the first time that they were on show to the rest of the world.

Australian history is littered with examples with the triumph of the underdog - Ned Kelly the bushranger who stood up to the authorities, the miners at the Eureka stockade and the hapless swagman in the folk song Waltzing Matilda. The Australian public can identify with the character who, like the Anzacs, "has a go" even when winning seems impossible. It has something to do with the rascal that all Australians have buried somewhere inside of them.

The Anzac's assault on the beach at Gallipoli provided a moment in history that gave generations of Australians inspiration to draw upon. It is a legacy that underscores the values of mateship, tenacity and innovation. It is this the first example of the spirit of Australia that all Australians have come to remember. This spirit is alive and well in the best of endeavours today. These qualities define what it means to be Australian and they have survived the test of time and, even though they are not always on show, they seem to emerge when Australians need them most.

## **Bibliography**

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