



HERBERT DONOVAN MICHAEL

ANZAC Spirit and Gallipoli Campaign



2014

Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize Entry

By Blake McCallum

Booleroo Centre District School

The Gallipoli Campaign is most likely the most famous part of World War One for Australians. It saw the birth of the ANZAC Spirit. Many men paid the supreme sacrifice in the Gallipoli Campaign and in the end it resulted in very little gain for the Allies. One man who went to Gallipoli and survived was a distant relative of mine and fellow resident of Booleroo Centre, Herbert Donovan Michael.

Herbert Donovan (Don) Michael was born on the 13 September 1890 near the town of Booleroo Centre, South Australia. He was the eldest child of William and Kate Michael, farmers of Booleroo. He attended the Booleroo West and Booleroo Whim state schools, before attending Kyre College in Adelaide. Upon finishing his education he returned home to help on his father's farm.

As a young adult, Don, was a keen member of the local Literary Society and Liberal Union. At one literary meeting, held in July 1913, he led the affirmative side in a debate on the topic of compulsory military service. There are no further details other than that the affirmative side won.¹ If only these men knew what was in store for them in the next few years. They would see how it was nowhere near as glamorous as they probably had in their minds.

On the 17th February 1915, Donovan enlisted to the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F) in Adelaide. After several months of training he embarked from Adelaide with the 27th Battalion A.I.F. on the HMAT Geelong on the 31st May 1915 headed for Egypt.²

Shortly before his departure, on the 26th April, a farewell was held for Don Michael at the Booleroo Centre Methodist Church. Don was presented with a wristwatch by the Pastor and the night was spent with enthusiastic celebrations, speeches and singing.³ One can only presume that news of the dismal start to the ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign had not yet reached this small country town halfway around the world.

The Gallipoli Campaign was the disastrous attempt by the Allies to seize control of the Dardanelles strait from the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. Gaining control of this narrow strait would allow the Allied Forces to re-establish communication and trade routes with Russia. It would also damage the Ottoman forces and help preserve the safety of Britain's Suez Canal. Early in the morning on the 25th April 1915, thousands of Allied forces rowed onto the shore of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Australian and New Zealand forces landed at a place to later be known as ANZAC Cove and it proved to be an atrocious landing location due to the severe and unforgiving terrain.

The Allies suffered severe losses in the first few days before being able to develop defensive lines. For so many casualties very little land was able to be taken. By August 1915 the two sides had reached a stalemate. The Allies launched a new offensive having taken on reinforcements; this was the last major offensive of the campaign. It was known as the August Offensive and claimed many more lives, with very little gain.

¹ Daily Herald, (1913). The Country: Booleroo Centre. [online] Available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/105585814>? [Accessed 16 Aug. 2014].

² MICHAEL Herbert Donovan. (1915). [Service Record] National Archives of Australia, B2455. Canberra.

³ Daily Herald, (2014). SOLDIERS FAREWELLED: Gathering at Booleroo Centre. [online] p.6. Available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/134406071>? [Accessed 16 Aug. 2014].

"THE GRAPHIC" MAP OF THE DARDANELLES OPERATIONS



BATTERING AT THE GATE TO CONSTANTINOPLE: THE PROGRESS OF THE ALLIED NAVAL AND MILITARY FORCES AT THE DARDANELLES

Figure 1: a visual depiction of the Gallipoli Campaign, produced sometime around or after August 1915 by G. F. Morell. Note the terrain and positions of the Allied lines.

Meanwhile, the 27th Battalion had arrived in Egypt for further training. In August 1915, Don Michael was transferred to the 3rd Division Signalling Company and was deployed for duty on the Gallipoli Peninsula. He worked as a dispatch rider and it is believed that he relayed messages between officers of the separate units involved in the campaign.

As winter started to set in snow began to fall and only made conditions more uncomfortable for the men at Gallipoli. Winter essentially put an end to the hostilities on behalf of the Allies. This caused the Turks to become more confident and they attempted to get an advantage, but to no avail.

By December 1915, it was noticed that suspicious things were happening. On the 10th all those in the hospitals were taken away. On the 12th December, Donovan and other men were given leave from duties early in the morning and told to rest. "By this time all sorts of rumours were afloat. Some said that they were reducing the strength to make it easier to feed the troops during the winter. Some said that the Australians were to be relieved by troops more adapted to cold weather, and some said it was to be evacuation." (The Advertiser, 1916)⁴

The evacuation is commonly said to be the most successful part of the entire campaign. It was completed in 3 stages. The evacuation began with small amounts of men and equipment being removed by night so the Turks thought it was a routine reduction of forces for winter. After the second stage the ANZAC garrison was reduced

⁴ The Advertiser, (1916). GETTING AWAY FROM ANZAC. [online] p.10. Available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/8705241?> [Accessed 16 Aug. 2014].

to 26,000 men, having previously being 41,000. And finally on the nights of the 18th and 19th December the remaining men were taken away.⁵ All the men were taken to Lemnos, Greece and spent a few weeks there until dispersal to various other fronts of the war.

On January 3rd 1916, Don Michael wrote a letter home from Lemnos. The letter was published in *The Advertiser* on the 25th March. The letter detailed the events preceding, during and following the evacuation. (see appendix)

The 'ANZAC spirit' is the fabled qualities that the Australians at Gallipoli supposedly possessed. These qualities include courage, ingenuity, larrikinism and mateship. The 'legend' of the ANZAC Spirit was spread to help inspire other forces and the people back home. In the end I believe the ANZAC Spirit is just about regular men who have enlisted in the Imperial Forces to try and bring honour and glory to themselves, the country and the Empire. There was nothing extraordinary about these men they were just doing what was necessary to survive and help defend the Empire. Herbert Donovan Michael was one of these men. This however isn't to say that there were no extraordinary men at Gallipoli, there were definitely men with these qualities involved with the campaign. However, with all good men there are always bad men, not every man at Gallipoli was necessarily good. They were enticed to war through propaganda, glorified stories of battle and promise of adventure to devastating and horrible war fronts. Merely by continuing with his duties and fighting in these conflicts, Don Michael, was an embodiment of the ANZAC Spirit. Also, later in 1918, whilst on duty in France, he won a Croix de Guerre for his efforts in cutting enemy communication lines in the midst of heavy battle.⁶ By the end of the war he had been promoted to Lance Corporal.

The stories and legends of the ANZACs helped to rally the people back home to raise funds for the military forces. The families and communities these men left behind wanted to help them in any way they could. The main way they did this was by fundraising with fairs and other community events. They also honoured the men who had left to go to war by unveiling monuments and Honour Rolls to them. One such Honour Roll was unveiled in the Booleroo Centre Institute on, interestingly enough, the same day that Don Michael sent his letter from Lemnos (3rd January 1916).⁷ Furthermore in 1922 a 20 foot tall marble monument was erected in the centre of town engraved with the names of all those from the area that enlisted.

Following the war, Herbert Donovan Michael made a very successful life for himself. In 1939 he was elected into State Parliament and continued in that position until his death in 1956. He may have used the reputation of the ANZACs to help his election campaigns (these campaigns must've turned out better than the Gallipoli Campaign). One of the major part of his parliamentary career was the settlement of the returned service men of World War 2. He may have sympathised with these men, coming back to Australia and having to start again. He was still very interested in literature and made great use of the Parliamentary Library.

The ANZAC Spirit and Gallipoli Campaign will always be a major part of South Australia's history. These men were still brave and fought well despite the ANZAC legend being commonly regarded today as a 'myth'. Herbert Donovan Michael was one of thousands involved with this infamous part of South Australia's history. He was one of the lucky ones who came home and continued on the have a good life after the horrors of war.

⁵ Gallipoli and the ANZACS, (2014). *The Anzac landing at Gallipoli - A 'duty clear before us' - Landings*. [online] Available at: <http://www.anzacs.gov.au/1/landing/nbeach7.html> [Accessed 17 Aug. 2014].

⁶ Ireland, K. (1982). *From Heather to Wattle: The Story of Donald and Christina McCallum and their Descendants 1852-1982*. 1st ed. [Adelaide, S.A.]: Lutheran Publishing House.

⁷ *The Advertiser*, (1916). The Roll of Honor. [online] p.8. Available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/8677217>? [Accessed 23 Aug. 2014].



Figure 2: The Honour Roll in the Booleroo Centre Institute



Figure 3: The monument dedicated to the memory of WWI soldiers in the centre of town

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Appendix:

GETTING AWAY FROM ANZAC

Writing from Lemnos on January 3, Dispatch-rider Donald Michael, of Booleroo Centre, deals with the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and some events immediately following it. "Just after I wrote my last letter," he says, "we had a spell of intense cold, and on the morning of November 28 awoke to find about 3 in. of snow on the ground. For several days the cold was worse than anything I had ever experienced. I put some biscuits to soak in my dugout, and the water froze around them instead of soaking them. The waterpipes burst owing to the water in them freezing, and we were on quarter rations of water. It was too rough to land anything. We were about a fortnight without bread, and only once or twice got a bit of fresh meat. The only men in the trenches had a very bad time in the slush and cold. Many of them had to be sent away with frozen feet. I saw dozens of them going down to the hospital with their feet wrapped in pieces of blankets as their feet were too swollen to get boots on. I think such a cold snap was unexpected so early in the season, and the authorities were not prepared for it, but it showed we were in for a bad time if we stayed there during the winter. December opened up with lovely mild weather, which lasted right until the evacuation. I mentioned in my last letter, I think, that after Lord Kitchener's visit we could see that something was going to happen. About the time of the snow there was cessation of hostilities on our side. All the carrying of provisions, &c., was done at night. The Turks got very cheeky while there was no firing on our side. They crawled right out of the trenches, when our men would shoot them down. This went on for a few days, and then the Turks bombarded our trenches very heavily at Lone Pine. They made a terrible mess of things. After this things seemed to be about normal again. Certain things, however, were taking place that showed some move was being contemplated. Nearly everyone, though, had a different idea as to what was going to happen. We dispatch riders had a good deal busier time than previously, especially at night. After the cessation of all the occupancies of the hospitals were sent away. Other things that happened made us think that a general attack was contemplated. On Sunday morning, December 12, about 9 o'clock, in common with several others of our company, I received orders to be ready to go away for a rest by 3 o'clock that afternoon. During the snow I got a bad cold, and as I had not recovered my strength properly from the illness I had had previously, I was pretty well run down. Those who went from the Signalling Company, too, were mostly those who had been unwell. By this time all sorts of rumours were afloat. Some said that they were reducing the strength to make it easier to feed the troops during the winter. Some said that the Australians were to be relieved by troops more adapted to cold weather, and some said it was to be evacuation. When we reached the boat that afternoon there were hundreds of troops there ready to embark. There were three battalions of the 7th Brigade, 26th, 27th, and 28th. As soon as darkness set in embarkation commenced. By that time we had a pretty good idea that evacuation of the peninsula was intended. We were lucky enough to get aboard the second lighter, so there was not much waiting. We were put on a lighter and packed away down below in the darkness. We pulled out and were put aboard the troopship. I had been one day short of 11 weeks on Gallipoli, and was not sorry to get away. We put out to sea about 9 o'clock that night. This morning at daylight we entered Mudros Harbor. We had spent the night, which was very cold, huddled together wherever we could find room. Mudros Harbor was full of shipping, just as it was there before. We were transferred to a ferry boat, and were taken ashore. We had to march several miles with all our kit

ferred to a ferry boat, and were taken ashore. We had to march several miles with all our kit on. The way we passed a Greek village and numerous cottages of 10 or 12 years of age came out of all the bushes and water. Most of us had not had anything of the sort for about three months, so we got outside of a good deal. Every day after our arrival and for a day or so several troops were arriving from Gallipoli, and exactly a week after us the last of the men went off. The evacuation was carried out without a hitch, and was a most wonderful undertaking. The Turks had no knowledge of what we were doing right up till the last. All the movements were carried out at night. The last reports of our observers stated that the Turks were getting more than wire in front of their parapets, evidently expecting an attack from our side. I should have liked to have been there until the last, and I should probably have stayed until the last night if I had not been unwell. Some of our company were the last to leave. Our captain, of Adelaide, was, I think, the last military officer to embark. They got away without a casualty. It seems a terrible pity after all the work that was done there, and the local wire sacrificed, the place should have to be left. However, I think we all realize that it was impossible to advance without loss of life that would be appalling, and to add the position that we had would have entailed terrible suffering, also about 500 of us. Taking everything into account I think everybody was glad to leave the peninsula. Everyone was heartily sick of the monotony of the whole thing. It may have been a bit cheeky on the 15-man officers who were leading the Turks to find that we had got away without their knowledge. About 50 hours after the last of our men were gone the Turks changed our line. The day, I believe, was waiting for them and shelled them quite heavily. There was the evacuation a bit of stuff to be done. The value of what was captured must have amounted to many thousands of pounds. Perhaps when the war is over it will be seen that it has not all been a failure, but at present it does not seem as though we have done anything more than have large numbers of our dead on an enemy's soil. It was some days after we arrived on the island before we could get a message to be being sent out, and to realize that it was quite safe to walk about anywhere. All in all, it may be said to be lying in the harbor. I think we will probably see the world's best harbor in the future. From where we were taken to sea in the morning I visited 15 hospital ships, the "Hornet". There have been two big four-masted hospital ships at the time, and the ship of the largest ship afloat. Medical ships look lovely at night, as they are lit up with red and green lights.

Transcript of Don Michael's published letter (The Advertiser, 1916): Writing from Lemnos on January 3, Dispatch-rider Donald Michael, of Booleroo Centre, deals with the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and some events immediately following it. "Just after I wrote my last letter," he says, "we had a spell of intense cold, and on the morning of November 28 awoke to find about 3 in. of snow on the ground. For several days the cold was worse than anything I had ever experienced. I put some biscuits to soak in my dugout, and the water froze around them instead of soaking them. The waterpipes burst owing to the water in them freezing, and we were on quarter rations of water. It was too rough to land anything. We were about a fortnight without bread, and only once or twice got a bit of fresh meat. The men in the trenches had a very bad time in the slush and cold. Many of them had to be sent away with frozen feet. I saw dozens of them going down to the hospital with their feet wrapped in pieces of blankets as their feet were too swollen to get boots on. I think such a cold snap was unexpected so early in the season, and the authorities were not prepared for it, but it showed we were in for a bad time if we stayed there during the winter. December opened up with lovely mild weather, which lasted right until the evacuation. I mentioned in my last letter, I think, that after Lord Kitchener's visit we could see that something was going to happen. About the time of the snow there was cessation of hostilities on our side. All the carrying of provisions, &c., was done at night. The Turks got very cheeky while there was no firing on our side. They crawled right out of the trenches, when our men would shoot them down. This went on for a few days, and then the Turks bombarded our trenches very heavily at Lone

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as when we were there before. We were transferred to a ferry boat-, and were taken ashore. We had to march several miles with all our kit on. On our way we passed a Greek village and numerous children of 10 or 12 years of came out to sell chocolates and oranges. Most of us had not had anything of that sort for about three months, so we got outside of a good deal. Every day after our arrival and for a day or so previous troops were arriving from Gallipoli, and exactly a week after us the last of the men were off. The evacuation was carried out without a hitch, and was a most wonderful under- taking. The Turks had no knowledge of what we were doing right up till the last. All the movements were carried out at night. The last re- ports of our observers stated that the Turks were putting more barb wire in front of their parapets, evidently expecting an attack from us. I should have liked to have been there until the last, and I should probably have stayed until the last night if I had not been unwell. Some of our company were the last to leave. Our captain, -, of Adelaide, was, I think, the last military officer to embark. They got away without a casualty. It seems a terrible pity after all the work that was done there and the lives that were sacrificed, the place should have to be left. However, I think we all realise that it was impossible to advance without loss of life that would be appalling, and to hold the position that we had would have entailed terrible suffering, also great loss of life. Taking every- thing into account I think everybody was glad to leave the peninsula. Everyone was heartily sick of the monotony of the whole thing. It must have been a big shock to the German officers who were leading the Turks to find that we had got away without their knowledge. About 30 hours after the last of our men were gone the Turks charged our lines. The navy, I believe, was waiting for them and shelled them successfully. Owing to the evacuation a lot of stuff had to be destroyed. The value of what was destroyed must have amounted to many thousand of pounds. Perhaps when the war is over it will be seen that it has not all been a failure, but at present it does not seem as though we have done anything more than leave large numbers of our dead on an enemy's soil. It was someday after we arrived on the island before we could get accustomed to no firing going on, and to realise that it was quite safe to walk about anywhere. All day to-day we have been lying in the harbor. I think we will probably move out early to-morrow morning. From orders received they seem to be taking every precaution against submarine attack. We have to wear our lifebelts all day and sleep with them for a pillow at night. Also every morning there is a parade when we fall in in the places set apart for us in case of an alarm. All the time we have been here the harbor has been full of shipping. One morning I counted 15 hospital ships inside the "Loom." There have been two big four-funnelled hospital ships in, the - and the -, two of the largest ships afloat. Hospital ships look lovely at night, as they are lit up with red and green lights."

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Figure 1: Morrell, G. (1915). Graphic Map of the Dardanelles. [image] Available at: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f4/Graphic_map_of_the_Dardanelles.JPG [Accessed 23 Aug. 2014].

Figure 2: McCallum, B. (2014). [JPEG file]

Figure 3: McCallum, B. (2014). [JPEG file]

Photograph on Title Page:

Number 185, MICHAEL, Herbert Donovan. (2014). [image] Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/state-records-sa/6645001587/> [Accessed 19 Aug. 2014].