

# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL EDUCATION SERVICES 2015

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learning experience



Ellis Silas, *Digging in at Pope's Hill: end of a great day*  
(1918, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 101.8 cm, AWM ART02435)



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# Gallipoli: the Anzac story begins

*What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and smallness of their story will stand ...*

Charles Bean, Australian official war historian

**The landing by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) on Turkey's Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915 was Australia's first major action of the Great War. In this campaign, and in those that followed in France, Belgium, Sinai and Palestine, the nation endured the full fury and destruction of modern warfare and suffered more than 60,000 dead.**

The Australian public generally greeted the news of the outbreak of war in August 1914 with enthusiasm. Progress was quickly under way to raise, equip, and dispatch an army to the other side of the world. Volunteers rushed forward offering their names. While many had militia or cadet experience, or were veterans of the Boer War, most were civilians fresh to army life. Women were represented in the army nursing service, and also in voluntary aid organisations like the Red Cross. The name Australian Imperial Force (AIF) – was chosen by the force's commander, Major General William Bridges. It acknowledged the AIF's distinct national identity while declaring its allegiance to the empire.

The first troop convoy destined for the war set off from Albany, Western Australia, on 1 November 1914. While expecting to go to Europe, it was only when they reached Aden in Egypt that news came that the troops would go no further, and would undergo training near Cairo.

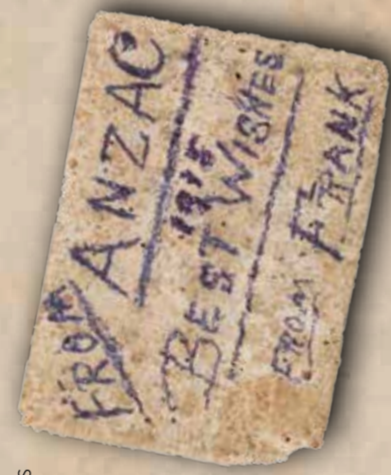
The Dardanelles Strait was the gateway to Constantinople (Istanbul), the Black Sea, and the winter ports of Russia. When mines and Turkish shore defences prevented the French and British navies from passing through the Dardanelles it was decided that troops should make landings at points along the Gallipoli peninsula. A large group of British Empire troops, including the Anzacs, were stationed in Egypt and ready to be drawn on.

## The landing

Before dawn on 25 April 1915, an armada of ships assembled off the Gallipoli peninsula to land thousands of troops on the Turkish beaches. ANZAC troops had a vital role: they were to come ashore at Ari Burnu on the southern end of the peninsula before thrusting inland. Here they were to capture a series of ridges before driving all before them to tie in with the main British landings on the peninsula's tip at Cape Helles.

From the start there were problems in getting the troops ashore, and once on land progress was held up by Turkish defences, high cliffs, steep ridges, deep gullies and thick scrub. The initial assault lost momentum in the face of allied confusion and a well-coordinated Turkish resistance, and was brought to a standstill once enemy reinforcements arrived. The place of the landing was soon named "Anzac" by the allied troops.

Fighting continued relentlessly throughout the following days, as vast numbers of Turkish troops occupied the high ground, inflicting heavy losses on the allied forces. The Turkish soldiers were tough, experienced, and prepared to give their lives to defend their homeland. The commander of Turkish troops on Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal, would emerge as an outstanding leader and a national hero: he would later become president of the Turkish Republic from 1924 until his death in 1938.



This army biscuit, known as "hard tack" was sent to loved ones back home by Gunner Frank Lemmon.

**How edible do you think these biscuits actually were? What would you have done to make them more palatable?**

Hundreds of soldiers move among the dead and wounded on the beach at Anzac Cove on the day of the landing.

AWM P516159

**What words would you use to describe how the men might be feeling?**

**if the Gallipoli campaign was such a disaster for Australia, why does it still loom so large in the public psyche today?**

## Unpacking the painting

**The artist: Private Ellis Silas**

*... I have endeavored to portray war as the soldier sees it, shorn of all its pomp and circumstance, the war that means cold and hunger, heat and thirst, the ravages of fever ... and makes of men, heroes.*

**Private Ellis Silas**

Ellis Luciano Silas was born into an artistic family in London in 1885. His father, Louis, was a designer and professional painter, and his mother, Letizia, was an opera singer, so it was not surprising that Ellis showed an early aptitude for art.

At the age of 22, Ellis immigrated to Australia, establishing a studio in Perth. At the outbreak of war in August 1914 he was keen to join the AIF, but was rejected on medical grounds. However, he persisted, and by October he had enlisted and was assigned to the signals section in the 16th Battalion. The battalion arrived in Egypt in early February 1915, and Ellis immediately began to capture aspects of military life and training in sketches and paintings.

Within three months the 16th Battalion was on its way to Gallipoli. Ellis went ashore at Anzac Cove late in the afternoon on 25 April. He described it as a "magnificent spectacle", while at the same time feeling sickened by the number of dead and wounded he saw. He witnessed the desperation of a small group of men trying to dig in on Pope's Hill by nightfall.

Much of his work as a signaller on Gallipoli involved sending semaphore messages using flags. To do this Ellis had to stand up, which often drew enemy fire. He worked almost non-stop for days, taking messages up and down the rugged terrain, before finally collapsing from exhaustion. In May Ellis was ordered out of the firing line and evacuated to Egypt, where he was admitted to the Australian General Hospital before being sent to England for further treatment. He was discharged from the AIF in August 1916, and listed as "permanently unfit for war service at home or abroad".

Ellis set to work recreating the scenes of battle he had witnessed in those weeks on Gallipoli. He later wrote: "It is not with any desire for morbid sensationalism that I introduce the dead in every drawing. They were part of our daily life; they were part of the character of the Peninsula – at least of Anzac." In 1919, at the suggestion of Charles Bean, Australia's official war historian, Ellis painted the scene of the Anzacs' digging in at Pope's Hill as he had personally witnessed it on 25 April 1915.

Based in London for the rest of his life, Ellis continued to produce art in a variety of forms, including sketches, paintings, murals, posters, and even stained-glass windows.



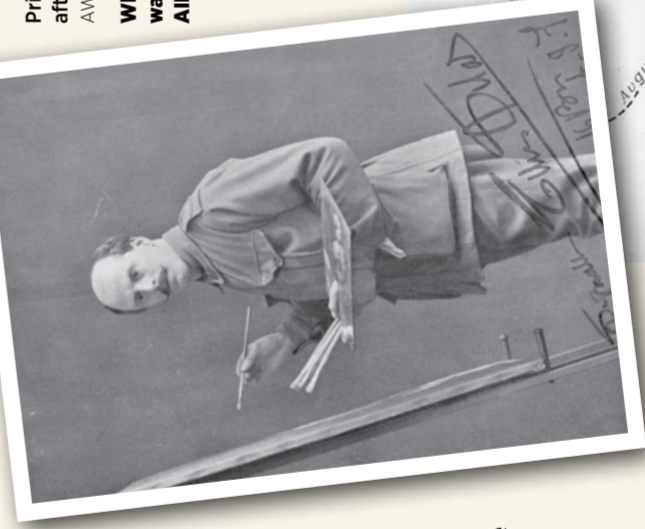
Frank Crozier, *The beach at Anzac* (1919, 123.4 x 184.6 cm, oil on canvas, AWMART02161)

**Compare and contrast the work by Ellis Silas with this one by Frank Crozier.**

**What similarities and differences do you note?**

**Does the painting by Crozier create a different emotional response to that to the work of Ellis Silas?**

**Which do you think portrays more accurately the realities of the campaign?**



Private Ellis Silas in England, after the war in 1919.  
AWM P02801.002

**Why do you think the artist was so keen to enlist in the AIF at the outbreak of war?**



**Locate Pope's Hill on the map of the Gallipoli peninsula. Why was it important for the Anzacs to capture and hold the high ground?**

AWM J00157

The Turks made a particularly heavy attack on 19 May, but allied machine-guns and rifle-fire defeated them. For his actions in the fierce fighting at Courtney's Post, Lance Corporal Albert Jacka was awarded Australia's first Victoria Cross of the war and became a national hero. The battle cost as many as 10,000 Ottoman and roughly 600 Australian and New Zealand casualties. A few days later, a short armistice was arranged to allow for the burial of the dead. The Anzacs could not move forward, nor were the Turks able to drive them into the sea. The campaign devolved into a stalemate.

## The August offensive

The landings in April provided the allies with only a tenuous grip on the Gallipoli peninsula. In August there were attempts to break the stalemate with a series of fresh attacks, but gains were few and losses severe. People at home avidly read accounts of their countrymen's heroism and achievements, but these rarely revealed the terrible waste, the constant stress, and the squalor of the trenches.

Coordinated breakout attempts were made at Lone Pine, German Officers' Trench, Quinn's Post, Pope's Hill, and The Nek. Despite the somewhat successful assault at Lone Pine, where fighting went on for days, other attacks were beaten down before any gains could be made. At Pope's, Quinn's, and The Nek, light horsemen charged into a storm of machine-gun and rifle fire. The casualties were devastating.

**Over the following months the troops carried on, holding the trenches and facing the prospect of a harsh winter. Disease and illness were rife and the tempo of the fighting fell away; so too did the men's spirits. They were now fighting for each other rather than for any hope of a victory.**

## Life at Anzac

"Hanging on", living amid filth, sickness, disease, and death, while under constant threat of enemy fire, was an ordeal. Having left home seeking adventure and possible glory, troops on Gallipoli found themselves dirty, thirsty, constantly digging and tunnelling, and living in cramped dug-outs.

Sanitation quickly became a major concern. The lack of variety and nutrition in the food available, and the harsh climate added to the problems already presented by the proximity of dead bodies and plagues of flies. The spread of disease became alarming. For a time more than ten per cent of the force was being evacuated weekly.

Beyond the medical facilities on Anzac, Australian doctors, nurses and other staff attended to the sick, wounded, and dying on hospital ships and in hospitals on the island of Lemnos and in Egypt.

## The evacuation

Although it was clear a foothold could be maintained, the August offensive failed, and the onset of winter and consequent problems caused by the change in climate meant the campaign would continue to be costly. There was growing disillusionment at all levels, including within the British government. Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War, ordered a withdrawal. Planning followed for an allied evacuation. The last boats departed Anzac in the morning darkness of 20 December. British troops at Cape Helles evacuated a few weeks later. It was all over. This was perhaps the greatest achievement of the campaign.

## The cost

The ill-fated campaign cost tens of thousands of lives. When combined with figures for the sick and wounded, the overall casualties may have been as high as half a million men. The total deaths were:

Australia	<b>8,709</b>
New Zealand	<b>2,721</b>
Britain	<b>26,054</b>
India	<b>1,358</b>
Newfoundland	<b>49</b>
France	<b>9,787</b>
Turkey	<b>86,700</b>

In the eight months of bitter fighting, nothing of military value was gained. However, the Australians and New Zealanders – "the Anzacs" – displayed courage, endurance, and mateship throughout. Such qualities came to be seen as the essence of "the Anzac spirit".

## Enrich your students' learning

Before you visit the Australian War Memorial, book a facilitated program for your school group. Aligned to the Australian Curriculum: History, these programs provide a deeper learning experience for visiting students and are designed to suit your classroom and curriculum needs. Trained educators draw on personal stories represented by the displays in the galleries and by real artefacts. Make the most of your visit by discovering amazing tales of Australian wartime history and the significance of commemoration.

**Bookings are essential for all school groups** visiting the Memorial, whether you are choosing a facilitated program led by Memorial staff or a teacher-guided tour.

All school bookings are made at: [www.awm.gov.au/education/bookings](http://www.awm.gov.au/education/bookings).

For further assistance, and for your school password to book online, please email the Memorial's Education booking officer at [school.bookings@awm.gov.au](mailto:school.bookings@awm.gov.au).

## Teacher's excursion checklist

Log on to [www.awm.gov.au/education](http://www.awm.gov.au/education) and choose the curriculum-based program that best suits the needs of your students. Book your visit online and record your booking reference number. (A risk-assessment guide is available from the NCETP website, [www.ncetp.org.au](http://www.ncetp.org.au)).

Ensure that there will be adequate supervision by teachers and other accompanying adults; one supervising adult is to accompany each group of 15 students. Students are to remain with supervisors at all times when in the Memorial.

Before your visit, talk to your group about appropriate behaviour for a special national place of remembrance and commemoration.

Link your classroom activities to your impending visit. (See [www.awm.gov.au/education](http://www.awm.gov.au/education) for some ideas and resources.)

Bring your PACER paperwork for validation and stamping. (Visit [www.busywork.com.au/page/community-services](http://www.busywork.com.au/page/community-services) for eligibility)

If your group numbers change, please email the variation to [school.bookings@awm.gov.au](mailto:school.bookings@awm.gov.au), quoting your booking reference number. Cancellations should be made no fewer than five working days before your scheduled visit.

On arrival at the Memorial, please enter via the schools' entrance, which can be found on the map on the Memorial's website. Bottled water and cameras are permitted in the galleries but please remember to leave all school bags on the bus.



**"A" Anzac badge. The brass "A" Gallipoli service badge was authorised for wear by Gallipoli veterans on each colour patch in 1916. Originally embroidered, they took the form of brass letters from 1917.**

AWM REL/15680

**Watch carried by Private Robert Hartley, of the 9th Battalion; the first group to land shortly before dawn. Robert jumped from the landing craft into water so deep that his watch was soaked and stopped permanently.**

**What time was it?**

## Memorial box outreach program

Memorial boxes are a rich learning resource for school students. They contain real and replica historical artefacts and equipment that students can handle, and uniforms to try on. These items connect to personal stories, as well as photographs and works of art from the Memorial's collection. Memorial boxes link to the Australian Curriculum: History for both primary and secondary students, particularly in source interrogation and analysis.

*Box 1: Australia in the First World War* is now available with digital content, including personal stories, sound and film clips, photographs, and artworks.

Boxes are available for loan Australia-wide from agents located in each state and territory.

For more information go to: <http://www.awm.gov.au/education/memorial-boxes>.

