The beginning of the Great War, on 28th July 1914 involving 32 countries, was sparked by the assassination of Archduke Frans Ferdinand which led to the involvement of the ANZAC forces joining with the Allies Britain, France, Russia and America to help fight against the Central Powers. The ANZAC troops fought for fairness but also mostly to help their mother country Britain, which many Australians still called ‘home’.

On the 3rd February 1915, the ANZACs were sent to Egypt to train for the upcoming battle as many soldiers had no military experience. They received orders on the 4th April that they would be leaving Egypt to fight in the Gallipoli campaign where they were given a major role to secure the Dardanelles so the allied ships would be able to pass through safely. This would allow new supplies of weapons and ammunition to reach Russia and also to put Constantinople under constant fire in hope that the Turks would withdrawal from the war. It would also be of great benefit if the Dardanelles were captured as it would allow the Allied forces to be linked.

The dawn landing was to be carried out by the Four Infantry Battalion, where 4000 men would land and take control of the shoreline. The first soldiers assigned to secure the beach-head came from three battleships, The Prince Of Wales, Queen and London which had taken anchor in the Aegean Sea two km from the mainland of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The soldiers were woken up at 1am on the 25th April, 1915, and were given a hot meal and a drink while the twelve tows were being prepared for the landing. This was carried out silently and precisely with all commands given in whispers. The landing boats varied in length, with the lifeboats holding up to 28 men and launch boats up to 98 men. The landing was to be done in two waves, with 1,500 men on the first wave and another 2,500 men to follow on the second wave.

At 4:00am, with landing only 10 minutes away, the first crack of light allowed the ANZACs to spot the difference between the hills and the glowing sky. It soon became obvious that they had landed in a different location as they were on a small cove, Gaba Tepe, which was 1.6 km north of their intended landing point. The ANZACs were wildly confused as they were met with steep cliffs and a skinny and narrow beach front while they were picked off by the Turks who were on alert waiting in high ground. “I saw the whole thing… and don't want see another sight like it. They were fairly mown down by machine guns.” (C.Pugsly)

Many soldiers had lost their lives even before reaching the shoreline as bullets were being fired targeting the boats and the men from countless snipers. Many soldiers also drowned due to the weight of their equipment. However, those who did reach the shoreline bolted to the nearest ridge or cliff to seek shelter and to capture higher ground. The landing cost the ANZACs many lives with more than 750 soldiers dying along with another 2,000 injured. The Gallipoli Campaign went on for 8 horrific months where soldiers were pushed to their limits struggling to survive throughout endless days of constant battle and diseases.
The battle was not progressing as each side gained barely any land and many ANZACs were becoming fatigued due to extreme climates and living conditions in the trenches. Therefore, the British government decided to end the Gallipoli Campaign with a silent and unnoticed evacuation which was executed in 3 stages, with 26,000 ANZACs being withdrawn over two nights from the 18th-20th December 1915. By the end of the final stage of the evacuation, only 20,277 ANZACs in total survived.

The Great War lasted for 4 years costing Great Britain 22 billion dollars. There were more than 295,000 Australians that enlisted to fight, with a catastrophic result as around 46,000 Australians lost their lives and another 132,000 were injured. World War 1 ended on 11th November 1918. We commemorate the loss on Remembrance Day on 11th day of the 11th month at 11am with one minute’s silence. Lest we Forget.

The ANZAC Experience

During 8 months of intense battle the Anzacs endured extreme terrain, living conditions and diseases while fighting in the Gallipoli campaign. They were not only under constant fire from the opposing side but also fought to survive throughout many diseases and casualties that occurred along the fighting of the campaign.

The ANZACs were faced with poor nourishment leading to their health deteriorating quite quickly. Their diet mainly consisted of a square military biscuit and for protein the soldiers were given Bully Beef, a canned meat food. Not only was there barely enough food to survive but it had also been infected by swarms of flies and maggots, which led to the spread of diseases, such as Dysentery. After sometime when the war had progressed food had become scarce and was not able to be brought in commonly by new supply ships. Also fresh water was a major issue as the wells and dams were starting to dry out so they had to request fresh water to be brought in from the supply ships.

The ANZACs were cramped into small and compact trenches while fighting against the enemy, where they also had to eat, sleep and live. “On the tumbled soil of the trenches lay the bare white bones, piled or clustered so thickly in places that we had to tread upon them as we passed.” (John North) Latrines become full very quickly and the smell of urine was pungent. Also, the odour from the soldiers caused by constant fighting and poor living conditions in the trenches was unbearable, and attracted flies that would torment and annoy the soldiers.

During the summer months, the weather was harsh as temperatures soared, leading to the fatigue of the ANZACs as they found it difficult to sleep. Rotting corpses were a big problem during the summer heat as the dead soldiers decayed much quicker polluting the air with a foal stench. This also created a breeding ground for flies and rats as the rotting bodies lay exposed. The ANZACs were also emotionally affected as they watched on in horror as the rats ate the eyeballs and rotting flesh of their dead mates.

The Winter months proved to be twice as harsh on the ANZACs. They were faced with freezing weather and torrential rains. The soldiers had found it much harder to get through the winter months as most of the ANZACs were used to the outback heat of Australia. Frostbite and hyperthermia quickly set in as the freezing temperatures affected the ANZACs, often resulting in the amputation of feet and toes. Torrential rains would flood the trenches up to the shins and would turn the battlefields into mud dams. Their clothes and boots were constantly wet which led to the soldiers getting Gangrene. During the freezing nights, it was common for soldiers to freeze to death at their duty posts.

In the trenches, the ANZACs would huddle together in dirty and flea infested blankets trying to keep warm from the sheer cold. Overall, they faced many challenging aspects of the war, they suffered from Typhoid, Hyperthermia, Frostbite, gangrene, dysentery, fleas, flies, poor food, lack of fresh water and poor living conditions. Many soldiers that did survive the war continued to suffer from emotional distress from the sights that they encountered.