



ANZAC Day

By Fiona Sullivan

In 1920, the Anzac Day Act made 25 April a public holiday to commemorate those who died in the First World War. Now the day honours all New Zealanders who have served in wars overseas.

The date marks the anniversary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand soldiers – the Anzacs – on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915. The aim was to capture the Dardanelles and open a sea route to the Bosphorus and the Black Sea but at the end of the campaign, Gallipoli was still held by its Ottoman Turkish defenders.

A hundred years later in 2020, during our first lockdown, neighbours stood by their letterboxes at dawn, sharing, some listening to the ceremony on Radio National. In one street in Papamoa some of the locals strapped a pole onto a lamp post to create a flagpole. In 2021 they went to the reserve across the road and put in two flagpoles, one for Australia and one for us. About fifty people were there, a lot of them young.

139,500 died in the Gallipoli campaign, most of them Ottoman Turks. 2,779 New Zealanders were among the lost, about one in six of those who served there. The Anzacs, the men and women from Australia and New Zealand, were all volunteers; there was no conscription and of the fifty names on the Papamoa Cenotaph over half are of Māori whakapapa, genealogy.

It was the first Anzac Day Service at the new Papamoa Cenotaph this year and more than two thousand people came to commemorate those who have fallen in the foreign wars our country has been involved in. The service and was organised by members of the Papamoa War Memorial Community Trust with the support of the Mount Manganui RSA and Tauranga City Council. The committee did not let tradition confine them but sought to create an inclusive ceremony combining tradition with our new generation's values and one respecting the Tangata Whenua, the people of our land. Having an input from the Turkish people was also a deliberate and new variation.

Eva Tawa from the local hapu, Nga Potiki, called us in with the karanga, a poignant note before dawn. Then about thirty veterans from the Vietnam war, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq followed the bagpipe player up the slope to stand at attention before the new memorial. The Papamoa Volunteer Fire Brigade was there and a large group of Papamoa scouts and guides.

A Māori minister spoke in te reo followed by a Chaplain speaking in English, to acknowledge both cultures, and the Papamoa School Choir students sang the national anthem in the same sequence. A student read John McCrae's poem,

In Flanders Fields:

We are the Dead. Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

The flags were lowered to half mast and there was a minute's silence which needed no words but when the ode was read by the students, in both our languages, many an eye was blurred.

'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;'

Ali Kivilcim recited the words of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who was a commander of Ottoman forces there in the Dardanelles at that time and was later the founder of modern Turkey:

Those heroes who shed their blood and lost their lives...

You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace.

There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours...

You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace.

After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

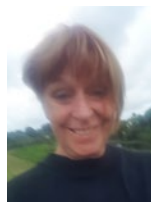
A bugler was there to play the last post and hot coffee was available from 5.30am. Many stayed to have some quiet time by the sea after a moving and beautiful ceremony around the new Anzac memorial up by the beach between the camping ground and the pony club in Papamoa.

Two ladies from Papamoa, Sheree and Viv, spoke to me about their experience of going to Gallipoli and both described the eerie feeling they experienced there.

Sheree said, "I've never seen so many Australians and New Zealanders quiet and respectful for the occasion. The ones who have the opportunity to go to Gallipoli have so much empathy with the Turks."

There were three ceremonies; New Zealand, Australian and Turkish which Sheree attended. Later the tour guide said that the hill she was sitting on was covered with blood and the hairs on the back of her neck stood up.

Viv was talking about how the men would have a break in the fighting so that both sides could go out and pick up their wounded and dead, distribute food and water, etc., and then go back to fighting. Killing each other and some of them were not men but boys.



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