

RUNNER-UP — TASMANIA

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On the cliffs and gullies of Gallipoli and across the mire of the Western Front, in World War One a supreme triumph of the human spirit occurred. The Anzac spirit, *"stood, and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship and endurance that will never own defeat"*¹ It encompasses the laughter, humour, pride and love of life that still exists in every Australian today. Ninety one years later, the same qualities that were displayed in the horror of battle continue to arise in ordinary Australians when needed or pushed to the extreme. These characteristics are world renowned for being Australian.

The word that firstly symbolizes the Anzac character is mateship, an essential part of every Australian and our national identity, the backbone of the Anzac spirit: *"The inspiring and binding force in Australian life isn't tradition or nationalism of a social revolution. It's quite a simple thing. Henry Lawson called it mateship.....the spirit which makes men stick together."*² While the Gallipoli and the Western Front campaigns provided an opportunity for the Anzac soldiers to demonstrate physical superiority in battle, it also showed the compassion and trust shown by every Anzac soldier, by the selflessness of their actions and willingness to help others *"there is no greater love than this that a man should lay down his life for his friend."*³ Mateship is essentially the feeling of equality shared by all and shown to all. It has come to symbolize and be part of many aspects of the Australian lifestyle: from a few blokes sharing a beer at the local pub to

1 Bean.C.E.W. The spirit Of Anzac: <http://www.anzacday.org.au/spirit/spirit2.html>

2 McDonald, N, *War Cameraman*, P. 111 in Fitzimons.P, *Kokoda*:Hoda;2004

3 Sedrach, The Bible: John xv. 13.

images of sporting teams embracing; *"It is a generosity of spirit and a selflessness that is perhaps our most precious heritage to hand on to younger and newer Australians - a nation of people who care for and look out for each other."*⁴

A dry, ironic, self depreciating sense of humour is seen as an integral part of the Australian character and Anzac soldier - a larrikin who enjoyed a joke, always held a smile and had a cheeky distaste to authority.

The sickness and hardships of Gallipoli and the hell that was the Western Front broke many of the hardest, bravest soldiers. *"At this spectacle even the most gentle must feel savage, and the most savage must weep."*⁵ To mask the anguish Anzacs felt, they developed this warped, black sense of 'Aussie' humour that is unique to our convict and pioneering heritage. Humour made life easier and hindered dwelling on depressing thoughts of the carnage and catastrophe Anzacs had witnessed.

This was the way the Anzac soldier coped and still had the strength of character to fight, and bleed, for his country every day:

*"Women ... emotions ... rations ... death ... boredom - the standard Digger rule was to treat everything the same way; that is, laugh at it."*⁶ Today many Australians live by this code, not to dwell on depressing things or take life too seriously. Our happy easy-going lifestyle is credited to this.

The relentless optimism and never-say-die attitude is another value the Anzacs were prided on that continues to play important roles in the lives of Australians today. 'The Rats Of Tobruk' is an example of the unbreakable spirit of the Australian soldier. Left with the task of defending the port city

4 General Peter Cosgrove. *Australian likes and dislikes*(2002)

<http://www.convictcreations.com/culture/auusieviews.htm>

5 Turkish Officer: http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/2visiting/walk_09Johnstons.html

of Tobruk, the Australian forces were surrounded by a German army over twice their size and led by the German military genius Rommel⁷. The Australians never contemplated surrender or disaster, and doggedly fought on *“surviving hardship, danger and death, because no digger would ever let his coppers down. In Tobruk for the first time in this war the Germans were thrust back by a spirit that even tanks and dive-bombers could not conquer.”*⁸

Today Australians continue to persevere in the face of disaster. The Aussie’s fighting spirit has helped to survive droughts, bushfires and other catastrophes. Perhaps one of the most inspirational stories of present day Anzac spirit and character is of Jason McCartney. On October 12th 2002 the Kangaroos footballer Jason McCartney was involved in the Bali bombings at the Sari Club. McCartney suffered horrific burns to 50% of his body⁹. He initially thought the injuries minor so selflessly set about saving those around him instead of saving himself. After exhausting himself assisting victims Jason was chartered back to Australia. *“Jason was supposed to be there on the first flight out of Bali but he gave up his seat for someone who he thought was a lot worse than he was. He did that twice before he got on a plane himself. It’s just his nature, the way he is. He thinks there’s nothing wrong with him and everyone else is worse.”*¹⁰ Jason McCartney displayed numerous Anzac values that were formed on the beaches of Gallipoli: bravery, fighting spirit, and like the deeds of John Simpson with his donkey at Gallipoli – *“comradeship, courage and sacrifice: others before self”*¹¹

6 Lambert.E A trace of history: <http://www.awm.gov.au/journal/j39/cartoons.htm>

7 *Rats of Tobruk*. Thieves in the night: <http://www.convictcreations.com/history/tobruk.htm>

8 McDonald, N, *War Cameraman*, P. 111

9 Jason MacCartney: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason_McCartney

10 MacCartney,I, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/10/15/1034561159694.html>

11 The spirit Of Anzac: <http://www.anzacday.org.au/spirit/spirit2.html>

One of the standout qualities of an Anzac soldier was his sense of resourcefulness. This ingenuity is a unique characteristic the Australian personality possesses. In Gallipoli in particular, Anzacs used whatever they could find to benefit their lives. The soldiers collected jam tins, filled them full of barb wire, ball bearings, nails and even reused fragments of Turkish shells to invent an extremely deadly weapon. The periscope rifle invented by Sergeant William Beech, 2nd Battalion, NSW, used angles and mirrors to allow relatively safe and accurate rifle fire to be directed at the Turks without exposing the Anzacs¹². It provided a distinct advantage over the Turkish soldiers and saved countless Anzac lives. The Anzacs carved shanty towns and dwellings into the hills and cliffs that dominated the landscape, anything that could make their lives easier. The legacy of these inventions is the Australian culture that sometimes leads to eccentric and unusual ideas but shows great resourcefulness, enterprise and adaptability. Recent examples of this include the worlds first refrigerator, zinc and sunscreen, solar cells, black box flight recorder and the bionic ear, all being of Australian pedigree. This defining Anzac characteristic will continue to live out in Australians improving the standard and difficulty of life and technology around the world.

Recently the most publicised example of the Anzac values and characteristics influencing modern society is the story of Todd Russell and Brant Webb, victims of the Beaconsfield mine disaster. Like the Anzacs they were resourceful and survived on ground water caught in their mining helmets. Rescuers deprived themselves of sleep and food, to work around the clock to save them, as Simpson did at Gallipoli. It is their examples of

¹² Where the scorched earth lay bare: http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/2visiting/walk_10quinns.html

resourcefulness and resilience which shows how Australians find ways to cope at the worst of times.

The spirit of Anzac is not something we can see but feel inside of us, it's our true sense of National Identity, of being Australian. The deeds and sacrifices made by the Anzacs to make our nation what it is today will not be forgotten, neither will the values or characteristics they displayed that makes us Australian. This Anzac mateship, sense of humour, resourcefulness and relentless fighting spirit continues to not only inspire and influence Australians but the rest of the world.

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