**The Spirit of ANZAC**

**When was it born?**

25 April 1915

**Where?**

At ANZAC Cove on the western side of the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey.

**Why There?**

The Gallipoli Peninsula on its eastern side dominates the Dardanelles, the very narrow sea approach to Constantinople and the Black Sea. It was thought that if the Dardanelles could be forced, and Constantinople captured, Turkey could be knocked out of the war and Russia supported via the Mediterranean Sea.

**The War**

On 4 August 1914, Australia, as part of what was then the British Empire, went to war. With other member countries of the Empire (Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and India) Australia joined with Great Britain to fight Germany and her allies; Turkey was one of Germany's allies.

At that time Australia was a new nation, less than 14 years old and for the first time Australians from all over the country came together to form an Australian army.

This force, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), initially 30,000 strong, left for overseas in November 1914.

While Colonial troops from all the Australian states had fought in South Africa in the Boer War, the common question in 1914 was - How would these young Australians perform as soldiers in this awful conflict of nations?

**Who were the Soldiers at Gallipoli?**

At ANZAC Cove, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps initially comprised:

1st Australian Division consisting of:

* 1st Brigade (NSW)

2nd Brigade (Victoria)

3rd Brigade (Composite Queensland, SA, WA, Tasmania)

New Zealand & Australian Division consisting of:

New Zealand Infantry Brigade

4th Australian Infantry Brigade (Composite all states)

Along the length of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the 5th, 7th, 9th and 19th Turkish Infantry Divisions were positioned; around and south of Kum Kale, the 3rd and 11th Turkish Infantry Divisions were in place, in all a total of some 62,000 troops, all aware of an impending Allied attack after an Anglo-French fleet on 18 March 1915 attempted unsuccessfully to force passage through the Dardanelles.

**What was Gallipoli like?**

The description which follows is taken from the book GALLIPOLI written by John Masefield and first published in September 1916.

"Those who wish to imagine the scene must think of twenty miles of any rough and steep sea coast known to them, picturing it as roadless, waterless, much broken with gullies, covered with scrub, sandy, loose, and difficult to walk on, and without more than two miles of accessible landing throughout its length. Let them picture this familiar twenty miles as dominated at intervals by three hills bigger than the hills about them, the north hill a peak, the centre a ridge or plateau, and the south a lump.

Then let them imagine the hills entrenched, the landing mined, the beaches tangled with barbed wire, ranged by howitzers and swept by machine guns, and themselves three thousand miles from home, going out before dawn with rifles, packs, and water-bottles, to pass the mines under shell fire, cut through the wire under machine-gun fire, clamber up the hills under the fire of all arms by the glare of shell-bursts, in the withering and crashing tumult of modern war, and then to dig themselves in, on a waterless and burning hill while a more numerous enemy charge them with the bayonet.

And let them imagine themselves enduring this night after night, day after day, without rest or solace, nor respite from the peril of death, seeing their friends killed, and their position imperilled, getting their food, their munitions, even their drink, from the jaws of death, and their breath from the taint of death, and their brief sleep upon the dust of death.

Let them imagine themselves driven mad by heat and toil and thirst by day, shaken by frost at midnight, weakened by disease and broken by pestilence, yet rising on the word with a shout and going forward to die in exultation in a cause foredoomed and almost hopeless.

Only then will they begin, even dimly, to understand what our seizing and holding of the landings meant."

**The Landing**

At about 3.30 a.m., Queenslanders from the 9th Battalion of 3rd Brigade finished transferring from ship to small boats which were first towed and then finally rowed towards the beach at what was to become ANZAC Cove.

30 to 40 infantrymen laden with packs, ammunition, rations, water and weapons were crammed into each boat.

Due to tidal currents and navigational error, the landing was further north than planned, not onto an open plain as was intended but across a narrow strip of beach at the foot of scrub covered hills, hills where movement was difficult, where targets were very hard to spot, and where co-ordination and control of assaulting troops was almost impossible.

At 4.29 a.m. the first ANZACs leapt ashore.

Initially only two or three hundred Turks opposed them with small arms and machine gun fire, but by 4.45 a.m. Turkish shrapnel was exploding over ANZAC Cove and Turkish reinforcements were being rallied.

The remaining battalions of 3rd Brigade were landed into a constricted area of confusion but the men had been told that they were the covering force for their division so they dropped their packs and commenced to force their way upwards and inland searching for Turks.

Between 5.30 a.m. and 7.30 a.m. the 2nd and 1st Brigades began to move ashore however by 7.00 a.m. 3rd Brigade could be seen from the ships at sea to be digging in on the first and second ridges beyond the beach.

As the day progressed the New Zealand Infantry Brigade and the 4th Australian Brigade were landed but by as early as 9.00 a.m. the first of the Turkish reinforcements had begun to press onto the Australians furthermost advanced.

**Savage Fighting Followed**

For almost a week there were sudden assaults, bombardments, bayonet fights and sniping duels.

**Casualties increased**

By 30 April 1915, of the 23,292 ANZACs actually landed, some 5,000 Australians were dead or wounded and the Turks still held the high ground above ANZAC Cove.

But the landing had been made.

The ANZACs had not broken.

They had proved their courage under fire.

**What was the duration of the ANZAC operation at Gallipoli?**

25 April 1915 until 20 December 1915.

**Who were the reinforcements for the first ANZACs?**

On 12 May 1915 reinforcements started to arrive. The first were Australian Light Horse (ALH) and New Zealand Mounted Rifle regiments; their horses were left in Egypt. These units were smaller than the standard infantry battalion numbering only about 500 men. Formations were:

· 1st Light Horse Brigade (NSW, Queensland, SA and Tasmanian Composite and Victorian regiments)

* New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade

On 19 May 1915 there were further reinforcements, again horses were left in Egypt. The reinforcements were:

2nd Light Horse Brigade (Queensland and NSW regiments)

3rd Light Horse Brigade (Victorian, SA and WA regiments)

On 11 August 1915, elements of 2nd Australian Division started to reinforce 1st Australian Division. 2nd Australian Division consisted of:

5th Brigade (NSW)

6th Brigade (Victoria)

7th Brigade (Queensland, Tasmania, SA and WA)

13th Australian Light Horse Regiment (Victoria)

Also in August 1915, 1st and 2nd Light Horse Brigades were strengthened by 11th Australian Light Horse Regiment (Queensland & South Australia) and 12th Australian Light Horse Regiment (NSW).

On 12 September 1915, 1st Australian Division handed over the position at Lone Pine to 2nd Australian Division.

The arrival of all of these reinforcements allowed the progressive resting of the sadly depleted original ANZAC units.

**The Fighting**

After 1 May 1915, trench warfare began in earnest.

By 18 May the Turks had reinforced and regrouped around ANZAC Cove in preparation for a major attack. Some 42,000 infantry of the 2nd, 5th, 16th and 19th Divisions prepared to drive the ANZACs into the sea. Fortunately, in the preceding week, 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade and New Zealand Mounted Infantry Brigade had arrived as reinforcements and 2nd Australian Infantry Brigade had returned from Cape Helles. Some 17,360 defenders faced the Turks.

In the early hours of 19 May the Turks attacked along the whole of the ANZAC front. They were met predominantly with very heavy small arms fire and resolute defence. By midday some 10,000 Turks had been killed or wounded. The ANZACs had suffered only 160 killed and 468 wounded.

But the Turks still held the high ground and the few local counter attacks mounted by the ANZACs drew such heavy fire that all movement between the two lines ceased.

For five days the dead and wounded of both sides lay in No-Mans land. An armistice was arranged to allow both sides to bury their dead. It is claimed that the mutual respect of ANZAC for Turk and Turk for ANZAC grew from this battle and subsequent armistice.

Operational emphasis shifted from ANZAC to Cape Helles at the southern tip of the peninsular. 29 Division (UK) had been reinforced by 29th Indian Brigade and 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, the force restructured as VIII Corps.

With their French allies, successive attacks were mounted aimed at breaking the Turkish lines and pressing north along the Gallipoli peninsula. Some local gains were made but the Turkish line held. As August approached, casualties and sickness in the army rose. According to one soldier, the Helles front "smelled like an open cemetery".

**Emphasis now switched to ANZAC**

A plan was devised to outflank the Turks by a night approach to the north of the ANZAC position and then to advance up the ridges leading to the heights of the Sari Bair range. A new landing was planned at Suvla Bay as a means of seizing a cluster of hills several kilometres inland and a series of feints were planned to stop the Turks reinforcing the threatened areas.

One of these feints was the attack on 7 August at the Nek by 3rd Light Horse Brigade (8 ALH [Victoria] and 10 ALH [WA]). Supporting artillery fire lifted early. Lack of communications prevented any change to plans. The attack still went ahead. In some four to six minutes both regiments virtually ceased to exist, yet no man held back, all went with their mates into a storm of machine gun and small arms fire.

Heavy fighting on the peninsula continued throughout August. Probably the fiercest fighting was in the area of Lone Pine; in just three days seven Victoria Crosses were won; then the tempo of killing slowed.

**The Withdrawal**

In November planning started for the withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Departure from ANZAC was meticulously planned and executed by phases. It was so well conducted that by 20 December 1915, all troops were clear without casualties and without alerting the Turks.

**The Campaign**

This was fought at great cost to both sides. While Turkey suffered huge losses (estimated 86,000 killed) the Turks were not knocked out of the war.

Of the some 50,000 Australians who fought at Gallipoli, 8,709 were killed and 18,235 wounded; New Zealand suffered 2,701 killed and 4,880 wounded.

But the campaign gave to Australia a new pride. The Army had not failed. It had faced the horrors of modern war - the pain, the discomfort and the fear - with courage, determination and above all, good humour.