

ANZAC DAY SERVICE
WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL
25 APRIL 2007

ANZAC Day is a national holiday in Australia and in New Zealand. It is neither of our National Days. But, more than any other, it encompasses how we see ourselves as peoples and as countries.

Just as one might visit National monuments here in Washington to get a sense of the way Americans see themselves, one would visit the War Memorial in Canberra as the first step on a journey to discover how Australians see themselves.

Why is that so? Why is it that, just as Americans cannot visit the battlefield of Gettysburg without feeling an almost spiritual connection, Australians and New Zealanders cannot visit Gallipoli without a physical reaction from deep within the soul.

Why is it that, just as Americans never grow tired of the story of the first Pilgrims or of the War of Revolution, Australians and New Zealanders never grow tired of the story of ANZAC. Each generation of Australians and New Zealanders learn it anew, and find contemporary relevance. It is a story we enjoy hearing and telling, however often. And in the hearing, and in the telling, we discover more about who we are, and what we are. For us, it is a story about us, for all time.

In the context of the First World War, the facts themselves are not extraordinary. Australian and New Zealand Forces landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey on 25 April 1915 in an attempt to secure access to the Black Sea for the British and French Navies. Our Forces were part of a larger coalition encompassing British, French, Indian, South African and Ghurkas.

The Gallipoli Campaign was a military failure. It played no major part in the outcome of World War I.

Australian and New Zealand casualties were significant. But no more so than those suffered by other countries involved in the Campaign and, as a proportion of total troops committed, somewhat less compared to the horror of some of the campaigns on the Western Front in France and Belgium.

Gallipoli is not especially important in Britain, France or India. It does, of course, have a real significance in Turkey, because it marks the defeat of would-be invaders, and because their Forces were led by the Founder of modern-day Turkey, Kemal Atatürk.

But, from the very beginning, Gallipoli was considered enormously significant by Australians and New Zealanders, with the first commemoration of the Gallipoli landing held in 1916. It continued down through the years, with the veterans of other wars also taking part. As the ranks of the original ANZACs

thinned in the 1960's and 70's there was a lot of speculation about its continued relevance.

But something happened. No-one knows how, or precisely when.

The ranks of marchers in all cities and towns, however small, started to thicken. Not with more veterans, although that also happened, but with children who had never fought in war, and who proudly wore the medals and ribbons of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. A statement by a new generation that ANZAC was also theirs.

The 75th Anniversary of Gallipoli in 1990, saw almost 20,000 young Australians and New Zealanders, come from around the world to be there, and to honour the few remaining ANZAC originals who were well enough to make the journey. To be there was to experience something almost mystical – the parting of the ways by thousands of people under the age of 30, who stood and clapped the arrival, just before dawn, of their forebears. The ceremony at Gallipoli, in far away Turkey, is now a rite of passage, to which many young Australians and New Zealanders aspire.

Gallipoli was the first major engagement in which Australians, and New Zealanders, fought as independent nations on the world stage. We had something to prove, to ourselves, and to others.

Gallipoli was fought in the context of the war to end all wars.

In 1914 Australia had a population of just under 5 million. Over 300,000 men enlisted, of whom 60,000 were killed, and about 150,000 wounded.

In 1914 New Zealand had a population of just over 1 million. About 120,000 men enlisted, of whom over 18,000 were killed, and about 50,000 wounded.

Gallipoli came to symbolise our birth as nations; it came to symbolise our values, and a preparedness to fight against the odds, for that which we believe.

Speaking at the Dawn Service at Gallipoli some years back, former Australian Governor-General, Sir William Deane, expressed it this way. ANZAC – he said – ‘is about courage, and endurance, and duty, and mateship, and good humour, and the survival of a sense of self-worth: the sum of those human and national values which our pioneers found in the raw bush of a new world and tested in the old world for the first time at Gallipoli ... It is about the spirit, the depth, the meaning, the very essence of our nation. And it is about sadness and grief for young lives cut short and dreams left unfulfilled. And horror at the carnage of war.’

Central to our capacity to commemorate ANZAC, and central to its legend, is the generosity of our then enemy and victor in 1915. It is simply not possible for an Australian or New Zealander to

stand with dry eyes at ANZAC Cove in Turkey and read Atatürk's immortal words of 1934, now inscribed in stone ... 'You, the Mothers, who sent their sons to war from far away countries! Wipe away your tears. Your sons are lying on our bosom. They are at peace and they will rest in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well!'

ANZAC Day is a day on which we honour all Australian and New Zealand men and women who have fought and died for their country. It is a day on which we recognise our Servicemen and women who serve today in different theatres globally. It is a day on which we recognise the men and women of other countries who have also made the supreme sacrifice.

That is especially true, in the National Cathedral, in the National Capital, of a country with whom we have been partners in arms for 90 years. Today, we fight together in Afghanistan and Iraq. We honour the valour of the servicemen and women of the United States of America. We honour their sacrifice.

This ANZAC Day, we also give recognition to the 10,000-15,000 daughters of the original ANZACs who married American servicemen during and after the Second World War – many of whom are here today with spouses and family. Their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren represent a continuing and lasting legacy formed in conflict. We must remain determined to defend what is right, in the hope that those who follow are not so called.