

Arthur's Story

World War One is remembered as the global tragedy of 1914-18 which left millions dead. However, through the haze of disaster and destruction left in the Great War's wake, there spawned from the bloody trenches of Gallipoli, the emergence of the true ANZAC spirit. Whilst the ANZAC Spirit is often talked about as a whole when referring to the Gallipoli campaign, it must be remembered that it was the actions of individuals who created the spirit through the stories from Gallipoli and following campaigns that continued to reverberate with the ANZAC Spirit.

The Gallipoli Campaign was a direct result of Britain's attempt to end the trench warfare occurring in Europe in 1915. At the time, the war was mainly fought by Britain and France on the Western Front, with Russia engaging Germany and Austro-Hungary on the Eastern Front. Despite the strong number of troops, Russia was under-equipped and when Turkey, Germany's ally, attacked Russia during January 1915, the Russians appealed to Britain and France for help and supplies (dva.gov, 2011). To provide their ally with aid, Britain decided to launch an attack on Turkey to gain control of the Gallipoli Peninsula. By taking the peninsula they would gain control of the Dardanelle Strait (Skwirk, 2014); a stretch of waterway, and the only connection between the Mediterranean/Aegean Sea and the Black Sea (Google Maps, 2014). It was envisaged that gaining control of the Dardanelles, would allow Britain to deliver supplies to Russia as well as achieving an advantage over Turkey, perhaps then pushing the Turks to a quick surrender (dva.gov, 2011).

The Gallipoli campaign was part of this strategy, however, from the first landing of troops on April 25th 1915, things went decidedly wrong. The troops landed in the wrong position, at what is now known as 'ANZAC Cove', instead of Cape Tepe the Anzacs' intended landing point. This error is believed to be the result of navigation miscalculations and faulty communication. Although the final landing point was only a few kilometres from their planned destination, the territory was completely different to what they had expected. They were not prepared for the steep, high cliff faces of Gallipoli Peninsular; nor were they ready for the preparedness of the Turks, with their cannons and incessant machinegun fire defending the area. The troops had no choice but to scatter beneath the Turks' assault from their dominant position high in the cliffs (Skwirk, 2014).

After the first day, only 900 metres of ground had been taken, however 2300 casualties were experienced by the ANZACS. During the conflict at Gallipoli numerous unsuccessful battles took place including the Battle of Lone Pine and the Battle of the Nek. Yet the Anzacs faced each new challenge with unwavering loyalty to fight for their king and country. They lived in dreadful conditions, in filth and squalor for months until finally, in December 1915, plans for the troops' evacuation took place. The evacuation became the most successful part of the entire campaign, but despite their relief at leaving such hopeless circumstances, many troops felt that retreat was the equivalent to failure. It is this attitude in such a dire situation which really showcased the spirit shown by soldiers throughout the entirety of the ANZAC Campaign (Skwirk, 2014).

One individual who exhibited an example of the ANZAC Spirit was Private Arthur 'Art' Aubrey Trenwith. Born in 1891 in Kadina, South Australia, Arthur worked as a miner, in the Yorke Peninsula mining town (National Archives of Australia, 2014; Copper Coast, 2014). Arthur travelled 100 miles to Oaklands, Adelaide, to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force on the 1st of January 1915 at 23 years of age (See Fig 1). Unlike some, Arthur did not find himself pressured into joining by friends or relatives. As one of thirteen children, Arthur and his younger brother Alfred 'Roy' were the only ones who sought to join up for the great adventure that was to be experienced in joining the British Empire forces in World War One (Clark, 1972). Like many young men at the time, they wanted to fight for Australia's honour with a strong commitment to king and country (See Fig. 2). Arthur was part of the 4th Reinforcements of the 10th Infantry Battalion that departed Adelaide on the 1st April 1915 on the 'Pt Lincoln' bound for Egypt (National Archives of Australia, 2014; diggerhistory, 2014). From there they proceeded to Gallipoli on the 7th of June 1915, as one of 1761 troops (RSA, 2012), to join other battalions of the 3rd Brigade some 43 days after the initial landing (Australian War Memorial, 2014).

On reaching Gallipoli, Arthur, along with his comrades of the 4th Reinforcements, had their first experience of war. On June 7th, at the same time they were arriving on Gallipoli beach, the first Australian hospital ship returning wounded to Australia disembarked; providing Arthur and his mates a glimpse of the future that may or may not await them. As enlisted men, Arthur and others from the 10th Battalion were required to participate in 'fatigue' work – a practice troops hated – it involved building terraces in the hillside of North Beach at Braund's Hill to accommodate potential

reinforcements for the planned August offensive. At Gallipoli, the soldiers had only one place to live: the trenches. The trenches were channels of filth, fleas, flies and rats; all of which bred disease (The Anzacs of Gallipoli, 2011). Despite precautions, such as vaccinations administered for Cholera, sickness ran rampant among the soldiers living in such close-quarters.

As one of the lucky few of the 10th Battalion to enjoy a 3-day rest period on Ambrose Island (Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2010), Arthur still managed to contract a serious case of Enteric Fever, a virus more commonly known as Typhoid Fever (Clark, 1972). Due to the contagion, Arthur, along with an estimated 45% of the 10th Battalion, were evacuated from Gallipoli on August 15th to a hospital in England after being deemed unfit to participate in the August offensives at Lone Pine and later the tragic failure at The Nek (Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2010; Clark, 1972).

In spite of his dreadful experiences and the illness which stopped his return to the front for several months, Arthur never let his patriotism and fighting ANZAC Spirit fade. Although it was here that Arthur's campaign at Gallipoli ended, once he recovered, he immediately departed England for France to re-join his battalion on the Western Front at the Somme. He remained there and fought bravely until his untimely death on February 17th 1917. He died on the Western Front serving his country. Arthur would never again see his beloved homeland; he was just 26 years old (Clark, 1972). The full details of his death and final resting place are still unknown to his descendants to this day; he lies interred in the corner of a foreign field. There was no hero's glorified return; Arthur Trenwith, the young soldier from Kadina, died fighting and displaying, what is known as the true ANZAC Spirit.

Arthur's sacrifice during the war left deep scars on his remaining family. Twelve siblings, his mother and father were the loved ones who felt the pain of his death; his younger brother, Roy, arrived at the Western Front a few weeks later, only to hear of his brother's death. The two were very close and exchanged letters frequently. The following is the last correspondence to his brother less than one month before his death, and received by Roy two days before (See Fig. 3).

"Dear Roy,

No doubt you are anxious to know how and where I am. Well Roy I am with Batt. again. Received your letter of 27th. Pleased to hear you are well at present. While at Base I met K. Lincombe and he expected to re-join you soon. You will be surprised

to hear your transfer as gone through and perhaps you will be notified before this reaches you if all goes well you will be with me in a few weeks. So wait patiently and you will soon have the pleasure of meeting me.

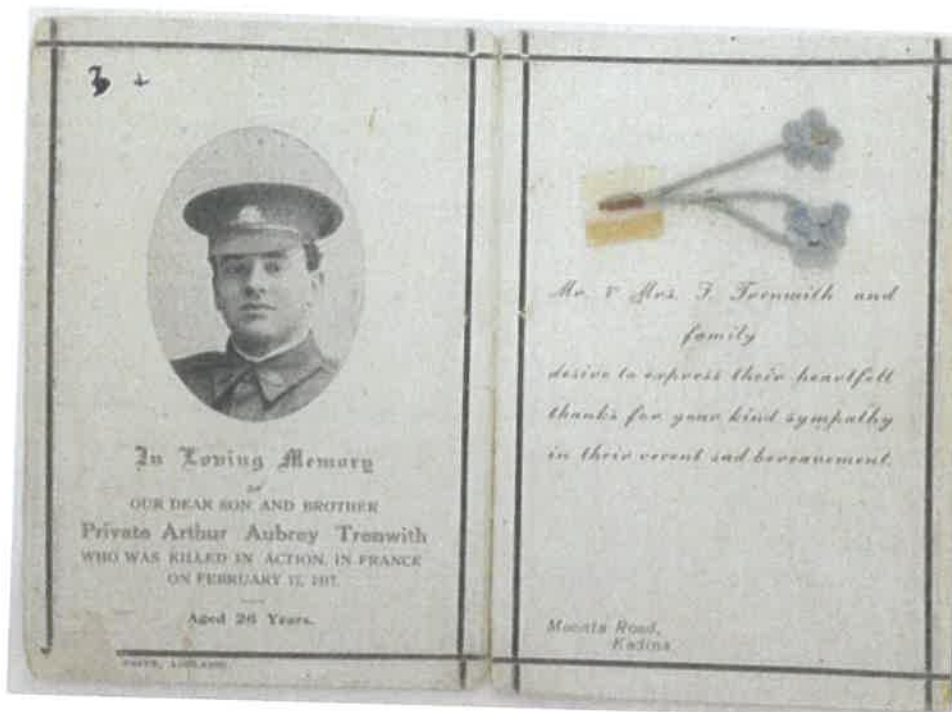
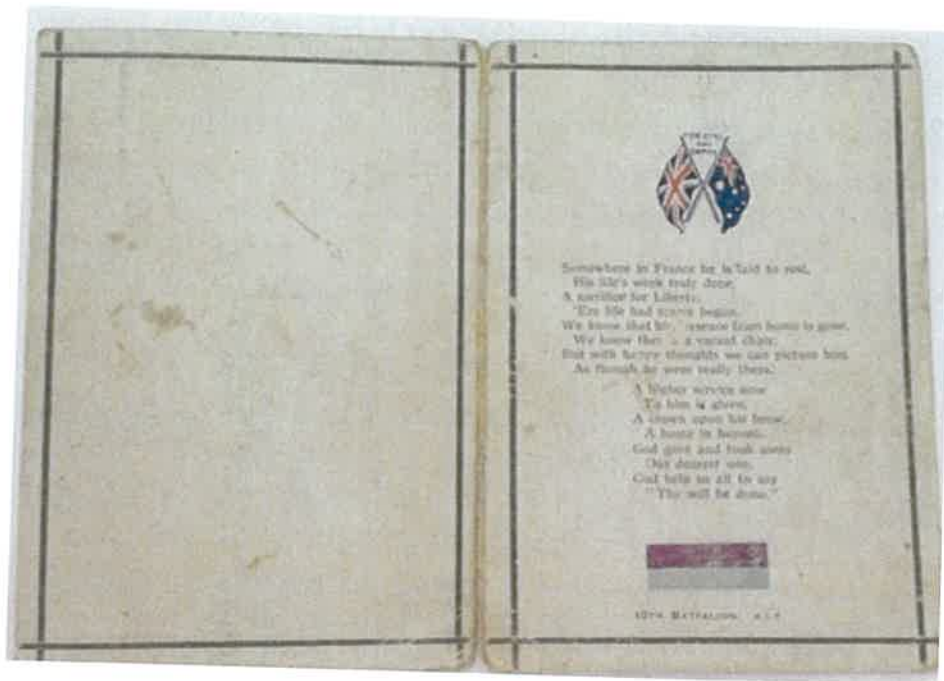
Have you met Watts yet? He is with your Batt. came over in 2nd Rein. so look him up and tell him to write and send his address. I have at last heard from Gert and find all are well and receiving our mail regular. I have never received any but my pal received two of three of mine while I was away and enjoyed their contents.

Well Roy, it is now bed time and very cold so I think I will turn in. Hoping this finds you well. I remain Art."

Arthur's death affected his whole family, those at home in Kadina did not receive word of his passing for some time, and were horrified to read an article published in the Kadina and Wallaroo Times entitled "Faithful Unto Death". It stated, "*The late private A. Trenwith was well known and widely respected in the Kadina district and much sympathy is felt for his family*" (Kadina & Wallaroo Times, 1917). On receiving the news, the family were also concerned for Roy's wellbeing, as they knew he had also suffered a neck wound whilst fighting in France. Arthur's mother, Elizabeth, never truly recovered from his death; and for the rest of her life, could not forgive Roy for returning home when his brother hadn't. They never repaired the bond they once shared as mother-and-son (McGlone, 2014). The loss of a child would leave any family broken, and Arthur's death certainly impacted greatly the Trenwith family (See Fig. 4).

The ANZAC Spirit, although revered for its glory and heroism that at all costs *must* be remembered by future generations, is also a continuing story of great loss. The ANZAC Spirit is, in essence, the spirit of true sacrifice for others and bravery beyond what is expected. There are many Australians and New Zealanders who served in Gallipoli, the Western Front, World War Two, and the following decades in Korea and Vietnam (The Returned & Services League of Australia, 2014), to modern day conflicts who have paid with their lives, their youth and their innocence, often for questionable causes. However, it must be acknowledged that it has always been with patriotic pride that these true war-time heroes displayed the ANZAC Spirit. This is the same spirit that Australian troops have shown, and continue to show, since the birth of our nation.

(1550 Words – ommitting letter)



(Fig 4 – Memorial Card)

Appendix List

Fig. 1: Arthur's enlistment document, 15/01/1915 (Sourced: National Archives of Australia, 2014)

Fig. 2: Photograph of private A.A. Trenwith, 1915

Fig. 3: Original Letter by A.A. Trenwith, February Jan 19th 1917

Fig. 4: Memorial thank you card sent by the Trenwith family to members of their community in recognition of their support during their time of loss.

The writing inside reads:

(pg. 1)
*In loving memory
of
Our dear son and brother
Private Arthur Aubrey Trenwith
Who was killed in action, in France
On February 17, 1917.
Aged 26 years.*

(pg. 2)
*Mr. & Mrs. T. Trenwith and family
desire to express their heartfelt thanks for your kind sympathy
in their recent sad bereavement.*

The writing on the front reads:

*"Somewhere in France he is laid to rest,
His life's work truly done,
A sacrifice for Liberty,
'Ere life had scarce begun.
We know that his presence from home is gone,
We know there is a vacant chair,
But with happy thoughts we can picture him
As though he were really there.
A higher service now
To him is given,
A crown upon his brow,
A home in heaven.
God gave and took away
Our dearest one.
God help us all to day
"Thy will be done."*

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 "Thy will be done."*