

Alexandra Newcombe, Wilderness School, South Australia

Courage, mateship, determination, resourcefulness and a sense of humour are identified as characteristics of the ANZAC tradition and spirit. Select any one or more of these characteristics and explore its/their significance to Gallipoli and in more recent times

ANZAC tradition and spirit is not based on the idea of a military victory or defeat as it is about the soldiers themselves. Despite the odds, the ANZACs showed great courage and were heroic, even in failure. It is this sense of courage that is identified as one of the many characteristics of the ANZAC tradition and spirit. The ANZACs bravely volunteered to go to places they knew nothing of and fought in dangerous conditions to protect their nation. Although this spirit first emerged at Gallipoli, it is not confined to the battlefields or the past. It is kept alive by all Australians by those who are faced with hardship and disaster and those who place themselves in threatening situations for the well being of others.

The ANZACs showed tremendous courage whilst at Gallipoli as they faced immense danger, enormous hardship and atrocious conditions. From their arrival on the 25th April 1915 to their departure, these soldiers showed the ability to surmount the dangerous conditions. Upon their arrival, they faced difficult terrain and immediate fire from the Turkish, but they courageously ran into battle. Charles Bean (1915), who accompanied the ANZACs, witnessed their fearless advance and reported how “Bullets struck fireworks out of the stones along the beach. The men did not wait to be hit, but wherever they landed they simply rushed straight up the steep slopes”. For the remainder of the campaign, the ANZACs continued to demonstrate the courage evident on their arrival. The ANZACs faced constant danger as they were frequently under fire and at risk of Turkish attack. Despite these dangers, they continued to fight and put their lives at risk as was suggested by ANZAC Alec Campbell (2003) who recounted how “If you exposed yourself in any way you were likely to get hit... Gallipoli was Gallipoli... Once we were there, we didn't expect to survive.” (p.39) Stories and reports of the conditions and terrible losses at Gallipoli were reported in Australian papers. Despite this a further 36 000 Australians volunteered for the war

effort, displaying great courage in the face of danger. (The Anzac Spirit, Date Unknown)

The ANZACs displayed remarkable courage in battle, resulting in some being recognised and rewarded for their actions. During World War One, 64 Victoria Crosses were awarded to Australians, the highest number ever presented during one conflict. Of the 64 awarded (Victoria Cross Memorial, July 2000), 9 were presented during the Gallipoli campaign. (Gallipoli Campaign ANZAC Victoria Cross Recipients, Date Unknown) Albert Jacka received the award when he single-handedly killed several Turkish soldiers and prevented them from reaching the main communications trench. Leonard Keysor showed enormous courage when he protected his position whilst wounded for two days by throwing back Turkish grenades that landed in his trench. Another ANZAC who showed courage, but was never officially recognised for his actions was John Simpson Kirkpatrick. With his donkey Simpson rescued wounded men whilst under ferocious artillery attack. His tremendous bravery and lack of regard for the dangers surrounding him was affirmed by Colonel John Monash who described how “Simpson knew no fear and moved unconcernedly amid shrapnel and rifle fire...” (cited in *‘Simpson – Australia’s favourite hero’*) When he died on May 19, many ANZACs owed him their life as during his 24 days at Gallipoli he managed to rescue over 300 men. (cited in *‘Simpson – Australia’s favourite hero’*)

The courage displayed by the ANZAC soldiers at Gallipoli has not been forgotten as it continues to exist in Australia to this day. This quality is demonstrated by everyday Australians as we use courage to cope with difficult situations. Former AFL player, Jason McCartney, displayed courage as he put the safety of others before his own after being injured in the 2002 Bali bombings. Although his injuries were serious, he helped rescue two women from the blast. Later, when he was due to return to Australia for medical attention, he gave up his place for someone he thought was worse off than him. Jason not only displayed courage in the face of danger, but also in his battle to fight back and live. Eight months after sustaining severe burns he overcame his injuries and returned to play football. In times of disaster, Australians show courage when they come to the aid of others in the face of danger. During the 2003 Canberra bushfires, hundreds of fire personnel and volunteers risked their lives

to defend communities. Many other Australians have displayed courage in a range of circumstances and some have been recognised for their efforts. In February 2005, 110 awards for bravery were announced and a further 131 were presented in August. (Australian Government Department, 2005) One of these recipients, John Roy Wust, was awarded the Star of Courage in February for showing ‘conspicuous courage in circumstances of great peril.’ (Australian Government Department, 2005) Mr Wust rescued a man and woman who were unconscious and trapped inside a burning vehicle. As well as this, in August, Samantha Gurdon was presented with a Commendation for Brave Conduct. She went to the assistance of an injured girl when she swam across an icy waterhole to reach her. Miss Gurdon comforted and tended the girl, whilst waiting on the emergency services that initially considered it unsafe for any rescuer to swim to the girls. Samantha Gurdon showed courage as she put her life at risk to save a girl she had never met.

Courage is not only displayed by ordinary Australians, but also by our country’s defence personnel. The Australian Defence Force has been involved in many peacekeeping missions around the world. These peacekeepers place their lives at risk so that many others may live theirs without fear. Following the Kibeho massacre between April and June 1994, which resulted in an estimated 800 000 Rwandans being killed, Australian peacekeepers were set up in the region to offer protection and medical services. (BBC, April 2004) They showed courage as they were placed in a dangerous area, which had been shattered by war and genocide. George Gittoes (1995) who witnessed the massacre and the actions of the Australians wrote of their courage;

I saw moments of incredible human courage from the Australian peace keepers... they’d gathered wounded and they came under fire from people within the refugee compound and it’s terribly hard for any human being when bullets are fired at them not to try and take cover...

In 1999, Australian peacekeepers were also sent to East Timor after violence erupted following the East Timorese vote for independence. In 2003, upon the Solomon Islands degenerating into disorder and lawlessness, Australia led a multinational peacekeeping force whose objective was to help restore law and order. In these two situations, Australians helped to oversee the region’s return to stability, demonstrating bravery as they faced hazardous situations.

Courage is one of the enduring characteristics of the ANZAC tradition and spirit that is constantly present in our society today. The courage displayed by John Simpson Kirkpatrick whilst rescuing injured soldiers has been repeated in the bravery of Mr John Wust and Miss Samantha Gurdon. These individuals had the courage to put the lives and well being of others before their own. The ANZACs showed remarkable courage at Gallipoli in their quest to protect their nation and its values. Today, Australian soldiers continue to fight and die for the rights of people in other countries with the aim of ending oppression.

Word Count: 1183

Alexandra Newcombe

Bibliography

- 'The Anzac Spirit', Date Unknown, <<http://www.rslwahq.org.au/anzacspirit.html>>, [Accessed 15/10/05]
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. May 2005, 'Defence and Security', <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aib/defence_security.html>, [Accessed 12/10/05]
- Australian Government Department, 2005, 'Australian Bravery Decorations', <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/about/medal_descriptions/bravery.html#sc>, [Accessed 10/10/05]
- Australian Government Department, 2005, 'Honours Announcements', <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours_announcements.html>, [Accessed 10/10/05]
- BBC. April 2004, 'Rwanda: How the genocide happened', <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1288230.stm>>, [Accessed 14/10/05]
- Bean, Charles. 1915 cited in 'The Anzac Landing', <<http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/bean.html>>, [Accessed 10/10/05]
- 'Bravery Decorations –February 2005', 2003, <http://www.govhouse.qld.gov.au/ceremonial_honours/OfficeoftheGovernorQueensland_Bravery0205.asp>, [Accessed 14/10/05]
- Duffy, Michael. October 2002, 'Battles: The Battle of Lone Pine, 1915', <<http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/lonepine.htm>>, [Accessed 08/10/05]
- 'Gallipoli Campaign ANZAC Victoria Cross Recipients,' Date Unknown, <<http://anzac.homestead.com/vc2.html>>, [Accessed 15/05/05]
- 'Gallipoli Victoria Crosses – 1915', Date Unknown,

<<http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/bravery.html>>, [Accessed 09/10/05]

Gittoes, George. 1995 cited in 'Australians at War – Transcript', 2001,
<http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/throughmyeyes/transcripts/pk/cuf_gittoes.html>,[Accessed 12/10/05]

Siewert, S & Stephens, T. 2003, *The Last Anzacs*, Freemantle Art Centre Press,
Freemantle

'Simpson – Australia's favourite hero', Date Unknown,
<<http://anzacs.net/simpson.htm>>, [Accessed 09/10/05]

Spirit, James Paul and Martin. 2004, 'The Solomon Islands 1998 – 2003',
<<http://britains-smallwars.com/RRGP/Solomons.html>>, [Accessed 10/10/05]

'Victoria Cross Memorial', July 2000,
<<http://www.skp.com.au/memorials/pages/00031.htm>>, [Accessed 14/10/05]