

WINNER — TASMANIA
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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
Australia today.*

Although the war that defined the spirit of the ANZACs was fought nearly a century ago, the values and characteristics displayed by our troops have never been forgotten. Built on the cliffs of Gallipoli and fortified along the Western Front these typical Australian values have been reinforced through our history during times of war and peace. The respect, mateship and egalitarianism demonstrated by the ANZACs have had a deep impact on Australia's identity, and the aim of this essay is to investigate the way these characteristics continue to influence and inspire Australian life.

When the ANZACs landed at Gallipoli they viewed the Turks as a faceless enemy, and it remained that way for that first month of conflict in 1915. After a brutal frontal assault by the Turks the ANZACs organized a temporary truce to rescue the wounded of both nations. Four days later on the 24th of May a formal ceasefire was coordinated, allowing contact between the two opposing sides while they buried the dead. It was this brief interaction that led the defenders and invaders to come to respect each other, and form the beginning of a unique relationship.

Alan Moorehead records that gifts were constantly thrown from one trench into another, with the ANZACs trading canned beef and cigarettes for sweets and dates from the Turks, as one soldier records:

“Extraordinary friendly exchanges between the Turks and our fellows this morning early. Some of our chaps ran right over to the enemy trenches and exchanged bully, jam, cigarettes etc. The whole business was wonderful and proves how madly unnecessary this part of the war is.”

Lieutenant T. E. Cozens¹

Moorehead also recorded one Turkish servant constantly hung his unit’s washing on the barbed wire winding in front of the trenches, and did so without drawing any fire from the Australians.

In 1934 the president of the new Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk, who’d fought at Gallipoli, wrote a tribute in memory of the soldiers that had fought against him:

“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmets to us where they lie side by side now here in this country of ours... You, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.”

Kemal Atatürk²

President of the new Turkish Republic

Atatürk’s comments point towards an enduring value reflected by the ANZACs that is dignity and respect for human life, even those of the enemy in the most trying circumstances.

¹ <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/17/1082140118215.html>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa_Kemal_Atat%C3%BCrk

On the Western Front there existed no friendly exchanges with the Germans, but that didn't mean respect was absent. Soldiers acknowledged the professionalism of the Germans, and never underestimated their abilities. The Germans also saw the Australians as a worthy adversary:

"Forces confronting us consist of Australians who are very warlike, clever and daring. They understand the arts of crawling through high crops in order to capture our advanced posts... The enemy infantry has daily proven themselves to be audacious."

German battalion commander³

On the other end of the scale many British officers claimed the Australians failed to show them any respect whatsoever. What the British failed to grasp was the ANZACs were a reflection of the Australian community, built on equality and a strong sense of mateship. While the British drew their officers from high society the Australian Army promoted men according to their abilities. At Gallipoli the ANZAC officers didn't see their position as one of authority, but one of duty to their friends. War correspondent Charles Bean reported:

"...Before the man had gone 20 yards he was wounded. The officer walked down the hill at once to pick him up. Within a couple of seconds the Turks had a machine gun trained on him and he fell, riddled with bullets. Australia has lost many of her best officers in this way."

Charles Edwin Bean⁴

War Correspondent

It was not only the officers who risked their lives for their fellow Australians, as Frank Boyes wrote home about:

³ http://www.dva.gov.au/commem/commac/studies/Western_Front.pdf

⁴ <http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/bean.html>

"... I was trying to get a clip of ammo into the magazine of my rifle when a Turk was lunging down at me with his bayonet. I was warding him off trying to reload when my mate shot him just as he was lunging down."

Lieutenant Frank Boyes⁵

Jack Reid wrote one of the greatest accounts of mateship down in a letter to his mates' father.

"Les had received a bullet thro' his upper arm and I now bandaged it up for him. We had scarcely knelt down behind some bushes when I was shot, the bullet passing thro' the right side of my head above the ear and towards the back of the head. Les came over immediately and applied my field dressing. And altho' I was insisting that it was no use, he put my arm round his neck and carried me back. Bullets were still whistling ...He had undoubtedly saved my life by his promptness in rendering first aid and in getting me quickly to the base and by doing which he had risked his own life."

Private Jack Reid⁶

These characteristics of mateship and respect have made Australia thrive and prosper in all areas of life. Our belief in egalitarianism has lead to us accepting people of countless backgrounds and beliefs with open arms. This combined with our sense of compassion ensures that we'll always lend a hand to a mate in need. Whether it be in times of severe drought to assist our farmers or during hurricanes to rebuild homes, Australians always come to a mates' aid.

Australia is highly respected by other countries across various fields. In the sporting arena former cricket captain Steve Waugh lead Australia to a record breaking 16 consecutive test match victories. The sporting legend also supports the Udayan Children's Fund, which assists children living with leprosy. Australian's are always willing to help a neighbour, and this quality shone during the Boxing Day tsunami. In

⁵ <http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories.asp?war=W1&id=32>

⁶ <http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories.asp?war=W1&id=232>

just 18 months Australians raised \$380 million⁷ dollars for the tsunami appeal. This generosity was not lost during the Bali bombing of 2002 where we donated not only our money, but also our people. Most notably was Fiona Wood, whose invention of spray on skin saved the lives of 28⁸ burn victims who survived the blast. No matter what the area Australians have earned respect in it from nations far older than our own.

Although the men who proudly called themselves ANZACs are all but gone, they left behind something that will never die. The respect, egalitarianism and mateship they displayed is not buried in a grave far from home, but found in the hearts and souls of all those who call themselves Australians. Whether it be the battlefield or the backyard these values and characteristics will continue to influence and shape the Australian spirit and way of life for many generations to come.

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⁷ Figure from: http://www.worldvision.com.au/appeals/tsunami/resources/NGO_Report_on_the_Asian_Tsunami_26Dec04_to_31Dec05.pdf

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