

## RUNNER-UP — SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Jakob Sterk

St Ignatius College

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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.*

As we reflect at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on the ANZAC's it becomes clear that their spirit continues to influence Australian identity today. It's a spirit which took its roots from strength and endurance, mateship and bravery and was solidified by honour, humour and an anti- authoritarian attitude. As Australians we are children of a young nation and have had little time to gather the legends that we have created. Of those we do, the battles of Gallipoli are the most distinguished and contradictory.

Legends speak of tremendous battles against the final victor, but that of Gallipoli are rarely found. Unlike the famed battles of the English, French and Germans, the bitter struggle at Gallipoli was a tedious ordeal spanning many months and on the Western front, years. In the case of ANZACs they had no tradition to guide them. They had no legends or ancestors to live up to; it was simply a matter of proving themselves, of starting a tradition here and now. *“At Gallipoli, and then on the Western Front, the ANZACs proved the character of Australian manhood for all the world to see and through their victories and sacrifices, established a nation in spirit and name.”*<sup>1</sup>. This was the nation that “came of age” at Gallipoli.

Each characteristic played a central role at Gallipoli. Principally each attitude and value encouraged men to integrate and develop equality and respect for each other, a respect unrivalled by any other nation during the war. The challenges they faced have strengthened their bonds. This image is represented in many incidents spanning the Gallipoli campaign. John Simpson Kirkpatrick, whose loyalty and courage to his comrades helped save hundreds of lives, he displayed outstanding bravery by walking his donkeys through Shrapnel Gully under the constant fire of Turkish infantry. John Kirkpatrick displayed a true resourcefulness by using two stray donkeys and harnessing them with old bandages. His ingenuity was born out of loyalty and the desire to help and save his mates. His courage in rescuing wounded friends from the battle field is recognised today as one of the most famous and emotive images of the campaign.

The bond between soldiers meant they could cope in the fiercest of situations. The values were shared amongst all men, and this closeness developed the stereotypical trait of larrikinism in the ANZAC soldiers. Men weren't deterred by threats of falling shells and hand grenades from their risky activities, such as playing cricket on the beach and swimming in the sea. Neither did they succumb to the pressure placed upon them by British superiors, *“They put laughter into everything.”*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alistair Thomson, Williams J., 25/9/06, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, Sydney, Australia 1999, University of New South Wales Press Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Digger, Laffin J, 15/9/06, *Western Front 1917-1918 The Cost of Victory*, Australia 1988, Time-Life Books. Page 133

Yet not only military ventures have seen the ANZAC's virtues shine. The transferable qualities have been displayed in other areas of society. Fred Hollows and the foundation established in his honour are examples of modern day ANZAC resourcefulness. He was an ophthalmologist. Dismayed by the number of curable eye diseases that indigenous Australians had suffered from, he continually travelled around the outback, performing essential operations. He later travelled to Africa and was forced to adapt to the limited resources, in order to help perform preventative cataract surgeries. His belief in total equality and entitlement to basic medical care emphasised ANZACs ideas of mateship and the egalitarianism that embodies it. His ability to improvise in order to perform surgery in remote areas in difficult conditions and the desire to teach others is a modern echo of ANZAC resourcefulness. He utilised what was available at the time and overcame difficult situations, thus representing the true spirit of ANZACs.

On December 26<sup>th</sup>, Boxing Day 2004 a tsunami swept over the islands of Indonesia. The damage was wide spread and the total loss of life was in the hundreds of thousands. As the nearest neighbour, Australia has shown once again a true ANZAC spirit. The appeal for tsunami victims was an overwhelming success. The generosity and kindness of Australians has been displayed not only in the form of financial assistance but also in the form of medical supplies, food and emergency building materials, all of which were transported to the worst affected areas. Medical personnel and paramedics were flown to Indonesia to assist with emergency casualties. Once again loyalty and mateship, resourcefulness and great belief in equality have driven many Australians to assist people in need.

As we talk about ANZACs today and the qualities that define them, one must not forget about the highly spirited women who provided support and risked their lives as much as men did. Since World War 1 Australian nurses have been extensively involved in war affected areas. Many were killed in the act of duty, as well as many being captured and tortured by the enemy. Nurses often were not given the credit for the courage, commitment and endurance they displayed. 'The Roses of No Man's Land', have shaped a special image of themselves, which is still held dear in contemporary Australian society and that image is still held high by the Australian nurses wherever they go, around the world, as missionaries or parts of emergency assistance groups.

Nurses display enormous bravery, egalitarian attitude and common sense and resourcefulness in the job they perform so well.

We continue to see great examples of defining ANZAC characteristics even closer to present day society. A disastrous accident greeted the month of May as three men were caught subject to a massive rock fall. Two men were trapped underground for two weeks, and the other Larry Knight, tragically was killed by the accident, bringing forth a flood of genuine sympathy across the country and internationally.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the thought of losing two more couldn't be accepted and so the rescue began. *"It was the power of mateship... that drove the tremendous effort behind the rescue and*

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<sup>3</sup> Beaconsfield mine collapse occurred on April 25, 2006 in Beaconsfield, Tasmania, Australia

*made sure we would stop at nothing until our mates were on the ground.*"<sup>4</sup> Looking over the ordeal it became clear that friendship, courage, endurance, resilience and strength, shown by both trapped men and rescuers alike were the defining values that told them to bear on. This was what brought Webb and Russell through the worst of their hardships as they said in resulting interviews. The event laced a national unity and it is clear at such times the ANZAC values are still present in today's society.

The qualities, which define the ANZAC tradition and spirit, live on in our multicultural society today. Although one individual cannot necessarily have all these qualities, we have become known as Australians for the unique combination of these characteristics in our society. The actions of some notable Australians have maintained our image gained at Gallipoli and have defined Australia to the rest of the world. "*... when the tide changed the great and free nations beside whom they fought and with whom they emerged counted Australia amongst them. She has been given a place in the conference of nations...*"<sup>5</sup> It is those around us, who display significant courage, humour despite adversity and true mateship that keep the ANZAC tradition and spirit alive in Australian society today.

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<sup>4</sup> Kim Beazley, 8 June 2006

<sup>5</sup> SMH, 19 July 1919

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