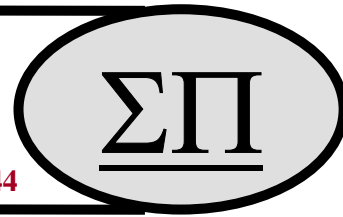


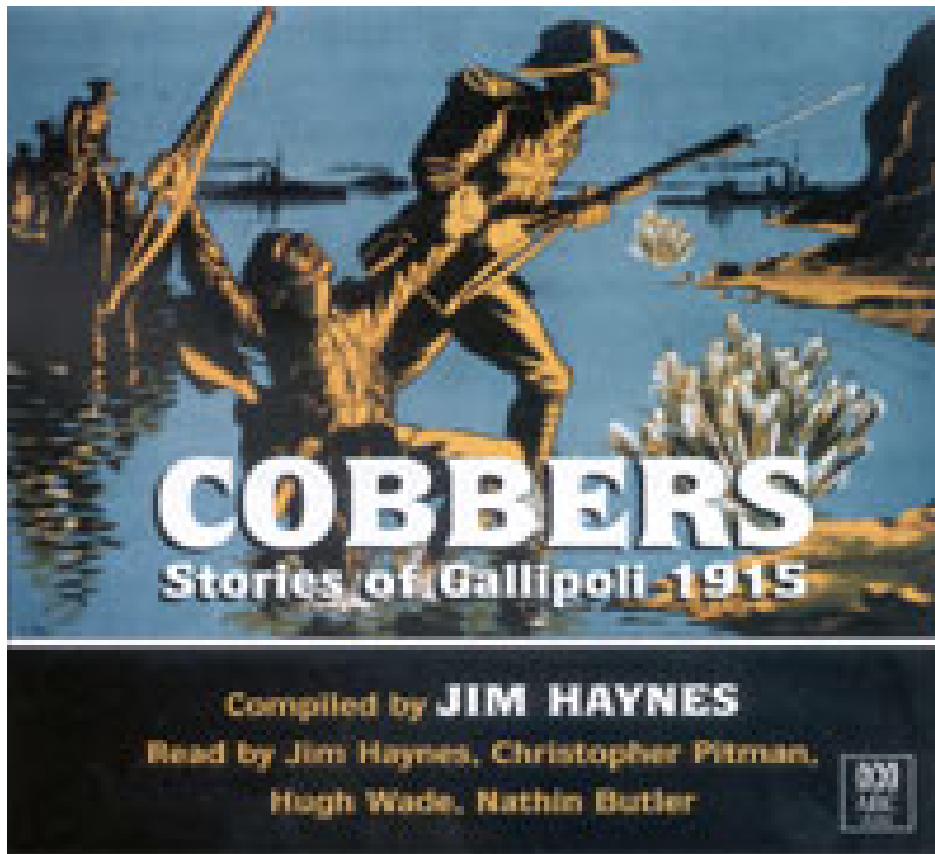
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## MONUMENTAL MOMENTS Albany Anzac Exhibition 2006

A brief history of the Dardanelles campaign of WW1, from  
*'Cobbers - Stories of Gallipoli 1915'*  
written by Jim Haynes, ©2005 (ABC Books)



Recommendation – A truly great read and interpretation of the hell that was Gallipoli.

In order to appreciate the stories in this collection, readers may like to remind themselves of the basic history of the time.

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After World War I began, the Ottoman Empire was lured into an alliance with the Central Powers, partly through the ruling committee's leader, Enver Pasha, having a German background and sympathies, and partly due to Russia being the Ottoman Empire's old and obvious enemy.

The Germans convinced the Ottomans to close the Dardanelles, the waterway between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea, thereby blocking the sea route to southern Russia and preventing Allied arms and supplies being sent to the Eastern Front.

An appeal by the Russian Government to the British War Office and high command prompted the Allied decision to attack the Dardanelles. Russian troops were being hard-pressed in the Caucasus and the Allies hoped that a British attack might cause the Ottomans to withdraw. They also hoped to open a supply route to Russia by forcing the Dardanelles.

It is generally acknowledged that the fall of Constantinople would have been a foregone conclusion had the Allied fleet passed through The Narrows. French and British warships attacked Turkish forts at Cape Helles and along the Straits in February and March 1915. However, underwater mines, torpedoes and spirited defensive work by the Turkish forts along the shores of the Dardanelles at The Narrows, near the Turkish town of Canakkale, halted the assault.

On 18 March 1915, the British and French fleets attempting to force the Straits suffered a humiliating defeat, losing six battleships – British losses were the *Irresistible* and the *Ocean* sunk in The Narrows, and the *Inflexible* crippled and run ashore at Tenedos. The French lost the *Bouvet* sunk in The Narrows, the *Gaulois* beached on a tiny island back towards Lemnos, and the *Suffren* badly damaged and retired.

After the naval attack on the Dardanelles failed, the British military leader on the Gallipoli Peninsula, General Sir Ian Hamilton, conferred with the British Sea Lords, and Field Marshall Horatio Kitchener, and it was decided that a naval action would not succeed without an invasion in force by infantry. Plans were immediately made for a

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massive invasion to try to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula.

At the time, the arrival at Gallipoli was the largest military landing in history. It involved about 75,000 men from the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, Nepal and India. After several postponements due to poor weather and to some of the supply ships being wrongly loaded and then having to be re-loaded, the huge flotilla sailed from the Allied base on the island of Lemnos on 24 April 1915. The landings began to take place before dawn the following day.

The main Allied force, consisting of British and French troops, landed at five different locations at Cape Helles, on the tip of the peninsula. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was a combined force of Australian and New Zealand volunteer soldiers. The corps was formed in Egypt during 1914 and was led by the British General Sir William Birdwood. The force of 30,000 men was to be landed at Gaba Tepe, more than sixteen kilometres north of Cape Helles.

The Anzacs actually landed even further north, in an area later called Anzac Cove. On the first day, 16,000 Anzac troops went ashore, the majority of them going into battle for the first time. The Allied forces suffered severe casualties during the landings. The Allied naval attacks in the area had alerted the Ottomans and their German commanders and they had strengthened their military defences on the peninsula.

Neither the British and the French forces, nor the Anzacs further north, were able to penetrate more than a few kilometres inland. The first day of the campaign saw the Anzacs fighting in small disjointed groups due to the confusion caused by the landings not occurring where planned and the troops becoming separated from their officers and battalions.

They had been landed in a hilly, scrubby tangle of ravines and steep sandy gullies. Yet, amidst the confusion and poor leadership, groups of Anzacs attacked and briefly captured key points on the peaks of the range that commanded the centre of the narrow peninsula.

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By afternoon of the first day, with no supply lines opened and insufficient organised reinforcements, the Anzacs were unable to hold those positions they had gained. No covering artillery had been landed and the Anzacs were driven back and forced to dig in along a line that would become the firing line they would hold and defend for the entire campaign.

The geography of the region and the limited size of supporting forces available prevented the Allied troops from advancing beyond those positions they originally commanded both at Anzac Cove and Cape Helles.

The landings at the much better defended beaches at Cape Helles resulted in heavy casualties and the British foothold there consisted of an area stretching approximately eight kilometres from the toe of the peninsula to the foot of a range of hills called Achi Baba, at a point where the peninsula is also about eight kilometres across.

Efforts to retake the hilltop failed time and again and many lives were wasted. Some Anzacs were sent to bolster the forces at Cape Helles, the 2nd Australian Brigade and the 2nd New Zealand Brigade. They took part in the second Battle of Krithia which consisted of charges across open ground into machine-gun defended territory, being ordered on three successive days, 6,7 and 8 May 1915.

It was at the Battle of Krithia that Tom Skeyhill, whose verse appears throughout this collection, was blinded. The Anzacs suffered terrible losses at Krithia. There is a photograph of some twenty-seven men who were all that was left standing of a brigade of over 700 after the battle. The hill was never taken and the campaign at Cape Helles ground to a stalemate until forces were eventually evacuated in January 1916.

They were the last Allied troops to leave the peninsula. The battle-hardened 29th Division of the British Army fought bravely at Cape Helles and over half their number were killed or wounded. Having consolidated their hold on the narrow strip of beaches and hills at Anzac Cove, the troops settled down to what really became a siege.

The Ottoman forces controlled the heights and the key artillery

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positions on the shore. From the sea, the British naval guns provided cover and protection for the Allied forces dug in on the peninsula. The infantry on both sides were entrenched along a front stretching for approximately five kilometres and curving in an arc from near Hell Spit up into the ranges and back down to North Beach.

The distance between the Anzac and Ottoman trenches varied from just a few metres at Quinn's Post to several hundred metres. After the initial consolidation and digging in, the situation was stable for almost a month.

Then, in mid-May, the Ottoman forces launched a fierce series of counter-attacks. On the night of 19 May 1915, 40,000 Ottoman troops were thrown at the Anzac front line, which was made up of 12,000 men. The Anzacs held the line against overwhelming odds and the horrific losses on the Ottoman side led to a request for an armistice to bury the dead. This was granted – on 24 May 1915.

Losses along the central area of the Anzac line were estimated as 160 Allied soldiers and over 4,000 Ottoman dead. The next real development occurred in August 1915 when a new invasion was undertaken at Suvla Bay to the north of Anzac Cove. This force of some 15,000 men was to land at Suvla on 6 August 1915 and advance across a dry salt lake and hilly open plain toward the Anafurta Range, Hill 971 and Chunuck Bair.

Attacks by all Allied forces on the peninsula were planned to divert Ottoman attention from the landing and enable this new force to become an important part of a pincer movement against the heights. These invasion forces were made up of men who were newcomers to war and poorly led. The command was given to General Sir Frederick Stopford, who had been retired since 1909, was sixty-one years old, and had never commanded men in battle.

*The Wellington Battalion under the commands of General John Monash's 4th Infantry Brigade and General Earl Johnston's New Zealand Infantry Brigade, went into the Chunuk Bair fight 851 strong seasoned though tired men. Joined by 292 fresh reinforcements just before the attack, it came out 300 strong; the battalion lost the equivalent of its entire strength in a week's intensive action. (Stanley)*

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Whatever the reason – unclear orders, poor morale after the botched landing, heat and difficult terrain, heavy Turkish resistance, or simply poor and hesitant leadership – the forces which landed at Suvla Bay on 6 and 7 August 1915 failed to advance as expected.

Meanwhile the Anzacs attacked according to plan. The Australian 2nd Infantry Brigade charged the Ottoman trenches at Lone Pine and captured them costing 2,000 lives; the 2nd Light Horse Regiment charged into the face of machine-gun fire and died at The Nek; and the New Zealanders charged up Rhododendron Ridge and took Chunuk Bair.

At Cape Helles, the British 29th Division made yet another futile and tragic attack on Krithia. Allied losses all around were devastating. On the other side, 7,000 Ottoman troops died defending Lone Pine and The Nek. Ottoman troops under the command of General Mustafa Kemal recaptured the heights from the New Zealanders and the Ghurkhas on 10 August 1915.

The Anzacs held Lone Pine till the evacuation and the Allies effectively held most of Suvla Bay area and Anafurta Plains after another concerted push with reinforcements finally allowing the forces at Anzac Cove to link up with the forces at Suvla Bay on 27 August 1915. After this time, another stalemate eventuated; not one inch of territory was won or conceded by the Anzac forces from the end of August 1915 until they were evacuated in December 1915.

By end of August 1915, over eighty percent of the Allied troops were suffering from dysentery. Winter brought the snow and many soldiers died from exposure or suffered frostbite. A long stalemate followed until the Allied troops at Anzac Cove and Suvla Bay were finally withdrawn in December 1915.

Unlike the landings and the eight-month siege campaign, the Evacuation was a masterpiece of military strategy and coordination. Troops were evacuated steadily from 11 December 1915 and the final 20,000 left furtively and completely undetected on 18 and 19 December 1915.

A rearguard of 1,500 men occupied the trenches and fired rifles,

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made noises and set timers on guns and booby traps to make it appear that the trenches were still occupied as normal. On a given signal, the rearguard units ran to the deserted beach and were taken off under cover of darkness. Only two lives were lost during the whole process of evacuation : a tribute to General Alex Godley's Chief-of-Staff, Cyril Brudenell White and Cecil Aspinall.

Gallipoli established the fighting reputation of the Anzacs and passed into Australian legend. A total of 5,833 Australian soldiers were killed in action during the Gallipoli campaign. A further 1,985 soldiers died of wounds, bringing the Australian battle losses to 7,818. In all, 19,411 Australian soldiers were wounded. A total of 2,271 New Zealanders were killed, and 4,752 were wounded.

Figures for the British were 21,255 dead and 52,230 wounded casualties. The French count wasn't accurate but was approximately 10,000 dead and 17,000 wounded. Ottoman losses were 86,692 dead, 164,717 wounded and 20,000 who died of diseases.

We have no accurate record of the numbers on the Allied side that died from disease but about 150 a day were evacuated with illness from June 1915 onwards (202 days @ 150 = 30,300).

The last man off the beach at Anzac Cove on the 20 December 1915 was Colonel Henry Goddard of the Australian 2nd Division 5th Brigade 17th Infantry Battalion.

It is safe to say over 150,000 men died during the Gallipoli campaign, and twice that number was wounded. As the objective of the campaign was not realised, it was a futile exercise for the Allies. The Ottoman Army lost over a quarter of a million men, and eventually lost the war as well.

*Lest we forget.*