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The ANZAC spirit and the characteristics identified with it has been a part of Australian life and folk law for over ninety years. It developed in the Gallipoli trenches of World War One and has continued to endure throughout Australia's history. The significance of the sense of humour and resourcefulness displayed by the ANZAC soldiers, and how these characteristics have remained in our history in more recent times, are distinctive features of the ANZAC spirit that must be explored.

The Gallipoli Campaign was full of horrors. Each day the soldiers would witness the death of their best mates, breathing the air putrid with dead bodies and eating the awful tasting 'bully beef and bloody biscuits' rations. To cope with these dreadful experiences, a unique sense of humour amongst the ANZAC soldiers was born. This can be seen throughout poems, stories and diary entries of the soldiers:

". . . But what strikes me most forcibly is the extraordinary cheerfulness of our Australian soldiers. They laugh and joke all day long. When wounded they generally say something like this: 'So long, chaps, see you later. I'm off for a holiday.'"

Oliver Hogue
Love Letter XIX

The soldiers would even joke about such serious things as narrowly missing a bullet or piece of shrapnel and at times turned it into a sport:

"Shell after shell whizzed close to us . . . The men who had been taken off their feet jumped up, laughing boisterously. They thoroughly enjoyed the fun, and as they were in no way injured, the affair was a huge joke."

E.F. Hanman
An Engagement In May

"Sniping at the Turks became a form of sport. Australians invented the periscope rifle so they could spot the enemy without getting their heads shot off. Soon they were joking in the face of death."

Australia in History: Gallipoli and the Middle East 1915-1918
A.K. Macdougall

Humour was not only a means of entertainment but 'a safe way of communicating important and potentially sensitive information'. (Journal A 'Trace of History': Cartoons from the Australian War Memorial Christmas books of the Second World War). It was a way of disguising emotion, particularly if a soldier did not want to appear 'weak' to his mates. It was also a way of expressing and acknowledging emotions, without needing to dwell on them, which could prove depressing in the circumstances. Humour became an

integral part of the ANZAC soldier as it was such a significant characteristic during these desperate times at Gallipoli.

It is now a part of our everyday lives and it can be seen from newspaper headlines and articles to advertisements and protests. It is also displayed at even the most sorrowful occasions, such as funerals. Black humour is a form which is common to the Australian way of life. One example of this sickening style of humour concerns the disappearance of Harold Holt, the Prime Minister who went swimming in 1967 never to return. Subsequently a memorial was constructed - the 'Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Pool' - even serious things cannot escape without some form of hilarity.

Australian humour is also well known for being a little 'upside down' such as a red-headed person nicknamed 'Bluey' or a bald man 'Curly'. Often, as it was during Gallipoli, mates will make a joke at their friend's expense, which will show how strong the friendship is, rather than displaying direct affection. Originating from convict times, many Australians have had a certain disregard for the rules, and this was also part of humour. Many convicts managed to avoid death by making the policeman or Judge laugh. Australians have always been known for their humour, and though some of it was shaped by the convicts of the First Fleet, we have the ANZACs to thank for keeping it alive throughout our history.

Resourcefulness is another characteristic that developed strongly during their times at Gallipoli. Troops had to use their ingenuity to find ways to use the little they had to keep themselves alive. In the first few weeks, the ANZACs ran out of bombs and so they used empty food tins that had held their rationed jam to make them. These were filled with scraps of barbed wire, shrapnel balls, nails, screws, pieces of glass and explosives and were eventually thrown at the Turks. These simple bombs were very effective as weapons. In May 1915, Lieutenant Corporal Beech of Sydney invented the periscope rifle. Using mirrors, soldiers were able to spot rifles while remaining completely invisible to the Turks. Soldiers also used what was at hand to keep themselves clean:

"A ration of tea and sugar was mixed with water in a billycan . . . each man got a mug full. They drank most of it, and then used what was left in the bottom of the mug to shave themselves, or at least wipe their faces".

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Without these and many other of the ingenious ideas and inventions created at Gallipoli, the soldiers would not have survived as they did. And in more recent times, this resourcefulness had been known to benefit all Australians. Resourcefulness is a characteristic which Australians have had to adopt right from their early beginnings in Australia and it is still something that is very prominent in Australian life today.

'Australia is amongst the most inventive and resourceful countries in the world. Often having to 'reinvent the wheel' to suit Australian conditions, early Australians, their descendants and ensuing migrants, have invented some of the world's most useful

products and technologies.'

Michael Z Soker, Publisher of Tomorrow's World, the Australian Initiative.

Aussies have led the world in many areas. The Royal Flying Doctor Service, for example, led the world in its innovative approach to health care of remote and scattered communities, from its beginnings in 1928. 1984 saw the first frozen embryo baby born at the Queen Victoria Medical Centre and in 1987 the fastest AIDS test was developed at the University of Melbourne. In 1958, Dr David Warren invented the 'black box' voice and instrument data recorder which is now built into all flying aircraft. In 1936, Australia produced the best bullet proof steel in the world, and in 1984, Dr Stuart Wenham and Professor Martin Green from The University of Sydney invented the world's most efficient solar cells. Since Gallipoli, Australians have continued to use their resourcefulness and initiative in the most effective ways, creating a variety of new machines, vaccines, transport, and technological devices. The future looks extremely bright and exciting if young Australians continue the ANZAC resourcefulness that was born those many years ago.

Throughout our history, from Gallipoli to more recent times, Australians have shown incredible resourcefulness and ingenuity, along with a renowned sense of humour. These characteristics have shaped not only our diggers in World War One, but who we are as a nation today. They have helped us fight for the Empire, to defend ourselves, and to contribute to the well-being of the world. Without the ANZACs, the Australian spirit and the characteristics identified with it would be very different to what we know today.

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