

SPEECH: 25 APRIL: 2010: ANZAC DAY: GALLIPOLI PARK

MARYSVILLE: OWEN TASSICKER: (FINAL 24th).

INTRO:

It is my privilege to speak to you today. I shall share some of my experiences at the Gallipoli Dawn Services at ANZAC Cove in which I have participated almost every one of the last ten years. Following the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign, the ANZACs were deployed to the war in Palestine. I shall share reflections on the re-enactment of the famous Charge of the 800 Horsemen at Beersheba in 1917.

THIS GATHERING

Our congregation today is a blend of Returned Servicemen of several wars, their descendants, together with Military men & women from Canberra. We comprise Marysville people, visitors from Melbourne, representatives of Service Clubs such as Rotary, Apex, Lions and representatives from the Police and CFA.

Especially, we salute the Group from the Melbournian Turkish Community.

MERHABA!

GRIEF AND LOSS: ANZAC & MARYSVILLE

This ANZAC Ceremony is being conducted here in Marysville. Over the years, Old Marysville has won a special niche in all our hearts. There have been honeymoons in the fine old guesthouses, church conferences at El Kanah, and weekend lover's trysts in a cosy B& B. But a year ago a firestorm ravaged Marysville, as though it had been bombed with napalm. We all shared in the colossal sense of grief at the destruction of property, the loss of life, and the maiming of so many families. It is symbolic, is it not, that this Commemoration is being conducted here at Gallipoli Park. For both Marysville and Gallipoli are somehow linked by catastrophic firestorms, though far apart in time and distant in geography.

DAWN SERVICE AT ANZAC COVE

For a minute or two, let us leave Marysville and join the huge assembly at ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli. It is 4am, the night is cold, and the thousands of young

backpackers are huddled in sleeping bags. Mature Rotarians, men & women such as ourselves draw our jackets tighter, and pull our beanies down a little further. Earlier in the evening there was light entertainment, with songs from the trenches in France. The long vigil is nearly over as the dawn approaches, and the mood becomes sombre. The bugle sounds at 5.30am, and the solemn Dawn Service Commences. The TV Cameras whirl. It is 12.30pm Marysville time. The Ceremony concludes with the last post. Afterwards, Hot coffee & some welcome brekky awaits us.

EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOUR

The backpackers were and always have been, attentive, respectful, and well behaved. I can certainly say that, for I have been at most services at ANZAC Cove since 1999. Unfortunately, certain sections of the MSM here in Australia, deliberately misrepresented the behaviour of our young people in a way that was unfair and even slanderous. Speaking personally, I have always been proud of our young men and women

LONE PINE: 10.30AM.

Now on to the Lone Pine commemorations at 10.30am. On the 5th August 1915, an intense assault was mounted by the Australians to take a strategic hill, where the Ottoman forces were entrenched. A ferocious battle lasted for days. They fought above ground, they fought in the trenches, they fought in tunnels underground. There were layers of dead and dying. A lone pine tree was blasted by a shell. When finally the battle was over, a soldier picked up a pine cone and sent it home to NSW where it was planted. And so, today, we plant a descendant of that Lone Pine, a grim reminder of that epic battle

CAPE HELLES

One cannot speak of the battles at Gallipoli without referring to the desperate fighting between the British and Ottoman forces at Cape Helles to the south on the 25th April. The Lancashire Regiment bore the brunt of the fighting. Six VCs were awarded on that first day.

57th REGIMENT

One must speak of Colonel Mustapha Kemal of the Turkish 57th regiment. He was a brilliant strategist and soldier who inspired his troops. It was he, and his men who fought the ANZACs to a stalemate at Gallipoli.

RAVAGES OF WAR: ANY GREEN SHOOTS

Casualties on this small piece of land were appalling. Allied casualties were 140,000 dead and wounded. Turkish casualties were 250,000 dead and wounded. Who were these wounded? They were fathers, sons, brothers – damaged men in body and emotionally scarred. In all this, were there any good outcomes? Were there any green shoots after this firestorm?

RESPECT & CHIVALRY

In the midst of this holocaust, there were many instances of chivalry. A British Officer lying wounded in no-mans-land was crying out. It was a Turkish soldier who fashioned a white flag, maybe out of underwear, who entered the no-mans-land. The guns fell silent. He carried the wounded enemy officer to a first aid post. Out of such acts of chivalry grew a mutual respect amongst the opposing forces, which flourishes right up to the present day.

GENERAL BIRDWOOD

Speaking at an International gathering, General William Birdwood, Commander of the ANZAC Corps said: “The Turkish soldier will give his life for his country without hesitation. He is a tough and brave soldier, but when a cease-fire is called, he is gentle and humane. He will bandage the wound of his enemy, and carry him on his back to save his life. Such a soldier hasn’t been seen before on the world stage”

GREEN SHOOTS IN YOUNG AUSTRALIA: 1915

Australia was a very young nation at that time, established just a few years before in 1901. Was there really much sense of nationhood in remote mining towns of the West or in the canefields of far north Queensland? Maybe not much! But as the casualties of the Gallipoli conflict became widely known, the

whole country mourned the loss of their young men. Out of the firestorm of Gallipoli, and Lone Pine, and the ANZAC spirit, the nation Australia was brought together. Can we think of this as being Green Shoots in a young land?.

GREEN SHOOTS: MARYSVILLE 2010

But now to Marysville , April 2010. Following Black Saturday, there was an outpouring of offers of help from every state and level of the country from neighbours, from Lions Clubs, Rotarians, Salvos, Churches. Black Spur Inn hosted weary and hungry CFA volunteers. Rotarians from Tasmania shipped over heavy machinery and rebuilt miles of fencing. Brunos Gardens are a must see before you leave today. Green Shoots are sprouting in Marysville.

2000 YEARS AGO

Other instances both recent and distant, come to mind, where a devastation has finally blossomed into something new and splendid. Just two weeks ago, many of us celebrated Easter. We recalled the events of 2000 years ago when Jesus Christ was teaching in old Israel, the Authorities were offended and had him executed. Having ascertained that he really was dead, they buried him. His many followers were dispersed, dismayed and in hiding. Then after three days when Christ rose from the dead and met with them, his followers were overjoyed. They spread a new faith to all ends of the earth – but it took time for those green shoots to spread. So let us be encouraged that a new Marysville will arise. What will it be?

CHARGE AT BEERSHEBA 1917

In our final minutes, now let us return to the Middle East. Following the catastrophe at Gallipoli, in 1917 the war shifted to Palestine – or nowadays Israel/Palestine. ANZACS were deployed to Allenby's Army and equipped for desert warfare. The famous charge of the 800 Aussie horsemen at Beersheba in October 1917 took the Ottomans by surprise. The precious wells were seized. As darkness fell over the now quietened battle field, a lone Aussie horseman heard

the cries of an injured man. Lifting him up onto his saddle, the Aussie horseman carried the Turkish soldier to a medical post. Scholars tell us that this, the Last Great Successful Cavalry Charge was instrumental in changing the whole history of the Middle East. The fortunes of war had changed. But it seemed as if the destinies of Turkey and Australia had become entwined.

COLONEL MUSTAPHA KEMAL

We spoke earlier of the gifted soldier Colonel Mustapha Kemal who inspired his troops in the Gallipoli conflict, and fought the Allies to a stalemate. His standing was so high in Turkey that after the wars, this soldier/statesman/linguist was able to unite the Country into a modern, democratic, secular, republic. We can safely say, that following the firestorm of wars that engulfed Turkey for several years, one of the truly great statesmen of the 20th century was born, and a new nation arose. Before you leave today, read that plaque and be amazed at the generous words of Mustapha Kemal Attaturk “You, the mothers”

FINALLY

As we conclude, let us take satisfaction that we, the grandchildren of the combatants who fought at Gallipoli 95 years ago, now have friendly relationships, built upon mutual respect.

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