

100 YEARS

The legend lives on

BY JESSICA ABELSOHN

11 NOVEMBER 1918. THE WHITE FLAG. AN AGREEMENT FOR PEACE. A SIGNATURE PROMISING NO MORE FIGHTING. UNTIL, THAT IS, 1 SEPTEMBER 1939. AS AUSTRALIA MARKS THE CENTENARY OF THAT FIRST ARMISTICE, WE LOOK BACK AT HOW WAR HAS SHAPED OUR NATION.



ANZAC Day is 25 April. Some may say that this year is more momentous than others as this year marks the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War. Others will say that every year is just as important as the last. Especially as the last of the original diggers get older. It's up to us to tell their stories. It's up to us to remember.

As we honour the fallen, the returned and those currently serving, we look back at how Australia contributed to the wars of the world, and how the lives of our loved ones have influenced our society today. »

COVER STORY



“Gallipoli galvanised the nation. It put Australia on the map.”

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The coming of World War One (WWI) caught most Australians completely by surprise, yet the support was steadfast. The total amount for the first recruits was around 50,000 men. They were wildly popular, farewelled with marches and parades throughout the country in late October 1914. The Australians' first offensive took place in Turkey, as they attempted, together with the New Zealand army, to open the Black Sea for the Allies.

Thus, the Anzac legend was born.

Hostile territory. Well-prepared enemy. Arriving from sea. It had rarely been attempted.

That the Anzacs even gained a footing on the shores of Gallipoli is deemed remarkable. The landing captured the imagination of Australians back home like no other event has done since. It led to a rush of recruits, all hoping to represent their nation and the Allies. Eventually 320,000 Australians would serve overseas in

WWI, an astonishing contribution considering the population of the country at the time, just over four million people.

Despite the failure of Gallipoli and the fact that more than 8000 Australians were left buried around the peninsula, enthusiasm for the war never faltered. Gallipoli galvanised the nation. It put Australia on the map. Paul 'Tich' Tyson, a Vietnam Veteran claims

Gallipoli is where Australia's positive reputation started. "Australian troops enjoy a wonderful reputation throughout the world. This was brought about by the actions of the diggers at Gallipoli, and continues to this day," he explains.

And soon, Australians were fighting on the Western Front.

Despite relentless fighting for the Australians and huge losses, by 1918, the Australian Imperial Force was at the height of its fighting powers, winning notable battles including Villers-Bretonneux. The troops, exhausted, were withdrawn in October 1918. The Germans signed the Armistice on 11 November that year.

Badly wounded, the soldiers who returned home, some physically, almost all emotionally wounded were forced to reintegrate into a society so keen to forget the previous four years, leaving many feeling lost and alone. »

Lone Pine Memorial Gallipoli.



COVER STORY

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Almost one million Australian men and women served in the Second World War (WWII). In September 1939, the announcement by Prime Minister Robert Menzies that Australia was going to war again was heard on every radio station across the country. "Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially, that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war."

The Australian troops fought across Europe, North Africa and South-East Asia. Perhaps Australia most felt the effects of WW2 with the bombing of Darwin



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and the submarine attack on Sydney Harbour. Following the heightened threat, the Australian Government expanded the army and air force to defend the borders and completely overhauled policies to ensure it had the right to mount a total war effort. By March 1942, fears of an imminent invasion had receded.

From July 1942, Australia would defend the Kokoda Trail, fighting back the Japanese. The Japanese objective to take Port Moresby was part of their strategy to isolate Australia from its allies. Despite being poorly equipped, with little knowledge of jungle warfare, the Australians eventually prevailed. The Kokoda campaign has long been mythologised, incorporated

into the Anzac legend, and known to be some of the most desperate and vicious fighting encountered by Australian troops.



A child watches an end of WWII march in the streets of Melbourne, 1942. Right; Paul 'Tich' Tyson with baby.





The Australian Army on training exercises.

THE CHANGING SOLDIER

Warfare has changed over time. In the most obvious ways, there are new technologies and new ideologies. There's been a transformation in the mobilisation of troops. There's innovation. And there's also a change in the soldier.

"During World Wars One and Two, Australian Troops were used in a capacity as shock troops. They became skilled at trench warfare and then became adaptable to fight in the deserts then onto the jungles of Malaysia, Borneo and New Guinea," Vietnam Veteran Paul 'Tich' Tyson explains.

Then there was the introduction of new equipment and the struggles that came with it. "In Vietnam, many of the soldiers who trained and served had not been trained or near helicopters in their lead up to Vietnam."

However, these days, that's not the case.

Tyson says, "recent governments have increased the defence portion of the Federal Budget to allow funding for appropriate training prior to deployment," he says. "Australia now has a vibrant defence industry producing ships, vehicles and material which our troops use overseas. My son has told me that the Australian equipment is the envy of other armies he served alongside."



THE VIETNAM WAR

The longest 20th century conflict in which Australians participated and perhaps one of the most divisive conflicts at the time, the Vietnam War remains a contentious topic. Australia's involvement began in August 1962 as the country joined the fight against the spread of communism. While the war had support at first, dissent grew, mainly because the public increasingly believed that the war was a lost cause. Paul Tyson who served in Vietnam, says the Australian troops were well regarded by their allies and enemy alike, however they still felt the negative Australian attitude. "I remember the huge divide in the Australian community," he muses. "We were aware of the turmoil at home; violent protests, stories of troops being spat on by university students, or students



raising money to support our enemies in Vietnam." He says the enthusiasm was still there though and the results are still apparent in Vietnam. "I have travelled back to Vietnam many times. In the south of Vietnam, where we served, the legacy of the Australians is still apparent," he explains. "I have been thanked by Vietnamese who have since made their home in Australia. It's a wonderful feeling to hear you have made a difference to somebody's life from a war-torn country," he says. Almost 60,000 troops served in Vietnam. More than 500 soldiers were killed; an additional 3000 came home wounded.

The lack of media censorship brought home the horrors of the war. For many Australians, support faltered. For many returning soldiers, the homecoming was hostile. »

Australian War Memorial



COVER STORY

THE WAR ON TERROR

Mass terrorism replaces Cold War ideologies. Terrorist attacks hit the US. President George W. Bush declares a 'war on terror'. Australia joins the Coalition forces.

The war on terror is distinctly different from those we have fought in the past. No one sees this more than Tyson whose son served multiple deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. "I see the equipment our son has trained with and used on his deployments," he says. "It's always a good thing when a soldier deployed overseas on active service can talk to his family on their computers."



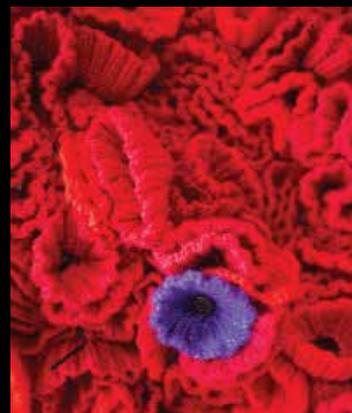
However, Tyson also explains the similarities between the war on terror and the Vietnam War. "I have watched on with interest the training that my son and his troops have undertaken. I see the same enthusiasm and attitude displayed by us Vietnam Veterans. I hear terminologies such as 'train hard, fight hard!'"

But there's also the negative reactions. "I also see reports in the media criticising our country's commitment to places such as Iraq and Afghanistan; at least these comments are not aimed at the soldiers as it was back in the Vietnam War days," he says. "I do cringe when I hear or read an article saying that the commitment to these places is a waste and we are not achieving peace by sending Australian troops. Try telling that to the families of those who have lost members of their families whilst on active service." »



MARKING THE MILESTONE

Over the past four years, focus of commemorations have been on the centenary of various World War One events. Come November, around Australia, the armistice that took place 100 years ago will be remembered. According to the Australian War Memorial, there will be a creative public program, combining public activities, displays, installations and events. Activities will commence on 5 October and continue through to Remembrance Day, on 11 November 2018. "The centrepiece to the commemorations will be the installation of 62,000 knitted red poppies on the Memorial's grounds," Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brandon Nelson says. "Each poppy represents an Australian life lost in the First World War, who are individually listed on the Memorial's Roll of Honour."



SHAPING AN IDENTITY

When asked about Australia's national identity, Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson says: "Nothing has shaped Australia's national identity more profoundly than its military service. It has shaped us, defined us, demonstrated to the world what kind of people we are."

Gallipoli is where the legend all began. The troops were brave and determined, with a humorous spirit. They were mates. Indeed, the spirit shown throughout the Gallipoli campaign also captures the idea of the Australian nation.

Many find it strange that Gallipoli has had such a profound effect, even today. But really, it's not. In 1914, Australia was classified as a new country; the Great War united the nation, which previously had been a series of colonies. Now, rather than Queenslanders or Victorians, men were fighting as Australians, for Australia.

Despite mourning more than 60,000 troops who didn't make it home, Dr Nelson emphasises Australia's commitment to national identity. "The deeply divided and embittered nation remained true to its democratic principles as we lived with another 60,000 who would die within a decade of their return," he explains. "They gave us greater belief in ourselves and a deeper understanding of what it means to be an Australian."

THE LEGEND TODAY

In many respects, the legend forged by the Anzacs in Gallipoli, still stands today. "In subsequent conflicts, Australian defence force personnel have reflected the stunning attributes forged in these global wars," Dr Nelson asserts. A total of 102,700 Australians are named on the Honour Roll. These men and women remind us of the greatest sacrifice one can make for their country. "Like us, each had only one life, one chance to serve others and our nation. They chose us," Dr Nelson continues. "No Australians have given more, nor worked harder to shape our values and our beliefs, the way we relate to one another and see our place in the world than those who have worn and who now wear – the uniform of

the Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army and Royal Australian Airforce."

Indeed, those who have served and are currently serving are revered in Australian rhetoric. They are deeply respected, living their lives, and some giving their lives, to protect us. There has also, in recent years, been an increase in support for and commemoration of Anzac Day. While some commentators have claimed many young people are 'taking the mickey', for the majority, that couldn't be further from the truth. For many of the younger generations, the realisation that there are no surviving Anzacs is a heavy one. Many are taking on the responsibility of telling their stories, and living their lives the way the Anzacs did, with courage, ingenuity, humour and compassion, ensuring that the legend lives on. ••

"The legend forged by the Anzacs in Gallipoli, and reinforced in the wars since, still stands today."

DR BRENDAN NELSON



Anzac Day dawn service at Currumbin.