

**Matthew Dean**  
**Winner for Western Australia**  
**Narrogin Senior High School**

---

The word ANZAC expresses so much about the values and attributes viewed as important by both the peoples of Australia and New Zealand. Attributes such as mateship, courage and a sense of duty bind those who served this country in times of war to that of my generation who are now active participants in the commemoration of that service. The Anzac Spirit and the traditions that have emerged from the fateful landing on the 25 April 1915, now capture the world's attention each ANZAC Day as thousands of Australians and New Zealanders find their way to a Dawn Service or a march somewhere in Australia or overseas. While treaties and alliances bind most nations of the world, the common legacy for our two countries comes with the shared wartime experience and the commitment to the dual commemoration of that experience.

Every Australian and New Zealand school student from 1915 to the present has come to learn of the Gallipoli landing, acknowledging that for there to have been success in the attack, the Australian Imperial Force required the element of surprise but the Turks were well aware of the imminent attack and occupied the cliffs and therefore the superior position in battle. Despite the odds, these original Anzacs showed great courage and inventiveness in their endeavours of the morning of 25 April 1915 and, indeed, in the months that followed. They landed one and a half kilometres north of the allocated landing site, straight into the heavily guarded Turkish peninsular now called Anzac Cove.<sup>1</sup> Believing that the battle with the Turks would be swift, our boys carried only a day's rations. Rowing towards the shore, the Anzac's fell under immediate fire from the Turks. In total, 8,700 Australians were killed and a further 27,000 were wounded in the eighth month campaign and with this, the transfer of Anzac from men to place became official.<sup>2</sup>

The Gallipoli campaign would have a lasting impact on this country and as such, it was important for the community to pay tribute to the memory of those who did not return and the contribution of those who did. On the one-year anniversary of the landing on the 25 April 1915, the first commemoration service occurred and in all

---

<sup>1</sup> L. Dennis. 1999. *Australia Since 1890*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Longman: South Melbourne. P. 37.

<sup>2</sup> K. Cameron et al. 2000. *Investigating Australia's Twentieth Century History*. Nelson: Southbank. Victoria. P. 48.

states by 1927, ANZAC Day was declared a public holiday.<sup>3</sup> Since that time, ANZAC Day has been shaped and redefined but still essentially it is an occasion of reflection, commemoration and renewal. As each year passes and the number of veterans grow fewer, the legacy of honouring the past passes to the younger generation who through services held in schools, wreath laying and community events, are able to reflect on what they have and what they can do.

With recent conflicts in East Timor, Afghanistan and now Iraq, it is inevitable that members of the Australian Defence Force will be committed to battle on foreign soils. Though I personally have never had to experience the impact of war, many in my own community of Cuballing, have. In the centre of this small Western Australian wheatbelt community stands a war memorial with the names of fifty-one young men who lost their lives in World War One.<sup>4</sup> This community boasted the highest per capita enlistment in the state, with some locals even arguing that it was actually the highest enlistment rate in the British Empire. Few of my generation could imagine the impact that such a loss would have on a community, to lose brothers, husbands and fathers. These were the leaders, businessmen and workers of the district and yet so many never returned. My brother, Ross Douglas, holds the rank of Lance Corporal in the Australian Army, having enlisted in 2001. The prospect of his being stationed overseas or transferred to a combatant unit weighs heavily on my family and yet such a likelihood reinforces my belief in the continuation of the Anzac tradition and the need to maintain our commemoration of the deeds of those who have served Australia as members of the military.

In such troubled times as those that have passed, countries, communities and families have pulled together to overcome adversity, thus providing hope and a desire to ensure a better life for the generations that followed. In both the World Wars, communities rallied to help those in need through fundraisers to support the war effort, dances to lift morale and offering support to families who lost loved ones. Unemployed men and women were manpowered into essential industries such as munitions and farming, while many married women contributed to the war effort through volunteer organisations as the Red Cross. Can it be argued that we are as community spirited today as those who lived during these times or have we lost some

---

<sup>3</sup> R. Ward. 1985. A Nation for a Continent: The History of Australia 1901-1975 (Revised Edition). Heinemann: Richmond, Victoria. P.141.

<sup>4</sup> 'Cuballing' (Available at <http://www.warmemorials.net/memorials/wheatbelt/cuballing/cubal.htm>) Accessed 17 November 2004.

of the Anzac spirit during more modern times? And what elements of this tradition and spirit, if any, feature in modern Australian society?

On the 27 December 2003, a fire swept through the small community of Tenterden, some 320 kilometres south-east of Perth. Two women, Lorraine Melia and Judith Ward died in this fire, where wind gusts up to 70 kilometres per hour and 40 degrees centigrade temperatures propelled the flames at a rapid rate burning out over 15 000 hectares of farmland and bush.<sup>5</sup> Though the Anzac spirit may not be the motivating factor determining community service in Australia, perhaps it's legacy has instilled in the generations who have followed the original Anzacs to view such contributions as normal and part of the Australian way of life. In Tenterden, men and women were members of the local community fire brigade and they, together with volunteer units from other towns fought this fire. Such efforts come with personal risk with five people injured fighting this fire and yet supporting neighbours and protecting community – not self-interest, motivated their actions. For this town of ninety residents, the impact of this tragedy was widespread culminating in the loss of life, livelihood and significant environmental damage.<sup>6</sup> But through such adversity, the town and its people rallied to rebuild fences, agist stock and fundraise to support the victims of the fire. The community beyond Tenterden also made their contribution highlighting that when Australians need assistance, “a mate will be there.” Such is the Australian way or the Anzac Spirit!

The story of war is one of both tragedy and triumph. Acts of astonishing bravery and courage by ordinary Australians, who risked their own lives and forgot about themselves to assist a mate or even a complete stranger typify what the Anzac spirit is all about. Many of these deeds went unnoticed just as many acts of kindness in the modern world go unnoticed. As Australians we should all look to make a difference in the world, reflecting on the service and sacrifice of those who have gone before us. In this way we hold true the legacy bestowed by those who enlisted in World War One some ninety years ago and it is these attributes that we commemorate each Anzac Day.

---

<sup>5</sup> The West Australian. 8 December 2004. P 6.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Women die in fire 150m from water’, Sydney Morning Herald (online). 28 December 2003. (available at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/12/28/1072546401394.html?oneclick=true>) Accessed 10 November 2004.

With each passing year, the numbers of veterans grow fewer in number and it is important that we, the younger generation, take up the obligation to commemorate the deeds of those who have gone before us. But more importantly, the youth of today must adopt the qualities that have come to represent the Anzac tradition and in turn pass this duty to that of the next generation. On the 25 April 1915 the Anzacs went to war in the belief that their actions would secure a better world and our efforts ninety years later to honour that legacy through commemoration and a commitment to making a difference within our own communities is perhaps the greatest tribute that can be offered.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cameron. K., etal. 2000. Investigating Australia's Twentieth Century History. Nelson: Southbank. Victoria.

'Cuballing' Available at <http://www.warmemorials.net/memorials/wheatbelt/cuballing/cubal.htm>. Accessed 17 November 2004.

Dennis. L., 1999. Australia Since 1890. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Longman: South Melbourne.

Ward. R., 1985. A Nation for a Continent: The History of Australia 1901-1975 (Revised Edition). Heinemann: Richmond, Victoria.

'Women die in fire 150m from Water', Sydney Morning Herald (online). 28 December 2003. (available at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/12/28/1072546401394.html?oneclick=true>) Accessed 10 November 2004.

'Confused, exhausted women feel into path of flames, inquest told', in The West Australian. 8 December 2004. P 6.