

RUNNER-UP — AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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Consider what values and characteristics demonstrated by the ANZACs at Gallipoli and later reinforced at the Western Front, continue to influence Australians today.

Through their sacrifice the ANZAC warriors of the First World War, planted the seed of beginnings for the nation of Australia. It was their spirit, their mateship, their courage and their humour that turned Australia from a nation of immigrants, to one in its own right. The Battle of Gallipoli and later the Western Front Campaign proved very much a baptism of fire for the young ANZACs, a battle that was virtually impossible. But through their spirit our nation had gained much more than a single military victory could give us. The ANZAC legends had laid the foundations for the nation of Australia with their traits which continue in Australian society today.

“We Will Make a Name for Ourselves and Australia Tomorrow Mac.”¹ – Alfred Shout

The night preceding the Battle of Lone Pine, Captain Alfred Shout sat in the trenches, unaware of what card fate would deal him the following day. He certainly did make a name for himself, but far more importantly he made a name for Australia. As Gallipolis's most decorated War Hero, Shout can as much as anyone be attributed with creating the image of the courageous ANZAC. Two days after the tragic battle of Lone Pine, Turkish troops forcefully counter-attacked. At one section, later known as Sasse's Sap, Captain Cecil Sasse, Shout and eight volunteers, began to push forward, Sasse shooting, Shout bombing and the volunteers creating safety barriers at each newly claimed area. Shout in one last push lit three bombs, and rushed forward at the mercy of the Turkish gunfire. Two were released; however the final blew in his hand, the injury that would kill him. For his efforts he was awarded Australia's highest recognition of bravery, The Victoria Cross.

“A man crawled out of our shallow trench ... worked his way snake-wise until he got to the wounded man. Clumsily turning the man over he shouted, "How's she going,

¹ Macqueen, Cpl. 16 Nov. 2006 <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/PUBS/ex_service_org.htm>.

mate?". There was no answer. He yelled, "Strike me pink the poor bugger's just about outed", and began to drag him... he got a bullet through his ankle but managed it at last and we cheered him. He looked over and grinned." – Private Percival²

While awe inspiring efforts such as Shout's have become folklore, nothing has reached the level of the collective spirit of the ANZACs at Gallipoli. Gallipoli was not a time for individuals, the true sense of mateship was that which pushed men on. Private Percival in describing his brother's injury, and ensuing death, showed how powerful a tool this spirit was. Men went out there to fight, for themselves, for their country, but most importantly for their mates. It was this which drove the men to get up every morning when all hope of victory seemed lost.

Charles Bean in his *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, talks glowingly of this spirit amongst men. Many say that he himself can be largely credited with the spread of the legend through his patriotic writings.

"To be the sort of man who would give way when his mates were trusting to his firmness ... to live the rest of his life haunted by the knowledge that he had set his hand to a soldier's task and had lacked the grit to carry it through – that was the prospect that these men could not face. Life was very daer, but life was not worth living unless they could be true to their idea of Australian manhood."³ – C.E.W Bean

The aspect of humour is one that most Aussies look at with the greatest of pride. To be in a situation as horrific as the one detailed and to be able to have a laugh is a special and admirable characteristic. A laugh at the mates, at themselves, or even the Poms is something that was so important in both pushing the men forward, but also in developing the likeable image of Australians across the world.

These characteristics of bravery, mateship, and humour forged by the efforts of the men at Gallipoli and on the Western front, and those women who attended them, were of such power that they remain a notion of Australian society today. During the time

² "Mateship." 7 July 1915. 16 Nov. 2006 <<http://www.australianbeers.com/culture/mateship.htm>>.

³ Bean, C.E.W. *The Story of Anzac*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.

of the war the ANZAC legend was said to be very much a self fulfilling one, the more the men heard it the more they lived up to it. This is very much the same today, the pride Australians have in the heroes of war, as shown by recent attendances at dawn services across the nation, show the legend lives on.

Pride and fulfilment of this can come across in many different ways, and it would be naïve to suggest Australia remains a country of 'gutsy, larrikin blokes.' Globalisation has broken down many barriers of a national identity, but every Australian should not forget the pride of the defining moment in our history.

It is said that in crisis the true strands of human nature are revealed. For the ANZACs at Gallipoli, farmers, bankers, fathers, boys were brought together and forced to work together. This image was further forged on the Western Front, and later the Second World War, and continues today.

In Australian society, crisis brings people together, they act on their instincts, and not necessarily how they usually perceive themselves. Charity efforts, and public outpouring of prayers and love for such horrible events as the Bali Bombings and the Boxing Day Tsunami, have brought people together, showing the greatest of ties of mateship.

One such disaster was the Beaconsfield Mine Collapse in Tasmania. Brant Webb and Todd Russell were trapped underground for two weeks, with the Australian public in a sense of shock yet also one of hope. The bravery showcased by these two men, and those who risked their lives to save them, was phenomenal. However what made the chapter so special was the character that these two men displayed throughout. Russell joked "It's not much of a room we have up here," before saying he must find a new job. The character these two men showed when presented with adversity was a true indication of the ANZAC image, or what we may now call the Australian image.

In the wider society as well people show the traits and values of the ANZAC. Love is an extremely important value that is perhaps often overlooked in our portrayal of the ANZAC. However just as it is vital to life today, it was to the men on the battlefield. A loss of an Australian life is felt by everyone, just as an Australian achievement is.

We are an incredibly proud people, bred from years of isolation and a growing self identity. We are drawn together by ties of mateship. We constantly prove in times of toughness our bravery shines through. And finally, we all love a laugh.

How Australians are perceived overseas is as important to the people of society today, as it was for the ANZACs. A unique character, something to be proud of, is vital part of self knowing in an increasingly distant world. The Aussie larrikin lives on today. All across the world people recognise Aussies by the same traits as the Diggers showed in the War Campaign, a true testament to the fact that the spirit lives today.

The First World War campaign can be seen as the foundations of what it means to be Australian. While we have changed greatly, the ANZAC traits of bravery, mateship, and humour are everpresent today. Australians look back at those heroes of the First World War campaign with the greatest sense of pride and gratitude. It was there spirit that created a beginning for our nation, and it is that same spirit which continues to determine our future today.

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