

## Question 1: How Closely does the 'ANZAC Legend' Reflect the Experiences of Individual Australian Soldiers Who Fought During World War 1?

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1914, recruiting offices first opened for Australian men to serve their nation in WW1 (World War 1). At this time, Australia was a newly independent country, with Federation occurring in 1901, thus this was the first time Australians could represent their country rather than the British Empire. For this reason, WW1 was a significant event for Australia in history, and began the ANZAC legend, which has become a part of Australian tradition and identity over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ANZAC legend not only commemorates the lives of the fallen comrades but represented the birth of our nation in a global arena. It was a spirit and a mindset that was engaged by servicemen, as well as politicians, to create Australia's national identity and form us as an independent entity. As Arthur Bourke, OAM, argues, the ANZAC legend is, "a powerful driving sensation that can only be felt... It is a feeling that burns in the heart of every Australian and New Zealand countryman. A warm, tender, fiery, even melancholy ideal that nurtures intense patriotism in the innermost soul of everybody."<sup>1</sup> Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century the ANZAC legend has become co-opted for political purposes, rather than working to solely reflect the experiences of each individual Australian soldier. In saying this, analysis of primary sources reveals that some soldiers' experiences were a precursor to aspects of the legend that has grown out of Gallipoli.

The ANZAC legend has two strains; the first purpose being to commemorate the countless lives lost during WW1 and then as the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries unfolded, subsequent wars. 416,809 Australian men enlisted for WW1 and over 60,000 of these servicemen were killed, while 156,000 were reported wounded, taken prisoner, or gassed. Across the country, war memorials and monuments that enshrine the ANZAC legend have been placed in towns, as well as communities, to take pride in and mourn the soldiers that served and those who passed away during WW1. For example, out the front of Tasman District School in Nubeena stands a sandstone war memorial<sup>2</sup> that has documented the men who "died on active service" and all who "served". Fixed to the base of the monument is a golden plaque that read "LEST WE FORGET" which, on the day the memorial was analysed, was honoured by a bunch of flowers that had recently been laid by a local member of the rural community. While as Johanna Khan argues that "some historians believe ANZAC Day events are now on the decline"<sup>3</sup>, these flowers show that the memory of the soldiers lives on in current times, and that people still value and cherish the ANZACs to this day. Although monuments recognise the significance of the ANZACs, they are also remembered by dawn services which are held at dawn to signalise the original landing time of soldiers at Gallipoli. The 25<sup>th</sup> of April is also marked as ANZAC Day for Australians and New Zealanders to treasure all who

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Bourke, "ANZAC Spirit", *The Australian War Memorial*, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/anzac/spirit#:~:text=More%20recently%2C%20Arthur%20Bourke%20OAM,that%20can%20only%20be%20felt.>

<sup>2</sup> Nubeena War Memorial, Nubeena, Tasmania. Viewed 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Johanna Khan, "The Evolution of ANZAC Day from 1915 Until Today," *Australian Geographic*, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2017/04/evolution-of-anzac-day/>

died and served in WW1. Dr Carolyn Holbrook, historian at Deakin University, disputes that in the 1920s, "ANZAC day was about commemoration and remembering the dead and fallen mates, combined with a sense of pride for being soldiers and proving themselves."<sup>4</sup> The continued reverence for the ANZACs, as shown in these symbols and ceremonies, reveals that the ANZAC legend is still a part of Australia's national identity in current times.

However, in addition to commemoration, the ANZAC Legend also held great political value during the time of war as well as the decades following the event. Australians voluntarily enlisted for Gallipoli which held a large amount of pressure on the government to recruit enough men to serve. From the beginning of the war, politicians took it upon themselves to use the new idea of the ANZAC legend to create enlistment campaigns. These campaigns contained an abundance of propaganda and persuasive language that often used the argument to 'do your duty for King and country'<sup>5</sup>. Dr Martin Crotty, a historian at the University of Queensland disputes, "It has always been political..." He states that ANZAC commemorations have "suited political purposes right from 1916 when the first Anzac Day march was held in London and Australia, which were very much around trying to get more people to sign up to the war in 1916-1918."<sup>6</sup> The government, at the time, claimed that the ANZAC legend would help shape Australia and construct the country in many aspects including individuals' nationalism, but in following years politicians continue to use the argument. John Howard, Australian prime minister (1996 – 2007) explains, "the ANZAC legend has helped us to define who we are as Australians."<sup>7</sup> The legend was politically used for the values that it such strongly represented such as bravery, honour, pride, and that, according to Matthew Humphreys, was "the start of a new era for Australia"<sup>8</sup>. As Holbrook argues, "These kinds of myths and legends, they're a mirror... If you want to get a picture of Australian society, you can look at things like this, because they reflect contemporary values."<sup>9</sup> Thus, while one function of the ANZAC legend is to commemorate the fallen, the legend also serves the agenda of politicians at the time.

Although the ANZAC legend was and still is seen as an extremely valued and honourable myth, it is highly debatable to whether each soldiers' individual experiences reflected the courageous spirit that the legend represents. Numerous soldiers had to face a gruesome reality once arriving at Gallipoli, which was well recorded by Sergeant D Moriarty. As he

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<sup>4</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, quoted in Johanna Khan, "The Evolution of ANZAC Day from 1915 Until Today," *Australian Geographic*, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2017/04/evolution-of-anzac-day/>

<sup>5</sup> "ANZAC Portal", *Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/military-organisation/enlistment>

<sup>6</sup> Dr Martin Crotty, quoted in Johanna Khan, "The evolution of ANZAC Day Until Today", *Australian Geographic*, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2017, <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2017/04/evolution-of-anzac-day/>

<sup>7</sup> John Howard, quoted in "Howard says Anzac legend defines nation", *The Subway Morning Herald*, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2005, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/howard-says-anzac-legend-defines-nation-20050425-gdl6v1.html>

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Humphreys, "What Inspiration Does the Legend of the ANZAC Provide for Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?". [https://education.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/262675/matthew-humphreys-entry.pdf](https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/262675/matthew-humphreys-entry.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, quoted in Johanna Khan, "The Evolution of ANZAC Day from 1915 Until Today," *Australian Geographic*, April 24 2017, <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2017/04/evolution-of-anzac-day/>

recounted in his diary: "Landed on Turkish soil under a terrific fire from enemy entrenchments. Battalion lost about 17 killed and 200 wounded. I lay in the open from 7am till 5pm..."<sup>10</sup> Their arrival at Gallipoli was the soldiers' first glimpse of what was to come, if they were still alive by the time they got to the shore, the challenges ahead of them only got harder. In the diary of Harold Collins, he describes his encounters on the battlefield. He wrote, after the Turks spotted him and his squad, "We ran for our lives. God knows how it is that we were not hit. As we ran the shells followed us." He then explained a horrific bullet wound that a beggar had suffered while being transported by Collins and his squad, "He was shot through the eye, and it came out his left jaw so it will give you an idea of how he suffered. He was conscious all the time."<sup>11</sup> These encounters only begin to scratch the surface of what these men went through and the things they saw. This truly resembles how every man that served in war had a separate experience, some embracing the pride and bravery of performing under pressure to provide for their nation and others that went through a traumatic hell, or those who never made it back to their homeland. These statements reveal that underneath the ANZAC legend there were not always prideful experiences, and it could be argued that the legend has come to obfuscate the real horror.

Although all the soldiers lived through what may be defined as a nightmare, that did not take away the inner pride that each man felt knowing that he was serving his nation for the first time in Australian history. It was a true honour felt by the heart and soul that helped individuals drown out the dreadful reality that was being faced. Jack Thomas Hutton enlisted for WW1 in October 1915 and soon after left his hometown, Carnsdale in New South Wales to perform his duties for his country in France. The 26-year-old personally recognised the bravery that was embodied by servicemen after his own time spent serving. He describes firsthand the traumatising experiences of being on the firing line and expresses the horrific truth and the un-thought of version of the ANZAC Legend. On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July, he portrayed the scene as, "It's just like hell pure & simple." By Monday 31<sup>st</sup> July, he wanted to "Wipe the scenes away they are awful." Then on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> August, he wrote about the "Thundering guns and flame lit skies." On Wednesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> he then wrote a powerful entry that is a primary example of what these thousands of Australian men felt for not purely their nationality but each other: "Men brave, men of Australia, a heroic breed."<sup>12</sup> This progression of his experiences shows the horror faced on the battlefield, which although petrifying, as evidenced in his descriptions, still resulted in a sense of national bravery that was felt by the end of the event.

As stated above, The ANZAC legend held deeper value than just being a legend, it was a spirit that has helped shape Australia to be what it is today. The legend was, and still is, thought so highly of as it represented the true Australian morals and qualities that have continued to develop through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. While the myth was so significant

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<sup>10</sup> Sergeant D Moriarty, "Diary of a Gallipoli Soldier", *The Guardian*, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2008. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/12/gallipoli-diary-dardanelles-campaign>

<sup>11</sup> Harold Collins, "The Diary of Harold Collins:", *Sydney Jewish Museum*, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2020. <https://sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/news/the-diary-of-harold-collins/>

<sup>12</sup> Jack Thomas Hutton, "World War 1 diaries", *State Library New South Wales*. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/world-war-i-diaries>

during this time, it does not prove that it was solely truthful. After analysing primary sources, research indicates that a number of individual soldiers' experiences describe a different version of the legend, one that was not broadcasted, especially by politicians. The men involved had defined the event as horrific and gruesome which was not included in the development of the ANZAC legend. Instead of being a spirit that had come from soldiers it become more of a politically constructed representation of what should be known as the great ANZAC legend.

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