

Captain Harold Armitage and the ANZAC's Contribution to the Gallipoli Campaign



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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The ANZAC Spirit is said to have been born in the Gallipoli Campaign of World War 1 and perpetuated through the efforts of the men and women of Australia's defence forces in subsequent conflicts. Using a range of sources, describe the journey of a South Australian man or woman who was part of this campaign.

In doing so you are required to conduct research that will enable you to:

- 1) Describe his/her background before departing for the war (2 marks).***
- 2) Describe the Gallipoli Campaign and Australia's involvement in it (3 marks).***
- 3) What were your research subject's experiences at Gallipoli? (3 marks).***
- 4) To what extent did his/ her service reflect the ANZAC spirit (4 marks).***
- 5) Give your own understanding of the meaning of the ANZAC Spirit (4 marks).***
- 6) What was the impact of their service on families and communities left behind in South Australia? (2 marks).***
- 7) Use a range of sources which may include photos, maps, artefacts, diary entries and archival materials (2 marks).***

Captain Harold Armitage and the ANZAC's Contribution to the Gallipoli Campaign.

Captain Harold Edwin Salisbury Armitage was the eldest son of Henry James and Martha Elizabeth Armitage. Harold was born on the 11th of November 1894 in Norwood, Adelaide South Australia and attended public primary and high schools in Adelaide¹. At the age of 16 he was a cadet at Adelaide High School and at the age of 18 was a Corporal in Adelaide High School's Senior Cadets. He then became an officer of the Citizen Military Force.

Harold continued his education and in 1914 started study at the University of Adelaide. He studied an arts degree, specialising in English and History as well as studying a degree in education. Whilst Harold studied, he began teaching young children at the school house in his home town, Millicent, with his father the head master.

Harold was 20 when war broke out and he was keen to resign his commission from the Citizen Military Force and enlist in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). He was refused by military authorities to enlist as a private in the 10th battalion so instead joined an Officer Training Course and was easily the best out of his class. He then helped train the 3rd, 4th and 5th reinforcements of the 10th battalion at the Oaklands Camp in Adelaide.

On the 1st of January 1915 Harold took leave from his studies and in March 1915 he was accepted into the AIF as a Second Lieutenant². He was lucky to be accepted as military regulations stated that no officer under the age of 23 was able to enlist on active service.

The Gallipoli campaign lasted for approximately nine months with the main attacks taking place in August 1915. Out of the 61,522 Australian men who lost their lives in World War One, 5,482 were killed in action and 2,012 died due to injury purely from the Gallipoli campaign.

The main objective of the Gallipoli campaign was to send a naval force through the Dardanelles so that the major Turkish city, Constantinople, could be invaded and hopefully cause Turkey to surrender. This plan furthermore ensured that the Dardanelles would be opened up for allies to send supplies to Russia. If successful, the plan would also threaten Germany, who would be forced to make a new front and take pressure off of other theatres³.

Australian and New Zealand battalions involved in the campaign trained in Egypt, however nothing could prepare them for what awaited.

Australian and New Zealand forces invaded the beaches of Gaba Tepe, or ANZAC Cove, on the 25th of April 1915 as bombarding Turkish gunners, who protected the Dardanelles, had previously failed⁴. The ANZAC's secured the beach and steep cliffs at the cost of over 1,700 casualties in less than twenty four hours. This landing was the birth of the ANZAC Spirit.

The Battle of Lone Pine was the first of the August offensives at Gallipoli and has been described as some of the worst fighting in World War One with over 2,000 Australian soldiers who died in the battle⁵. The battle involved bombing Turkish trenches before waves of Australian soldiers charged.

The next morning, after the Battle of Lone Pine, the 3rd Light-horse Brigade attacked the Nek. Unfortunately this battle was a disaster and resulted in the slaughter of over 240 Australian soldiers⁶. Since the Turkish trenches were bombed seven minutes too early, enemy soldiers had time to regain their positions and fire at the charging Australians.

The campaign was a military failure however can be seen as the making of a nation. This campaign is considered to have created the ANZAC tradition along with bringing all Australian's together.



Australian's Charging Enemy Trenches

¹ *ARMITAGE (MID), Harold Edwin Salisbury* 2014, Returned & Services League of Australia, accessed 20 September 2014, <<http://www.rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/243533>>.

² *Captain Harold Edwin Salisbury Armitage* 2014, Australian War Memorial, accessed 17 September 2014, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/people/P10675761/>>.

³ *The Failed Plan* 2014, Map, Australian War Memorial, accessed 18 September 2014, <<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/dawn/plan/>>.

⁴ *It Was Just Breaking Dawn* 2010, Australian Government Department Of Veteran Affairs, accessed 20 September 2014, <http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/nbeach1_2.html>.

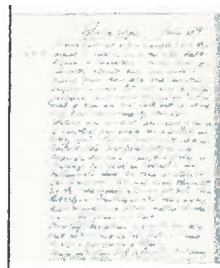
⁵ Adam-Smith, P 1978, *The ANZACS*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, Victoria.

⁶ *The Nek* 2014, Splitters Creek Historical Group, accessed 19 September 2014, <<http://www.gallipoli.net.au/thenek.html>>.

Harold Armitage left Adelaide for Gallipoli via Egypt, at the age of twenty on the 20th of April 1915, as a Second Lieutenant of the 10th Battalion⁷. He arrived at Gallipoli in June, so was not part of the first landings. He did however fight on the front and was involved in heavy trench warfare along with playing a major role in establishing new trenches, closer to the Turkish lines. In his diary, Harold retells the experience of arriving at Gallipoli. He wrote that as soon as they arrived, bullets started whizzing past their heads. He also wrote of the miscommunication between staff as they failed to tell him that his battalion should have arrived in the evening rather than the men, "...trotting around in broad daylight" as Harold described it (page 32 of his diary⁸). Harold and his men were sent straight to the trenches and only saw one man killed during the landing. Harold's first mission was to take approximately two hundred men to dig new trenches in the middle of the night. The majority used picks and shovels whilst others were armed and watched for the enemy. The noise was overheard by the Turkish who attacked. They were showered with enemy bullets so Harold took charge and on his word 'five rounds rapid' was released. As the enemy scattered the new trenches were regained with only two casualties. They waited in the trench, with machine gun bullets blasting around them, until the diggers had got through. Then Harold guided them safely away from the front. By August 1915 Harold became a Lieutenant and soon after an Acting Captain. Harold and the 10th battalion served in Gallipoli until the evacuation in December.



AIF 10th Battalion



Harold's Diary, 1915

The ANZAC spirit was established in the Gallipoli campaign and is based around the attributes these soldiers demonstrated. Harold clearly demonstrated many traits of the ANZAC spirit and was an officer loved by his men. Sergeant Gurr from Harold's home town wrote home mentioning that Harold was doing a splendid job and that his men "*...all love him and swear he is the best officer in the AIF.*"

Harold demonstrated the most important aspect of the ANZAC spirit; mateship. He was very conscious of the health and safety of his men and as Lieutenant, Captain or Major he dedicated himself to their safety and would have sacrificed himself for them in an instant.

He also demonstrated bravery and remained calm and in control when panic could have easily taken over, to protect his men. An example of this was the night he took charge of approximately two hundred men whilst under attack on a mission to dig trenches. Men were digging over a large area but he made no hesitation in regrouping the battalion rather than saving his own life and the newly dug trenches were regained with only two casualties.

Harold was also very humble and often gave credit to other troops in his diary even commending the Turkish on sniper locations. He also thought himself overpaid as a Captain.

Similar to other ANZAC's, Harold disagreed with British officers decisions and as an officer himself, felt they were incompetent⁹. However contrasting from other soldiers, he was too polite to contest the officers.

Like thousands of other ANZAC soldiers, Harold always remained positive. His positive and determined attitude was reflected in his diary and mirrored that of his men.



ANZAC Soldiers Digging Trenches in Gallipoli

⁷ 10th Battalion 2014, Australian War Memorial, accessed 17 September 2014, <https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11197.asp>.

⁸ Diary of Harold Edwin Salisbury Armitage, 1915 2014, Australian War Memorial, accessed 17 September 2014, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG0000396/>>.

⁹ Letterbook for Harold Edwin Salisbury Armitage, 1916-1918 2014, Australian War Memorial, accessed 17 September 2014, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG0000398/>>.

The ANZAC spirit can be broken down into different qualities depending on each individual's view, experience and knowledge. Personally, the ANZAC spirit is best represented by the mateship, endurance, courage, bravery, larrikinism and friendly nature shown by the soldiers.

Mateship is what essentially pulled a lot of these young soldiers through every day. Without such great mateship the soldiers wouldn't have had the emotional endurance to continue what felt like a hopeless campaign at Gallipoli. The mateship also inspired them to be brave for one another and certainly influenced officers, like Harold, to be a courageous role model. The friendly mateship and ANZAC spirit was perfectly conveyed on May 24th, 1915¹⁰. A cease fire was called so that bodies from a failed Turkish attack could be buried. In that day, soldiers realised the enemy were not that dissimilar from themselves. They also realised that their bullets did as much damage to the Turkish as vice versa. Soldiers swapped badges, photographs and stories with the opposition which resulted in an unforeseeable friendship. From that day forward the ANZAC's had a new respect for the enemy and jokes were often made from the trenches.

This shows the impenetrable friendly nature and larrikinism of the ANZAC's as no other two nations at war could stop fighting and joke together in a day.



ANZAC and Turkish Officer



ANZAC Soldier Carrying Wounded Mate

Harold Armitage left Adelaide as a Second Lieutenant with the 10th battalion and on the 3rd of April 1917 was killed in action as an Acting Major of the 50th battalion. He was only twenty-two.

Harold's dedication to service made his parents and community extremely proud of him. However his great achievements were little consolation for all the loved ones he left behind.

For his parents who lost their eldest son, the sibling who lost a brother, the men who lost a kind Captain, the digger who lost a mate or the school who lost a gifted teacher, his loss affected the whole community.

His sacrifice and bravery will not be forgotten¹¹.

Lest we forget.



50th Battalion

Word Count: 1499

¹⁰ *The Ridge- Johnston's Jolly* 2010, Australian Government Department Of Veteran Affairs, accessed 20 September 2014, <http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/2visiting/walk_09johnstons.html>.

¹¹ *ANZAC Day 2013* 2013, Wattle Range Council, accessed 18 September 2014, <<http://www.wattlerange.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/minutesAgendas/coudoc%20mayoral%20communications%20130513-1.pdf>>.