

ANZAC DAY ADDRESS

Rear Admiral M SLATTERY - RANR

Judge Advocate General - ADF

Armidale, 25 April 2016

A common belief draws us together this morning. We believe that to be Australian is to seek to remember, to understand and to honour the sacrifice of the Anzacs at Gallipoli. We believe this is as fundamental to being Australian, as it is to be fair. We know the Anzacs have inspired 100 years of brave Australian and New Zealand service in war and formed the character of two nations. But today we all struggle to comprehend the courage, the suffering and the waste that was Gallipoli. So let me try and sketch for you a single moment in time on that day in Anzac Cove.

It is now close to 11.30am. On this day, at this hour in 1915 Anzac Cove is in chaos. The landings started barely 7 hours ago. The Anzac battalions are in mixed disorder. But brilliant individual initiatives shine though. Some 8,000 troops from the 1st and 2nd brigades are now on Turkish soil. Their average age is 25. 20% are younger than 21. 90% are single. The soldiers are being paid 6/- a day, a meagre reward for what they face but still six times the pay of British soldiers landing just down the coast.

Already the patterns that would shape the Turkish siege of our troops over the next eight months are frighteningly clear. The Anzacs are facing east, held tightly in a deadly semicircle, a bowl with a radius of no more than 750 yards, their backs to the sea. They occupy 400 acres of land, the size of a few paddocks here in New

England. The Anzacs as yet have no artillery. But two Turkish batteries pound the open country, where the Anzacs are digging in. Murderous fire rains down from Turkish snipers, even on the defenceless boats landing more troops. At nightfall, still another seven hours away, the casualties will be counted for day one - 2000 dead, wounded and missing.

A little over 2 hours ago, at 9.00am two Australians, Private Arthur Blackburn a solicitor from Adelaide and his mate Lance-Corporal Phil Robin, a Bank Accountant penetrated as far east as far as any Australians would ever get inland into the Gallipoli peninsula, only about 2 miles. They had seen the glistening water of the Dardanelles from the ridge top. But by now they are back in Anzac lines. Blackburn would survive Gallipoli and go on to win a Victoria Cross in 1916 in the battle of Pozieres. He returned to lead a battalion in WW2 and was taken prisoner by the Japanese. And in our Australian way of course, his troops always just called him "Blackie".

Just over one hour ago, from about 10.00am, Kemal Ataturk, the local Turkish commander, finally rallies his retreating troops and orders them to lie down and hold the high ground to the north of Anzac Cove up on Battleship Hill. Over the rest of the day the Anzacs will be forced down from this hill, from ground they will never occupy again, into their final trench front lines.

By 11.30 Australian heroes from here in New England are already ashore. This Australian story is a New England story too.

LTCOL George Braund aged 48 is fighting at the Nek, leading a New Zealand company, whose officers are all dead. Back home here, Braund a former magistrate and head of the Armidale Chamber of Commerce, still represents Armidale in the NSW Parliament. He will

be accidentally killed two weeks later, when he fails to answer a sentry's challenge.

Young Captain Leslie Morsehead is there too. He was a teacher and cadet master at the Armidale School and later Melbourne Grammar. He enlisted as a private but so great was his talent that he is made an officer within a month. Commanded by Braund in the 2nd battalion, at 11.30 he is fighting backwards down from Battleship Hill. He is later wounded and comes back to Australia, back indeed to Armidale. But he knows he must return, despite the horror and waste he has seen. So here in New England in early 1916, 100 years ago, he forms the 33rd battalion, with companies from Uralla, from Barraba, and from Manilla. He takes the battalion to the Western Front, where it earns an enviable record. It never retreats from ground it takes. Morsehead's 33rd battalion from Armidale joins the 34th battalion from Maitland and the 35th battalion from Newcastle to form the 9th Brigade. Later Morsehead will lead the Australian 9th Division at the battles of Tobruk and the first and second battles of El Alamein.

We see that Sergeant Archie Barwick, a sheep property manager from Surveyors Creek near Walcha, is just ashore too. He signed up as soon as war was declared and later served on the Western front. His remarkable war diary, now at the Australian War memorial, describes the surreal aspects of this first day. He says: "I know myself I never felt the slightest fear the first day or two; it was when we began to realise that bullets hurt when they hit you, that we knew what fear was".

The other great WW1 New Englander, Colonel Harry Chauvel, will not arrive for another three weeks. Born in Tabulam, a station owner, a Boer War veteran, and now Commander of the 1st Light

Horse Brigade; in the mad logic of war, he will fight dismounted as infantry, survive Gallipoli, and lead his Desert Mounted Corps in the battle of Bersheeba in October 1917.

But tomorrow morning 26 April, two unrelated but remarkable events will occur. At first they will both go entirely unnoticed. An English merchant seaman, not an Australian, who has jumped ship and enlisted in the AIF under a different name, will be adopted into Australian legend. As Private John Simpson of the 3rd Field Ambulance, he will find a stray donkey and begin to tend to the wounded in the face of enemy fire, until he too is finally killed on 19 May.

At 8.00am tomorrow, still about 20 hours away, also unnoticed, a Brigadier from Melbourne, an engineer, civilian militiaman and a lawyer, John Monash will land on the beach at Anzac Cove. He will stay in Gallipoli until December leading the 4th Brigade. But within that time he determines such military chaos should never be permitted to happen again. And he is in a position to make change. Over the next three years he uses his vast intelligence to shape a new 20th Century way of waging mobile war that he introduces to the Western Front. It was an Australian way. Apart from its strategic brilliance, it involved the core idea that for an Australian commander of Australian troops: every soldier's life matters; every soldier must be treated fairly and should as far as possible be protected and supported by tanks and steel, by aerial reconnaissance, by massive logistics and must never, never be needlessly sacrificed.

You cannot see it from Anzac Cove. But at this moment, over the horizon in hospital ships, and further across the water in Lemnos and Egypt, Australian nurses are ready to receive the hundreds of wounded, who can already be counted. Many nurses would go on to

Europe and die in action close to the front. New England women have already made this brave contribution to World War I. Three came from Armidale: Amy Pearson, Grace Fitzgerald and Ella Lawman. They joined the Australian Army Nursing Service and served in Egypt, Europe and in India. Archie Barwick's judgment on the nurses attending Gallipoli casualties was simple and direct. "One cannot praise our nurses too highly...their first thought is for the sick and wounded men...they were bonzer girls."

Look about. What do you see in the late morning light on Anzac Cove? You can see, soldiers dressed just in their webbing and Khaki with rifles and packs. It looks so unfamiliar to us. They fight without body armour or Kevlar. They beached in the dark without landing craft. Without night-vision goggles or satellite GPS technology they drifted into the wrong place. And it was a killing field. They send messages to HQ in little handwritten notes – not a field radio to be seen. Their fine leadership is decimated, simply because officers have to stand up to try to see their men. They are so vulnerable.

But beneath all this we see and feel something very familiar. We know as Australians that each soldier has been carried to Gallipoli by ideals that we all still recognise and that bring us together once again today in admiration: a willingness to fight for friends who need Australian help and a courage and readiness to endure when others depend on Australian resolve.

What is happening back here? On Anzac Day in Australia, it is late afternoon. Australia knows nothing of Anzac yet. A detailed account of the Gallipoli landings will not emerge until 8 May. Even then, casualties will be understated for months. But when it emerges, the news is electric. Recruiting doubles. Units such as the 33rd Battalion are raised. And one hundred years ago today Australians first

celebrate Anzac Day. Here too in this city the Armidale Express reports: every church in town was packed.

Gallipoli had immediate lessons for the war. It taught the world that Australian soldiers were utterly reliable. Before Sir John Monash could put any of his bigger plans into effect he knew he could rely on Australian courage to save the day. And that is just what he did in the last week of March 1918. Even now the numbers in WW1 simply stagger us. When the Russian Revolution occurred, the Eastern Front collapsed and 1 million German soldiers were transferred west. The arrowhead of the attack of these new forces was Villers- Bretonneux, just east of Amiens. The line nearly broke. Monash knew he had to put his very best there. And he did. He sent in the 9th Brigade including New England's 33rd battalion. The 9th Brigade with the 33rd, 34th and the 35th battalions bridged the gap, stopped the German advance and saved the day.

But Gallipoli foreshadowed many later conflicts, in which Australians have since fought and served with courage and tenacity. Armidale and New England have long given the finest of their young men and women to Australia's defence. I can now only mention one or two from each conflict. So many here gave their lives for us. In conclusion let me tell you some of their stories.

Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull was born in Armidale, worked as an electrician, joined the RAAF in September 1939, became an Australian fighter ace flying Kitty Hawks but was killed aged 25 in August 1942 on a mission over Milne Bay.

Sister Ellie McGlade was born and raised in Armidale. An army nurse, she was evacuated from Singapore. But her ship was bombed. She remained on Banka Island to tend to the wounded. The Japanese overran her aid post, killed the wounded and ordered the nurses into the water and there machine gunned them all.

Again in World War II, Armidale's John Laffan flew Spitfires, dive-bombed V1 and V2 rocket sites, and escorted bombers in daylight over Germany, one of the most dangerous jobs in the war.

An RN veteran first, Derek Norton migrated to Australia and served in the RAN off the coast Korea. He retired from the RAN with the rank of Commander, and home to Armidale.

After only 74 days serving in Vietnam, Armidale's Private Bill Brett was killed in action. His fellow New Englander, David Beahan, fought in the fierce Battle of Long Tan.

Lieutenant Michael Fussell attended The Armidale School, and joined the Army through ADFA. He qualified as a paratrooper and then as a Commando, and joined 4RAR. He deployed to Afghanistan. But tragically, whilst he was conducting a dismounted patrol in Uruzgan province he was killed when an IED detonated in November 2008. Like so many at Gallipoli, he died at the age of 25. Michael's brother CAPT Daniel Fussell still serves Australia in the Royal Australian Artillery.

But their service goes on. Armidale's LEUT Sophie Gollan is now posted as a navigation officer and Officer of the Watch on board HMAS Melbourne, enforcing maritime security and anti-piracy measures in the Middle East region. And New England's Corporal Robbie Prowse, an army combat engineer, is currently serving in Iraq.

Today we remember the service of all ADF members past and present.

To be Australian is to seek to remember, to understand and to honour the sacrifice of the Anzacs at Gallipoli and the sacrifice of all

since then who have died, been wounded or served in war for Australia.

And so now, I say for each one of us and in honour of them all,

Lest We Forget