

GALLIPOLI 2000

85th Anniversary of the ANZAC Landing



THE DARDANELLES

A good army of 50,000 men and sea power – that is the end of the Turkish menace.

Winston Churchill
British cabinet minister, 1915

On 19 February 1915 British ships began a bombardment of the Turkish defences at the straits of the Dardanelles (Çanakkale Bogazi). The British wanted to break through to Constantinople (Istanbul), the Turkish capital, and force Turkey, Germany's ally, out of the war. This strategy was designed to enable Britain and France to supply their ally Russia through Turkish waters and to open a southern front against Austria - Hungary.

The naval attack failed. A plan was then developed to invade the Gallipoli (Gelibolu) peninsula to overcome the Turkish defences and allow the navy through the Dardanelles. An army, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, composed mainly of British, Australian, New Zealand, Indian and French soldiers, was assembled in Egypt and on Greek islands close to Gallipoli. British troops were to make the main landing at Cape Helles.

Shortly before the British landing, a combined Australian and New Zealand force, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), was to land further north near Gaba Tepe (Kabatepe).



LANDING

You have got through the difficult business, now you dig, dig, dig, until you are safe.

General Sir Ian Hamilton
British commander-in-chief, Gallipoli

At dawn on 25 April 1915 soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) began landing on Gallipoli here at North Beach and around Anzac Cove (Anzac Koyu) to the south of the nearby headland, Ari Burnu. They were followed by the New Zealand Infantry Brigade. The aim that day was to capture the heights of the Sari Bair range and then press inland to Mal Tepe to cut off Turkish reinforcements to Cape Helles. From the beach, groups of men rushed up steep, scrub-covered slopes towards the high ground.

At first the few Turkish defenders were pushed back. Isolated groups of Australians and New Zealanders fought their way to where they could see the Dardanelles. As the day progressed Turkish resistance strengthened. By nightfall none of the objectives had been reached. The commanders on the spot recommended withdrawal but were ordered instead to dig in and hold on. This area of Gallipoli captured on 25 April became known for the rest of the campaign as Anzac.

Anzac, the landing, 1915 (detail)
by George Lambert. (Australian War Memorial)

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DEFENCE OF TURKEY

*Their duty was to come here and invade,
ours was to defend.*

Adil Shahin, Turkish veteran of Gallipoli

The British had expected the Gallipoli operation to conclude quickly and that the Turkish army would be no match for their soldiers. Instead they met a determined and resourceful opponent. At critical moments Turkish and German commanders took quick and decisive action and at no time did the British Empire forces manage the breakthrough which they so desperately sought.

On Gallipoli men of both sides showed bravery and endurance. After the Turkish counter-attack of 19 May, in which the Turks suffered so severely, the Australian and New Zealand soldiers began to regard the Turkish soldier with great respect. Something of the spirit of the Turks on Gallipoli can be seen in the response to an Australian note thrown into a Turkish trench urging its occupants to surrender: the response read, "You think there are no true Turks left. But there are Turks, and Turks' sons!" In this defence of the homeland, in the conflict known here as the Battle of Çanakkale, Turkish authorities have put their casualties at between 250,000 and 300,000, of whom at least 87,000 died.

Turkish artillery on Gallipoli.

(Australian War Memorial A05287)

Inset: *Colonel Mustafa Kemal, one of the principal Turkish commanders at Gallipoli later known as Atatürk - "Father of the Turks". He was to become the first President of the Republic of Turkey.* (Australian War Memorial A05319)



KRITHIA

Sir, this is a sheer waste of good men.

Joseph Gasparich, New Zealand soldier
Krithia, 8 May 1915

Also on 25 April the British landed at Cape Helles, the southern point of the Gallipoli peninsula. This force was to push north to the Kilitbahir plateau. However, determined Turkish opposition held the British to a small area at the tip of the peninsula. In an attempt to break out of the position at Helles, seize the village of Krithia and the commanding hill, Achi Baba, a combined assault by British, Australian, New Zealand and French troops was planned to begin on 6 May.

Little initial progress was made and on 8 May the Australians and New Zealanders were ordered forward. Moving over open and exposed ground towards Krithia (Alçıtepe), the troops found the enemy fire so accurate and intense that some men raised their shovels in front of their faces to protect themselves. However, the Turkish lines were not reached and over 1,000 Australian and 800 New Zealand soldiers were killed or wounded.

*The Charge of the 2nd Infantry Brigade (Australian)
at Krithia (detail)*

by Charles Wheeler. (Australian War Memorial)

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TURKISH COUNTER-ATTACK

*Countless dead, countless!
It was impossible to count.*

Memish Bayraktir, Turkish soldier

By mid-May the initial attempt to seize the Dardanelles had failed. The British clung to the small gains they had made. The Turkish army now mounted a major attack to drive the Australians and New Zealanders from Anzac.

In the darkness of the early hours of 19 May, Turkish soldiers advanced in waves on their enemies. The Turks were met with a concentrated fire that kept them from entering the Anzac trenches, except in one or two places.

For about six hours the Turks pressed their attack only to be driven back. Over 10,000 Turkish soldiers were hit and an estimated 3,000 lay dead between the lines. In this battle the Australians and New Zealanders lost 160 dead and 468 wounded. The Turkish bodies lay out in the open sun until 24 May when a truce was arranged to permit burial of the dead.

A Turkish officer is led blindfolded through the Anzac lines to discuss a truce to bury the Turkish dead after the attack of 19 May 1915.

(Australian War Memorial H03952)



LONE PINE AND THE NEK

There is hell waiting here.

C.A. McAnulty, Australian soldier killed in action at Lone Pine, 7–12 August 1915

Aware of the need to seize the initiative, the British planned a new offensive for early August. There would be a British landing at Suvla Bay (Suvla Koyu) and a major assault to the north of the Anzac position to capture the high ground leading to Chunuk Bair and Hill 971.

Supporting attacks were planned at Lone Pine and along a narrow ridge known as the Nek.

On the afternoon of 6 August at Lone Pine the Australians attacked and occupied Turkish frontline positions against determined Turkish counter-attacks. Most of this desperate fighting took place at close quarters in the Turkish trenches. On the morning of 7 August at the Nek, four waves of Australians were cut down before they reached the enemy line.

The Australian official historian, referring to these light horsemen, later wrote: "The flower of the youth of Victoria and Western Australia fell in that attempt."

The Charge of the 5th Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915 (detail)

by George Lambert. (Australian War Memorial)

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CHUNUK BAIR

I am prepared for death and hope that God will have forgiven me all my sins.

Lieutenant Colonel William Malone, New Zealand soldier, in a letter to his wife before he was killed defending the position his battalion had seized on the summit of Chunuk Bair

The main attack of the August offensive was made by a mixed New Zealand, Australian, British and Indian force against the heights of Chunuk Bair and nearby peaks. It was believed that if these positions could be captured and held, then the Turkish line at Anzac would be in danger and a breakout towards the Dardanelles possible.

Between 7 and 9 August the attacking troops made their way up the steep slopes and through the deep gullies on the approaches to the heights. Some units became lost in this wild country and planned assaults were often carried out too late and with inadequate support. The New Zealanders, fighting desperately and sustaining great losses, reached the Chunuk Bair summit and gazed upon the Dardanelles. By 10 August New Zealand troops had been replaced by British units when the Turks determinedly counter-attacked and regained the summit.

The August offensive thus ended in failure.

New Zealand soldiers rest in a trench during their assault towards Chunuk Bair on the night of 6 August 1915.

(National Library of New Zealand, F58131)



SICK AND WOUNDED

They lived with death, dined with disease.

From an anonymous poem about Gallipoli

When the Gallipoli campaign began no one expected that it would last so long or cause so many casualties. The number of wounded from the initial invasion overwhelmed the poorly organised medical facilities. During major attacks many hours passed before a wounded man received adequate care. Eventually, proper lines of evacuation were established to hospital ships and back to base hospitals at Lemnos island, Egypt and Malta.

As the summer heat intensified, conditions on Gallipoli deteriorated. Primitive sanitation led to a plague of flies and the outbreak of disease. Thousands of men were evacuated suffering from dysentery, diarrhoea and enteric fever. The poor and monotonous diet of bully beef, hard biscuits, jam and tea made the situation worse. Men suffered particularly from lice in their clothing. Morale sank as the prospect of victory receded. Many came to feel they would never leave Gallipoli alive.

Stretcher bearers carrying wounded at Anzac.

The soldier on the left is carrying filled water bottles up to the front line.

(Australian War Memorial C01761)

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EVACUATION

I hope our poor pals who lie all around us sleep soundly, and do not stir in discontent as we go filing away from them forever.

New Zealand soldier at the evacuation of Gallipoli

After August, the British mounted no further major attacks at Gallipoli. The British Government grew alarmed at the failure to break through to the Dardanelles and there was mounting criticism of the whole venture. In November, when winter arrived, there were men who froze at their posts and over 16,000 troops suffering from frostbite and exposure had to be evacuated. Eventually it was decided that the campaign could not meet its objectives and the British and Dominion force on Gallipoli should withdraw. Many thought a withdrawal would result in heavy casualties. However, elaborate precautions were taken to deceive the Turks into thinking nothing unusual was happening.

Between 8 and 20 December 1915, 90,000 men were secretly embarked from Suvla and Anzac. On 8 and 9 January 1916 a similar evacuation was conducted at Helles. Only a handful of casualties were suffered in these well-executed operations.

Williams Pier, North Beach, Gallipoli, December 1915, with the Sphinx in the background. At this time the preparations for the evacuation of the Australian and New Zealand troops from Anzac were well under way.

(Australian War Memorial C01621)



ANZAC

Anzac stood, and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat.

C.E.W. Bean, Australian official historian

The British Empire, Dominion and French forces suffered severely on Gallipoli. More than 21,200 British, 10,000 French, 8,700 Australians, 2,700 New Zealanders, 1,350 Indians and 49 Newfoundlanders were killed. The Allied wounded totalled over 97,000.

In Australia and New Zealand people looked in disbelief at the mounting casualty lists. Gallipoli was the beginning of a long road for the Australian and New Zealand soldiers that took them to the even more costly battlefields of France and Belgium.

On 25 April 1916, people gathered throughout Australia and New Zealand to commemorate Gallipoli. Today Anzac Day has become a time to remember those who served and died for Australia and New Zealand in war. However, it remains a day that recalls particularly 25 April 1915 when Australians and New Zealanders landed on the shores of Gallipoli, where they founded a lasting tradition of courage, endurance and sacrifice.

An Australian officer visits a comrade's grave on Gallipoli.
(Australian War Memorial G00149)