

LETTERS FROM A PILGRIMAGE

**Ken Inglis's despatches from the Anzac
tour to Gallipoli, April–May 1965**



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of Greece and Turkey, April–May 1965**

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INSIDE STORY

Cover: Anzacs going ashore at dawn on 25 April 1965.

Photo: Ken Inglis

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Preface

In 1965 the Returned Services League, or RSL, and its New Zealand equivalent sponsored a three-week cruise around the Mediterranean arranged by Swan Hellenic Tours, visiting sites of significance in Anzac memory and culminating in a landing at Anzac Cove on the fiftieth anniversary of the first one. Some 300 pilgrims signed up. A few were World War II veterans whom the tour planners enabled to visit sites of their own experience, and there were also some former nurses and some wives. More than half the men in the party had served on Gallipoli. Most were in their seventies.

Australia's experience and memory of the first world war had become my central interest as a historian. Going on the pilgrimage would let me talk at leisure with a large group of veterans and be with them as they returned, most of them for the first time, to old battlefields and the resting places of comrades. Kindly colleagues swapped teaching duties to let me be away for long enough.

That left only the problem of money. The whole tour – Qantas flights to and from Athens, a berth on the Turkish liner *Karadeniz*, coaches and hotels ashore – would cost £650. Most of the pilgrims had their expenses covered by RSL sub-branches and associated clubs. Half my fare was paid by the Australian National University, my employer, and half by *The Canberra Times*, whose editor, John Pringle, agreed to have me represent his paper and send back stories. In the event the *Sydney Morning Herald* also used some of them. By airmail I despatched stories and photographs of life aboard and time ashore in Athens, Valletta, Cairo and Beirut, and

on 25 April I reported by cable from Gelibolu, as the Turks named the town inside the Dardanelles where we anchored mid-morning after our dawn landing at Anzac.

Becoming a journalist had been my only boyhood ambition (formed after reading Isobel Ann Shead's novels *Sandy*, about a lad who became a newspaper reporter, and *Mike*, about another who became a radio man). I enjoyed part-time journalism, especially for the fortnightly magazine *Nation*. I was enraptured now to be carrying a press card authorising me to send cables via London to Sydney. I was pleased to be going as a journalist for another reason: I thought that the old soldiers might speak more freely to a reporter than to an academic. I doubt whether that was right. Certainly they talked willingly to me and to Norman MacSwan, the thoroughly professional newspaperman who was on board for Australian Associated Press; but I think most of them would have been just as open with any man, or woman, who showed a serious curiosity about their memories, thoughts and feelings. They gave me plenty to write about.

On the night of 24–25 April, among men now – as on that night in 1915 – steaming from Lemnos towards Anzac Cove, I enjoyed a sample of the generosity that made Pringle so respected by people who worked with him: a cable to the ship, complimenting me on the items sent so far and wishing me well for Anzac Day.

The historian, however, got the better of the amateur reporter on that morning. After the dawn meeting on the beach between Anzac pilgrims and Turkish hosts I could have got a lift with MacSwan across the peninsula to reach Gelibolu in good time to file a story for the next day's paper. Instead I went back to the ship in a Turkish lifeboat, getting a splinter in my ankle after a rotten seat broke as I stepped on it, and having men who had gone ashore fifty years earlier in the face of enemy shells and bullets being tenderly solicitous about my scratch. I wanted to hear what they said

about the landing as we sailed around Cape Helles and up to Gelibolu (and I wanted time to compose my report, unsure that I was up to doing it on the run as MacSwan was).

By the time my typewritten words were tapped from the Gelibolu cable office to London and thence to Canberra and Sydney it was just too late for the *Canberra Times* of 26 April. The paper carried MacSwan's report, as all other papers did, and used mine on the 27th. Later that week the *Canberra Times* published a seventh piece I had written on the way home, with photographs taken at Anzac Cove and Gelibolu.

1. Letter from a pilgrimage

The Canberra Times, 15 April 1965

At Brisbane airport the Northern Command band plays *Waltzing Matilda* and *Advance Australia Fair*, cameramen act as drovers to ensure a photogenic walk from the gate to the Boeing 707, and soon the first of four planeloads is off to Gallipoli.

On this plane, as on the others, most men are veterans of World War I, some are from World War II, and a fair number are accompanied by their wives. Their first Qantas meal, as it happens, is turkey.

In Manila they meet the mysterious East. Each man who goes to the toilet of the transit lounge has a small youth creep up behind bearing an electric vibrator which he rubs up and down the back. One victim comes roaring with laughter into the lounge where others sip whisky at eight shillings a glass. "Wait'll I tell the boys about this!" he says.

At the airport shop in Hong Kong there is much suspicion about the prices of cameras and curiosities. "Once you leave Australia," observes a West Australian who first left in November 1914, "you get robbed. No wonder we belted the Arabs."

The earth shakes just as the plane lands in Athens, and shakes again two days later, wobbling things in the hotel and killing twenty Greeks in the Peloponnese. On the first morning in Athens Sir Raymond Huish, who is leader of the joint Australian (RSL) and New Zealand (RSA) party, lays wreaths at two memorials.



Above and following page: Anzacs at the Phaleron War Cemetery. Photos: Ken Inglis

From coaches en route to the Commonwealth memorial we see thousands of flags along the streets in pairs: one is Greek (white cross on blue), and the other bears a red star and crescent. Greek troops are lined up at the memorial. A puzzled Australian asks one of their officers whether the flag is Turkey's. "No!" he says vehemently, and adds, "Between Turkey and us there is now a great subject. I do not know how the subject will end." The flag is Tunisian; President Bourguiba is about to arrive on a state visit.

At the Phaleron War Cemetery many Australian bodies lie in land given by Greece and tended by the Imperial War Graves Commission. Gumtrees now grow in it. "If the War Graves Commission does something," says one of the pilgrims, "it'll be good." After the wreath is laid, some Australians line up to sign the visitors' book



within a marble enclosure dedicated to men with no known grave. Some take pictures of individual graves, others stroll quietly among the white stones. Back in the coach they talk about the weather, about their appetites for lunch, about why the Greek driver is taking so long to start. The Greeks we see at the hotel wave their arms even in telephone conversation; the Australians, as always, rarely expose what they are feeling.

There is a mild undercurrent of racial hostility during the first meal at the hotel in Athens. One old soldier goes so far as to say of the cuisine that the grub was better in the army. Tea or coffee, we learn, is not provided at lunch or dinner for the money we have paid.

The more widely travelled among us explain that this is not unusual in Europe. The news does nothing except to heighten the party's sense of nationhood. It might well be impossible ever to find satisfactory accommodation abroad for such a party as this

one. For one thing, fortune has treated the old diggers diversely since 1915, and what is too expensive for some will be too austere for others.

More important, Australians as a people do not fit easily into the commercial parody of aristocratic living that goes on in international hotels. “What Australian,” asks one man, “doesn’t like his cuppa tea?” What Australian, for that matter, thinks that polished marble walls are worth having in a bathroom where you can’t get a decent hot shower? And even if the water is hot and the food palatable, what Australian really enjoys waiters prancing about with silver serving trays and calling him “M’sieur?”

To the mock-servants in this system, the Australian seems to display a plebeian meanness. Australians, says a barman in Athens, are unlike the English, the Americans and the French: they don’t know how to tip. But it isn’t just a lack of knowledge: it’s also a feeling that tipping – like saluting – belongs to a society divided into masters and servants, not to a land of free men.

The Australians’ image of Greek society is not enhanced by the character of those Athenians who loiter near the hotel. After only a few hours on the ground, stories are coming back of Greek duplicity, rapacity and worse: taxi-drivers going by serpentine routes and then short-changing passengers unfamiliar with drachmas; slimy youths soliciting for “night clubs” and darker places. Some old men are affronted, others tickled, to be picked as likely clients for girls.

Two old mates in their seventies are led to a dive by a young man who has suggested a cup of coffee. The man in charge asks would they like to buy two girls a drink. They call for the bill; it is two pounds.

“It was Cairo all over again,” says one of them later. “I should’ve tumbled to it, but I didn’t expect it from whites.” In Egypt, he recalls, “we was trained to kick our way out.” His mate regrets that they didn’t, and wants to go back and do the bastards.



Anzacs at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Constitution Square, Athens. *Photo: Ken Inglis*

Among the public activities in Athens the most formal is the laying of a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior outside the house of parliament. A Greek army band playing “Colonel Bogey” leads the Australians on a short march from the hotel to Constitution Square. An Australian woman unaware that the pilgrims are in town hears the tune and rushes to see why it is being played. Greeks watch amiably, some applauding. The Australians seem to be stopping more people than the ceremony, which has just finished, for the sixteenth anniversary of NATO. Women in the party watch from a terrace. One says later, “Some of us saw them march away in 1914; and now here they were. Our eyes had tears in them...”

The tomb is a monument to Greeks killed in battles from the Korean war back to the Peloponnesian war. In marble behind



Sir Raymond Huish (centre) at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Athens. Photo: Ken Inglis

the tomb are cut words spoken by Pericles about soldiers who did not return: “The whole earth is a monument to men of excellence.”

The first to arrive have been in Athens three days when the last, including the New Zealanders, land. Most of us have seen President Bourguiba and King Constantine go waving by. Some have met no Greeks except hotel employees and touts, and are confirmed in life-long sentiments about Wogs. Some have talked as best they can with Greek soldiers, stall keepers, citizens passing by (including some who have lived in Australia). Nearly all have gone sightseeing, and some survivors of the hills of Anzac have climbed the Acropolis. Like all tourists, they have responded to the relics of antiquity with a range of feelings from boredom to awe.



Sir Raymond Huish leads the march to place a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Athens. The flag bearers are father and son, Charles (right, World War I) and John (left, World War II) Dawson. *Photo: Ken Inglis*

But Athens is only the point of assembly. Most people are restless to be off. At the Piraeus it is a steep climb up the gangway to the *Karadeniz*, the Turkish liner on which we are travelling to Sicily, Malta, Tobruk, Cairo, Beirut and Turkey.

The climb is not easy for people in their seventies, even for those who still have all their limbs working. "It's worse than Pope's Hill," says a retired soldier settler on the way up the steps. There are grins from those who hear him.

2. Anzac Diggers see Tobruk and cheer

The Canberra Times, 21 April 1965

The Australian and New Zealand Gallipoli Pilgrimage reached Tobruk on the Turkish liner *Karadeniz* just twenty-four years and one day after the siege began in 1941. Several Australians on board were in the siege.

Tobruk is now the scruffy seat of King Idris of Libya, whose palace overlooked the pilgrims as RAF lighters took them ashore to a brisk and amiable RAF welcome. A sardonic RAF man assured us that the bleak eroded plain is looking at its best this month. Another RAF man who has served in Australia pointed out that it is rather like the country north of Adelaide. The town has been rebuilt; but bombs and shells are still dug out of the harbour, and thousands of mines lie in the ground: now and then a Libyan, or an English serviceman, is killed by one.

This was the second large party of pilgrims to visit Tobruk in six months. Last November 200 Germans visited their country's war memorial, a gross pseudo-Saxon fortress which squats across the harbour from the town.

By RAF trucks and buses, those Australians and New Zealanders who felt up to travelling sixteen miles along the bumpy road that runs from Alexandria to Tunis went out to the war cemetery at Knightsbridge (or Acroma). Here lie nearly 4000 dead Commonwealth men, many of them casualties in heavy fighting during May, 1941. Recent visitors (few of them,

until now, from Australia) have left messages in a book at the entrance.

From Wales: "Like God's Little Acre" and "It hurts to see they died so young." From Yorkshire: "Forever I'll remember." From Essex: "A sad but honourable place." From Vienna: "What for? Never again!"

Frailer members of the party took a short drive to the Tobruk War Cemetery, where they met those who had been out to Knightsbridge.

During the siege a simple cross was set over the grave of each dead man. Later the Imperial (more recently, Commonwealth) War Graves Commission moved in and did what it has done all over the world – replaced the temporary markers by headstones with plain inscriptions, erected a Cross of Sacrifice, and planted appropriate trees and flowers (including, at Tobruk, some plants native to Australia and New Zealand). In the Tobruk War Cemetery, an Australian memorial among the 2500 or so graves was unveiled in 1948 by Sir Leslie Morshead, after one of those controversies which arise so often when Australians remember their dead warriors. When the Chifley government announced that Mr Beasley, then high commissioner in London, would unveil the memorial, the RSL and the Rats of Tobruk Association protested that the man was not a returned soldier. Mr Chifley bowed to the petitions, and sent the general who had commanded Tobruk during its siege.

It was Sunday when the pilgrims arrived. A service was conducted by an RAF chaplain. He was, of course, an ordained clergyman of the Church of England. In the days before Pope John, Catholics would probably have felt obliged in conscience to keep away from such a service. Now, they joined in. A dust storm, called here a *ghibli*, blew up. The padre's surplice flapped wildly. A wreath blew off the base of the Cross of Sacrifice. Desert sand discoloured the pilgrims' blazers. A bagpiper blew into the wind

and defeated it. A bugler with laryngitis, ordered out of bed for the occasion, played clear and sweet. The NAAFI [Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes] provided tea, canned Scottish beer, rolls and biscuits. Back at the wharf, the pilgrims gave three loud cheers for the RAF.

They have visited graves and monuments to the dead now in Greece, Malta and Libya; and a bizarre piece of planning by the company which has arranged the itinerary led the pilgrims to a creepy necropolis on their one day of pure sightseeing, in Palermo. The old soldiers and their ladies were led down through catacombs in which the bodies of citizens of nineteenth-century Palermo hang from the walls or lie in open boxes – some bodies picked clean, some crudely embalmed. “Badly arranged boxes of bloody bones,” they seemed to one Australian; “commercialised death” to another. The fat Capuchin monk taking coins at the door came in for many a comment from Protestant Anzacs.

Between Palermo and Tobruk we called at Malta. The pale stone fortifications of Valletta came alongside early in the morning. Men from the local British Legion boarded the ship and received the Australian and New Zealand leaders. The whole party assembled at the War Memorial for a wreath-laying ceremony. The Memorial is in the middle of a traffic roundabout, in a central city area which, thanks to German and Italian bombs, is an open space. This was a fairly private occasion. Six Maltese buglers took part, about fifty citizens of Valletta watched casually, and hundreds of cars and buses circled the party, making the leader almost inaudible as he said, “They shall grow not old...”

For the rest of that day the pilgrims dispersed. Many wandered with pleasure through the narrow streets of a marvellously mongrel town, half English provincial, half Italian, where a statue of Queen Victoria, pigeon-laden, shares the sunlight with relics of the Crusades.

Conveying the pilgrims from place to place is a complex operation in which responsibility is shared by Qantas, the Turkish shipping people, Swan Hellenic Tours, and leaders from the RSL and New Zealand RSA. Before the pilgrims ever assembled, some harassing things had happened.

There was controversy over the leadership. Some RSL men insisted that the leader must be a man who fought on Gallipoli. When Sir Raymond Huish, the national vice-president and Queensland president of the League, was appointed, the NSW council of the League, which had nominated Sir William Yeo, protested on the ground that although Sir Raymond had served in World War I he was not an Anzac. (Sir William Yeo decided in the event not to come.) In February the Turkish government fell, making it even harder than before to settle arrangements for landing at Gallipoli on 25 April. A consignment of cheese and other delicacies from Australia, put on the sea two clear months before the *Karadeniz* was due to sail from Greece, missed the ship at this end by two days.

The troubles did not end when the ship sailed. One old man was missing from his cabin on the first night. The whole ship was searched for him in vain. Eventually he was found in Athens, having wandered off the ship at Piraeus. He came aboard again in Valletta, after a scramble which had involved all the organising bodies.

Many New Zealanders, who came straight to the boat after more than twenty-four hours in the air, were none too happy at their accommodation on the lowest deck. A planned daily bulletin of information could not be circulated because the typewriter intended for the job has Turkish characters. Hardly any of the Turkish crew can speak or understand any English (though a black Tunisian assistant purser works wonders of interpreting). Many of the old passengers find it hard, and even painful, to get from deck to deck. The food, though ample and excellent, is to many people strange and for some old stomachs hard to digest.

Most of the section leaders from various states, appointed by their own RSL branches, did not know each other, or Sir Raymond Huish, before they set off; and the Australian and New Zealand leaders did not meet until Athens. Add the simple fact that at sea there is not much to do except talk, and it is no wonder that complaints began to appear and to be passed round and round.

Some of the complaints centred on the leadership. Few of the 316 pilgrims knew their leaders personally. When the leadership seemed to behave with officer-like remoteness, pilgrims responded with some of the disrespect towards rank which is a part of the Anzac legend. It could be exercised now with impunity and propriety because the rank and file on this expedition to Gallipoli are free citizens paying their own way.

It has been said by some on board, as it was by some at home, that the leader should have been at Gallipoli. (The deputy leader, Mr B. V. Cooksley, from New Zealand, was there.) There have been certain other grievances, which Sir Raymond himself took seriously enough to air at a meeting of all passengers in the promenade deck lounge between Malta and Tobruk. One charge – that he had been absent with apology from certain ceremonies on the tour – the leader described as “a deliberate lie.” To a more general criticism – that he has been aloof to the point of invisibility – Sir Raymond replied that he had been flat out from morning to midnight in his cabin working on the problems of getting us ashore and about in Libya, Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey; and as he sketched some of the problems, they did indeed sound formidable. Like all the leaders, Sir Raymond told the meeting, he was serving in an honorary capacity. He had come away, he said wryly, for a holiday. At this meeting, section leaders from Australia and leaders from New Zealand were introduced publicly for the first time.

The meeting helped greatly to reduce a feeling among some New Zealanders that they were being treated as country cousins,

and a feeling among some Australians that leaders whom they had no part in choosing were carrying on as if they were still in the army. Shipboard gossip became suddenly more genial. This same day Sir Raymond was able to announce the first public entertainments of the voyage – a film of the siege of Tobruk, and a program of singing, recitation and magic by members of the party.

3. Why they came

The Canberra Times, 22 April 1965

Who are the pilgrims? Very few are from the generation that fought in World War II. Of the 200 or so Australian survivors of World War I on board, more than half were actually on Gallipoli. Of them, in turn, a large proportion were there for a hideously long time.

They warn you, though, against each other's yarns. "Beware the memories of old soldiers!" says one. "I've met ten million men who were the first to land," says another, "and ten million who were the last off."

One highly decorated man sits on the deaf side of his equally decorated mate who is absorbed in anecdote, and observes at intervals, "No, that isn't right," in a voice that the listeners, but not the speaker, can hear.

Of the 70,000 or so men of the first AIF [Australian Imperial Force] who are still alive, why have these men returned to Gallipoli? The reasons for not coming are doubtless as varied as the reasons for coming. "I was there once," said a senior ABC man in Canberra, "and I never want to go there again." This man happens to be active enough to have come if he wanted to: he joined up at sixteen and is still on the right side of seventy. Many of his old comrades wanted to come but were unfit. Some were forbidden to come by doctors. (One man had a fairly serious operation two days before the tour began, but persuaded the doctor to let him come. Another man on board has actually been advised by his

doctor to come. He lost his speech after a stroke, and the doctor hopes that returning to Gallipoli may shock back his power to talk.)

A survivor of the 7th Battalion wrote earlier this year to the unit magazine: “re the Anzac Pilgrimage... It’s sad to think so many would like to go, but cannot because of war disabilities or lack of funds.”

But if a man had been at Gallipoli and was fit, the odds were good on his finding someone, if he looked, to pay part or all of the fare. The Federal Government put up £20,000, which was administered so discreetly that a few old men, whiling away the hours at sea, mutter darkly about where it went.

It is easy, however, to guess that it went to any survivor of Gallipoli who wanted to make the pilgrimage and who could not find the necessary £600 or so. RSL sub-branches have sponsored many of them, and this local support largely explains the heavy representation from New South Wales. Of the 230 Australian pilgrims, more than one hundred come from the senior state. It is no accident that New South Wales is the only state with poker machines, and therefore the state where RSL sub-branches, through their associated clubs, are richest. One sub-branch in Sydney offered to send every member who served on Gallipoli, and eight are on board.

Why have they come? An old Digger from Cootamundra, New South Wales, was wondering aloud on the plane. (Of all the organising bodies incidentally, the one for which nobody has a word of criticism is Qantas.) All the blokes, this man thought, would want to pay respect to the dead, and to have a holiday. Beyond that he expected a variety of reasons. He was right.

One of the few men of the younger generation says he is coming mainly for the cruise and one of the older men sees the cruise as a waste of time on the way to the sacred ground. “When I left Gallipoli,” recalls a retired farmer from Narrabri, New South

Wales, “I said I never want to see this bloody place again. But when the sub-branch asked me last year did I want to go, I said if I was given the chance to go anywhere in the world – England, France, America, Japan – this is where I want to go.” A widow from Bogabri, New South Wales, whose husband lost a leg in France, had a brother killed on Gallipoli. “Remember what good shots the young men were in those days? Well, my brother was a sniper. Someone saw him fall out of a tree after he was hit. I’m going to look for his grave. Even if I don’t find it, he’ll know I was close.”

Some men who do not speak directly about why they are going have precise plans about what they will do in Turkey. One will try to return a set of surgical instruments souvenired from a captured Turkish medical officer. One will look for a particular Turkish sniper who stuck to sportsman’s rules.

Others speak more deviously. One old man says with a straight face that it is really the battlefields of 1939–45 that he wants to visit. “Me nipper was in the second show, and I want to find out if he’s been tellin’ the truth.”

4. Nasser earns the Anzacs' admiration

The Canberra Times, 23 April 1965

Of all the places visited so far by the Australians and New Zealanders who are travelling to Gallipoli in the *Karadeniz*, Egypt was the most familiar. As the pilgrim ship sailed into Alexandria, a Gallipoli veteran with a remarkably clear memory reeled off phrases he had used in Cairo fifty years before; phrases meaning "I am poor," "Come here," "You are a thief," "You are mad; you go into the asylum tomorrow," and coarser phrases than that. He burst into a song which, when repeated a day later in Cairo, caused an Egyptian bus driver to blush.

At the foot of the gangway, vendors gathered like flies, just as they had around these same men half a century ago. They gave off a mixture of stale and fresh greetings – "Hello George!" "Hello Mr McKenzie!" "Hello General Montgomery!" – and thrust out the same goods: "You like fez? You like dirty postcard?" The old Digger who remembered so much was approached by a salesman of riding crops. "These things were a must in the first show," he said, "to keep the Wogs off." He walked from the *Karadeniz* to the port building and had his first surprise. It is a splendid affair of open spaces and polished marble. "Well, this is new," he said. "Nasser must be doin' somethin'."

The pilgrims set sail along the coast road to the war cemetery at El Alamein, where yet another wreath was to be laid among thousands more graves of dead young men. Nothing looked very

different from 1914: fig trees, date palms, square hovels with flat roofs or none, Bedouin tents, goats, camels, sheep, people in Arab dress scattered along the desert. A poultry farm reminded some men of the eggs they used to buy at four for twopence from vendors crying “Eggs-a-cook” – words which soldiers were soon to shout at the Turks at Anzac Cove.

One recollection led to another. Memories differed about which soldiers treated the Gyppoes, or Wogs, most severely. To one man it seemed that while the English went in for serious brutality, the Australians were lighter and wittier. Tommies, he said, kicked the natives off the streets; Australians climbed the equestrian statue of the once viceroy Mohammed Ali at night and left a nosebag on his horse and a slouch hat on his head.

Another man recalled with relish that Australians used to trip up a seller of eggs and oranges, spilling his load on the dirty ground.

“The Wogs used to get angry,” he said.

“You can’t blame them, the poor devils,” reflected his mate.

“Of course we were on top then.”

“Yes, it wouldn’t do to try it now.”

The reminiscences were endless:

Remember the order we were given in Port Said to have nothing to do with the Gyppoes, after some Australians were staggered by the plonk?

Remember how they used to make holes in bottles of Johnny Walker and adulterate the Scotch without removing the label? Remember how we used to say that even the camel-manure tobacco wasn’t pure camel-manure? Remember how women used to pick all day in the droppings of our horses for bits of oats or barley?

Remember what we used to say on the trams when they asked us for the fare? “Charge it to Kitchener?”

Remember the bloke who got stabbed nearly to death by eunuchs when he lifted the veil off a harem sheila in the street?

Remember what we used to call Egypt – land of sand, sin, sorrow and syphilis? Remember Tiger Lil's?

Remember the children? Bootshine boys who would clean one shoe and insist on money before they cleaned the other? Children everywhere dressed in rags, dirty, hungry, flies swarming in their diseased eyes? “They was layin’ in the gutter,” recalled an old Light Horse man, “too weak to brush the bloody flies off.”

They talked, many of these men, in a mood expressed by C. J. Dennis fifty years ago when he wrote of

... the day we come to Cairo wiv its niggers an’ its din,
To fill our eyes wiv desert sand, our souls wiv Eastern sin,
... we grew to ’ate all Egypt, an’ its desert, an’ its stinks:
On the day we drilled at Mena in the shadder uv the Sphinx.

At Mena, near the Sphinx, the pilgrims had lunch on their way from Alexandria to Cairo. Before performing two ceremonies at the graves of British warriors in the city, they stopped to visit again the graves of ancient Egyptians. (“The only cemetery we haven’t laid a wreath on,” said one pilgrim later, “is the Pyramids of Giza.”)

Mr Lew Roberts, of Wentworthville, Sydney, recalled climbing the greatest of these tombs and carving his name at the top; but the coaches did not stay long enough for anybody to try it again. As the motors started, one pilgrim achieved a better rate of exchange from sterling to piastres (or “disasters,” as some were calling them again) than the banks were offering: Just in front of the Sphinx, he got 150 to the £ from a dark man who negotiated through the coach window from the back of a camel.

The new Egypt had been glimpsed in a quick tour of Alexandria. Our coaches swept alongside a seafront boulevard lined by large, and recent, blocks of apartments, and paused briefly at a palace inhabited by the late King Farouk. A driver pointed at the grotesque eclectic residence of the Fuads and said, “Once nobody could come in. Now it is for everybody.” Not for us, though, as

our time was short. An Australian resident in Cairo described the royal relics which the new regime displays: photographs of naked women, lewd statues, hypodermic needles... All we could see, peering quickly in, was a roulette wheel on an easel. "He done nothin' for his people," said a veteran from New Zealand.

On the drive to and from the palace, people talked about the children in the streets. "Now they look happy and well fed," said a New Zealander. "Nasser seems to be doin' a good job." A Victorian who landed at Gallipoli on the first day, and who had spoken severely of Wogs on the way to Egypt, said now, "I'm all for Nasser. He's changed the place beyond my comprehension." By the time our ten coaches reached the centre of Cairo, most of the men who had been to Egypt before were saying with admiration approaching wonder that this was not the place they remembered. The roads were fairly good. The beggars were gone. Shoeshine boys were scarce. The housing had improved out of sight. Above all they spoke of the well-clothed, healthy, smiling children; and man after man praised the regime. "I never had any time for this bloody Nasser till I saw all this," said an Australian who spoke for many others. "I reckon it's colossal."

The clothes worn by the children and their parents were perhaps their very best, for it was a festive time. The middle of the Anzac pilgrimage happened to coincide with the end of the annual Moslem season of pilgrimage, which is celebrated by a four days' holiday. It was for this reason, so the Australian Ambassador (Mr Francis Stuart) explained, that no Egyptian army officer was available to share with the Australian and New Zealand leaders their wreath-laying ritual. On account of the holiday, too, we shared the pyramids and the Sphinx, and next day the Cairo Museum, with an abnormally large number of native sightseers. In the Museum the pilgrims visited the contents of yet another tomb – Tutenkhamen's – and looked at some of the marvellous efforts of the kings of old Egypt to achieve eternal life. As in Athens,

Palermo and Malta, some pilgrims were more interested than others in the residue of history. One old Digger who might have walked straight out of Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* said loudly that he only wanted to pay a call on his old mate Pharaoh, while alongside him another old Digger talked as knowledgeably as a professional guide about how the discovery of Tutenkhamen's tomb transformed historians' understanding of ancient Egyptian civilisation. It was a hectic visit, as ten guides shepherded 300 pilgrims around the exhibits, leading each group to leapfrog the next so that the whole great building could be done in one hour flat. Some members of the party nicked off to look for relics of their own history: a hospital, a camp, or the Wazir.

The Anzacs' attitude to Egypt's "Eastern sin" seems by all accounts to have been ambivalent. Men both tasted it and disapproved of it. The pilgrims returned almost exactly on the fiftieth anniversary of Good Friday 1915, when hundreds of soldiers rampaged through a brothel district in Cairo at the so-called "Battle of the Wazir." Survivors of the battle recalled it now, some of them returning to the actual field of combat. "The sheilas used to hang out them windows. Nearly all French girls. A boatload came out when they knew the Aussies was there. Lovely girls, too." "A posh sheila cost four bob. One with a wooden leg cost twopence ha'penny." Accounts of the battle varied, though several agreed with the survivor who said that it started when "a New Zealander who'd got the clap brought his mate back from camp to clean the joint up." Many recollected pianos and furniture flying from top-storey windows. Fires were started, accidentally and deliberately, and when the fire brigade arrived soldiers cut the hoses. One man who was on picket duty that night recalls that he thought it best to ignore what was happening, and estimates that before British Territorials with fixed bayonets put an end to the destruction, a thousand Anzacs had been involved in it. Like the battles of the war itself, this one has been encrusted with legend. One Light

Horse man on the pilgrimage believes that there was a straight line from the Wazir to Sari Bair. "Churchill said if the Aussies want fightin' I'll give 'em fightin', and he whacked us out to Gallipoli, and we got fightin' all right."

Those who returned to the Wazir found it cleaned up. Tiger Lil is long dead, and so are most of her sisters. If the old girls have successors, they are not easily visible to the tourist. Some pilgrims were just as impressed by this change as by the improved appearance of children. A few who went out at night to sip champagne and watch dancing girls reported next morning, with mixed feelings, that Nasser seemed to have cleaned everything up.

From the Cairo Museum guides took the pilgrims up to the great citadel overlooking the city and the river and the pyramids. Here, said a guide, Saladin imprisoned Richard Coeur de Lion. Here, said an old soldier, the British authorities imprisoned Australians who had to be sent home early in 1915. Within the citadel we put slippers over our shoes and entered a mosque. Then we were led to a bazaar district where the atmosphere seemed as close to that of 1914 as it had seemed on the wharf at Alexandria. "If these bastards got you alone," said a New Zealander, "they'd murder you."

In one of the more genteel shops a huge Queenslander sat down comfortably to a game he had not played since 1915.

"You fair dinkum?" he asked an elderly assistant in robes.

"I fair dinkum long time," said the assistant. "From 1914."

Everything was too dear, said the old Digger; and a series of increasingly senior sales people could not lure a single piastre out of him.

"You want to buy without money?" asked a female assistant. "Life is now dear," she explained. "It is not like 1914."

The non-customer got up slowly, a cigarette hanging from his lip, shouted "Wacko the diddly-oh," and sauntered out.

Some people returned to the ship feeling that they had been (in a word Egypt gave to our language) gypped. Others were pleased

at what they had paid for scarab jewellery, Bedouin headgear, leather camels and fezzes. On board ship they had good news over the loudspeakers from Sir Raymond Huish. A consignment of Australian confectionery, which had just missed the boat at Athens, was on board, and so – by courtesy of Qantas – was a pile of Australian and New Zealand newspapers. (“Just as well we’re not home, George,” said a Victorian. “I see there’s a beer strike on.”)

In Cairo they had received splendid hospitality from the Australian Ambassador, who had them all out to a cocktail party which ran an hour longer than scheduled. The Turkish stewards on board now seemed to understand our exotic ways. All in all, it was a good-humoured party that sailed out of Alexandria for Beirut.

5. Stepping ashore tomorrow on Australia's "holy land"

The Canberra Times, 24 April 1965

As the sun rises tomorrow over the Dardanelles, some of the men who landed at Gallipoli fifty years ago will go ashore again, and for two days they will walk among the graves of men who landed beside them. To make this landing they have flown to Athens, joined the Turkish ship *Karadeniz* chartered by the RSL, and cruised around the eastern Mediterranean for nearly three weeks. Now they are approaching the climax of their pilgrimage. This time the Turks will welcome them.

Exact arrangements for the landing will not be settled until just before it is due. This is partly a matter of weather and water conditions. If the sea is rough, or if a current is running like the one which took the Australians to the wrong part of the beach in 1915, none of the party may land at Anzac Cove at all. The leaders realise that men who survived last time might endanger their lives this time in getting from the ship to small boats and thence to the shore. Instead, the *Karadeniz* may go around Cape Helles and put people ashore in the calmer waters inside.

There are other problems in the way of the landing. The Turkish authorities, running no risk with transient foreigners (a few of whom left hotel bills unpaid in Athens), insisted on having all transport costs paid in advance before they would discuss details;

and it was not practicable to extract this money from passengers before Beirut.

Who should land? And in what order? These questions have profound implications for many pilgrims, and they have been asked often in the weeks before the landing. The official leader of the pilgrimage, Sir Raymond Huish, was not a Gallipoli man. Should he therefore stay on board, at least until the Gallipoli men have preceded him to the beach? Scott Fitzgerald says that in an egalitarian democracy, the only real aristocracy is made up of citizen soldiers. There is no doubt that many Anzacs, encouraged by what their fellow citizens have been saying about them for fifty years, do consider themselves an elite within an elite. They formed in Australia the Gallipoli Legion of Anzacs and in New Zealand the Gallipoli Association, having their own badges and sometimes marching in a body of their own on Anzac Day. One leader of the New Zealand contingent, who wears the crescent and star of the Gallipoli Association, says that the Returned Soldiers' Association in New Zealand tends to regard the Gallipoli body as needlessly divisive; but this man wears the Gallipoli badge.

Some Gallipoli men are still resentful that they were never issued with an official medal to mark their distinction. Others are cooler about it. One survivor, who wears a tie woven in the colours of the ribbon intended for a Gallipoli medal which the British government never issued, is inclined to think that no formal emblem of recognition could ever be adequate to identify the elite. "A man who got out with a blighty the first day," he said, "would have the same as a man who stayed all through." Another Gallipoli man argues that on this pilgrimage, Anzacs should wear something on their blazer pockets to identify them.

Some think of early enlistment, shown by a low serial number, as evidence that a man was one of the best. "He had a three-figure number" is an old Digger's way of saying, "He offered himself for the war earlier than most others." Among New Zealanders, whose

ranks in the later stages of the war were composed of volunteers and conscripts fighting together, this preoccupation with the time of enlistment is less noticeable. The Australians, of course, were never reinforced by conscripts, because the voters narrowly rejected [wartime prime minister] W. M. Hughes's proposals for conscription. It is almost certain that most frontline troops voted "No" in the conscription referenda, and some pilgrims are vehement about why they did so. "Make those blokes come?" says one. "What good would they be?" The spirit of such questions divided a whole generation and is even now a force in our national life. Anzac Day after Anzac Day, the man who stayed home has had to endure being told that the empire was saved and the nation was made by the other men, the returned soldiers.

The sense of difference between Gallipoli men and other returned soldiers is of course amiable compared with the sense of division between the returned man and the lifelong civilian. It is nevertheless real. Some Gallipoli men think that all who were here before should land in a body some time before anybody else. That is unlikely to happen. If the plans for landing exclude any Gallipoli men, one or two of them may have to be held down: one has threatened already that if need be he will dog-paddle ashore.

The habit of pilgrimage to Gallipoli is well established, and would have been indulged more freely over the years but for the sheer difficulty of getting to these barren shores. The largest body of men were the 600 from all parts of the Empire who left from England in 1936. It is symbolic of the decline of imperial sentiment in England that the party landing tomorrow comes only from outposts of the old Empire (apart from one Londoner who joined the Anzacs at Athens). There was to be a British contingent of pilgrims, too; but the plan fell through because not enough could be found to fill a ship.

Among the men and women sailing towards Gallipoli today are several for whom this is a second act of pilgrimage. Some

came in 1960, organised by a travel agency and led by Mr William Yeo. Some came in 1955 led by Sir George Holland. A few have made their way as individuals, sometimes with the aid of the Anzac Troy Travel Agency. (This firm's name is said to have made Mr Sidney Nolan wince when he began to explore the ancient and modern mythology of the region. It was founded by the son of a Turk who worked for the Imperial War Graves Commission.) This year's party of 316 is by far the largest ever to come from Australia and New Zealand. It is the first to be organised officially by the RSL.

When the leaders of the League first resolved nearly two years ago to arrange the pilgrimage they hoped not only that it would attract old soldiers but also that it would help to keep the Anzac tradition alive among Australians at large. As the national secretary of the RSL, Mr A.G. Keys, put it, "We believe the events at Gallipoli should be impressed on the imaginations of young Australians so that they will know the sacrifices others have made to keep our country free and independent. A pilgrimage would help achieve that result."

The Turks, as Moslems who turn towards Mecca, understand well the habit of pilgrimage. "Exhort all men to make the pilgrimage," Mohammed told his followers, "They will come to you on foot and on the backs of swift camels from every distant quarter." Pilgrims come to Mecca from places almost as remote as Australia, most notably Indonesia.

There are nevertheless aspects of the Anzac pilgrimage which might puzzle the Turks. They are surprised, it is said, that we should celebrate a defeat. While we remember 25 April as the great day, Turkish memories turn to Gallipoli on 18 March, the day in 1915 when Turkish guns turned back ships from the mightiest navy in history. Nor do the Turks understand easily why their old enemy should have constructed cemeteries with such loving care all over the peninsula. "Does man think we shall never put his

bones together again?” asks Mohammed in the name of Allah. And since the Bible, like the Koran, affirms that God will raise the dead to eternal life, is it not enough to erect, as the Turks have done, a single monument to the dead warriors, without setting human beings to the task of putting the bones in thousands of separate graves each with its own memorial tablet?

The Turks might well wonder about the relation between the Christian religion and the ceremonies of Anzac. Home in Australia there has long been friction between RSL leaders and the Christian clergy about what is appropriate to be said and done on Anzac Day. Newspapers from home tell the pilgrims that thanks to the Rev. Alan Walker and Sir William Yeo, this issue has exploded yet again. Here on the pilgrimage are two clergymen who used to be chaplains; but neither has been pastorally involved in any of the ritual visits to cemeteries and other memorials to the dead in Greece, Malta, Libya, Egypt, the Lebanon and Turkey. Clergymen have twice officiated at these ceremonies: once in Tobruk, when the RAF arranged things and provided their own padre; and in Cairo, when the Provost of the Anglican Cathedral took part on the initiative of the Australian Ambassador. Otherwise Sir Raymond Huish, the leader chosen by the RSL, has led his countrymen through the RSL's own ritual of commemoration, which uses language drawn not from the Bible but from Laurence Binyon and Rudyard Kipling.

“They shall grow not old...” says the leader after he has laid a wreath; and when he reaches the words, “We will remember them,” the informal congregation repeats his words. “Lest we forget,” says the leader, and again the men and women standing among the graves say together, “Lest we forget.”

The avoiding of Biblical language is as significant as Sir William Yeo's declaration, earlier this month, that Anzac Day is bigger than churches. The conversation of some pilgrims suggests that they are more readily comforted, when they think of their

dead mates, by language of the sort Pericles used over dead warriors of Athens than by words normally used by clergymen. “They gave their lives,” said Pericles, who also campaigned on Gallipoli. “For their own selves they won praises that never grow old, the most splendid of sepulchres – not the sepulchre in which their bodies are laid, but where their glory remains eternal in men’s minds, always there on the right occasion to stir others to speech or to action.”

It may be only a token party that will leave the ship before dawn and land on the beach from small boats. It is certain that many of the pilgrims, including the women, will be put ashore at the village of Gelibolu, near the Istanbul end of the peninsula, and taken by bus thirty-five miles or so to the battlefields.

Formal ceremonies will be conducted tomorrow at some of the cemeteries in the Anzac Cove area. On Monday the pilgrims will be free to pay the private homage which for so many of them has been the great reason for coming. Officers from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission under Colonel Ted Griffin will help them to find individual graves. They will lay wreaths bought from the British Legion Poppy Factory. They will squint through camera sights and shoot. What they will think and feel, nobody else will know. They will be performing a ritual which one of their mates foresaw in a poem which was written just after the evacuation and published in a volume called *The Anzac Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Say, those dead of yours and mine
Make this barren shore a shrine;
All these graves – they’ll draw us back;
And for ever in our track,
Down the years to come, will pace
Pilgrims of our Anzac race:

God, while this old earth shall stand,
Where but here's our Holy Land.

For the pilgrims on the *Karadeniz*, Gallipoli is indeed Australia's holy land. How far, on this Anzac Day, they are representative of their countrymen at home, is perhaps easier to judge in Sydney or Melbourne or Canberra than in the pilgrim ship.

Next page: Anzacs going ashore in a *Karadeniz* lifeboat at dawn on 25 April 1965. Photo: Ken Inglis



6. Anzacs play to Turkish rules on their return

The Canberra Times, 27 April 1965

— GALLIPOLI, Sunday, 25 April

It is 5.20 am as seventy old men in blazers walk fifty yards uphill from an improvised jetty to where a cluster of thirty other old men wait for them. Some visitors peer about in the pale light trying to recognise the landscape once terribly familiar. Some look simply shy. One wears a uniform fifty years old. The rest, as requested by their leader Sir Raymond Huish, wear no medals or decorations; this is a peaceful visit.

The weather is almost uncannily as in 1915. Now, as then, Anzacs sailed from Lemnos late on a glorious Saturday afternoon and next morning went ashore at Anzac in calm water.

Last time, there was silence in the boats except for the lapping of oars; this time much talk. This time, unlike the last, there is a moon which, as lifeboats neared the beach, shone behind the ridge everyone recognised as the Sphinx. "There's old Gaba Tepe." "No, it's Achi Baba." Slowly, the pilgrims realise they are landing not at Anzac Cove itself but around the corner to the north. The black creased cliff straight ahead, they realise, is Walker's Ridge. Near to the top of the Sphinx they are now, from which a Turk sniped and reported by carrier pigeon movements of the British armada. To the right they see Rest Gully where church parades were held and where the legendary Simpson came down to the beach with his donkey.

Memories differ about topographical details.

"Oh it's hard," says one. "This is the thrill of my life," says another.

A third makes a kookaburra call.

Ahead of them on the walk uphill to old enemies, a score of cameramen jostle and exhort. Men in suits from Istanbul stand by. Old women in shawls sit and watch. Some of those young Australian hitchhikers, who turn up all over the world in parkas and jeans, are here. Last weekend, two of them were in Jerusalem and one in Genoa. They are making a kind of pilgrimage to see pilgrims. One girl giggling with excitement is the daughter of a man who landed with these old men.

The men now ashore were all among thousands who landed on the first day. The rest of the pilgrims, nearly 300, will not reach Anzac until buses bring them from Port Gelibolu, inside the Dardanelles, this afternoon.

There was boat room for only seventy, so "first dayers" alone were allowed to land at dawn. Their claims to have landed on the

first day were checked closely to prevent ring-ins. Their physical fitness was considered. Some were displeased, or at least unresponsive, when it was suggested they were not robust enough for the landing now. But all have made it happily down the gangway and up to the jetty and will return safely. The only casualty is a Turkish Army film man who steps off the jetty, camera and all, and is hooked out. Like the first landing, this one is not going quite as planned by the visitors. Their leaders want old Anzacs and old Turks to form single lines facing at the water's edge. But General Selisik, leader of the Turkish party, prefers to keep his veterans clustered up hill and this time the Anzacs must play by Turkish rules.

The groups meet in cheerful confusion. Hands are shaken, and lapel badges and cigarettes are given to the hosts. Camera-men unfamiliar with the Anzac temperament, call "Kiss each other." A bent old Turk with a white beard, cloth cap, and missing leg stands grinning alone until cameramen stop him and surround him with Australians. Other cameramen and reporters, having divided veterans into smaller groups, mop them up. The leaders exchange gifts, and compliments. From the RSL and RSA, a silver platter is given to the Turkish war veterans inscribed "In tribute to brave opponents now valued friends." General Selisik says through an interpreter that the Anzacs are a noble enemy. "May their souls rest in peace. We always cherish them on this soil so dear to us."

A representative of the Turkish Invalid Veterans Association hands Sir Raymond Huish binoculars taken by a Turk at Anzac Cove in a case bearing initials ALYV. The General embraces Huish and Bert Cooksley, the NZ leader. At 5.55 am Sir Raymond Huish calls "All aboard, please." It takes a while because cameramen oppose the evacuation. An old Turk says to an Anzac, through an interpreter, "I hope you live to see the hundredth anniversary."

“Please walk,” say cameramen and old Anzacs walk down to the lifeboats. Pressmen round up stragglers. Turks give them three cheers as the pilgrims pull away; the Anzacs respond with cheers and a ragged “Waltzing Matilda.” As the lifeboats near the ship it is 6.30 am and the sun is climbing over the bleak ridge known for a few months, fifty years ago, as Russell’s Top.

The pilgrim ship *Karadeniz* moves off to enter the Hellespont. At Cape Helles the ship stops while a wreath is dropped in the water which on 25 April 1915 ran red with blood.

Alf and Wacka, the old Anzacs of Alan Seymour’s play *The One Day of the Year*, could almost certainly have come on this pilgrimage if they wished, for men with war records like theirs were sponsored by RSL sub-branches and given grants out of the £20,000 put up by the federal government. They would have found plenty of mates aboard, for this is a comradely party; but many of the pilgrims are quite unlike Alf and Wacka in character and achievement.

What do the pilgrims have in common? Not counting the minority of World War II men and the women, they share three things: they come from the Antipodes; they fought in World War I; they are old.

Within each of the Australian and New Zealand parties, the bonds of comradeship are strong. The bonds are not, perhaps, quite as strong *between* the two parties as the word ANZAC would suggest. Among those who fought in the single Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, many men do feel a sense of trans-Tasman community. But after Gallipoli, the men from the two nations fought separately for the most part; and fifty years later, on this ship, the two parties are tending to remain distinct.

This is especially true of the two groups of leaders, between whom there has been some friction; and the sense of separation

has been enhanced by the fact that so many New Zealanders are travelling on the lowest deck. Some of them have alleged that the Australians assigned "D" deck to their Kiwi cousins. This has been strenuously and publicly denied by the leader of the pilgrimage, Sir Raymond Huish. It is nevertheless an unfortunate symbol of the relation between big Australia and little New Zealand that many of the New Zealanders should be at the bottom.

When the Australians and New Zealanders meet, as they do in the drinking saloons and the lounges, they talk often of their common ordeal. Throughout the journey, indeed, whether Australian is talking to Australian or to New Zealander, probably the most frequent subject of conversation has been the fighting in Gallipoli or France or the desert. Sometimes they amplify each other's knowledge of what happened. Sometimes they dispute; and when they do C.E.W. Bean's account in the volumes of the Australian official history is given high authority as a settler of arguments, rather as a dictionary is consulted by people disagreeing about the meaning of a word. (Some remember, too, Bean's bravery in pursuit of the events he was to write about. "The super-hero of the AIF," one highly decorated man on board calls Dr Bean.) Sometimes men simply testify, in words that have inevitably taken on a ritual character after fifty years of repetition. "I was there on the first day and I didn't get to sleep for five days and four nights," says one man again and again; and nobody who has not endured as much has any right to think him a bore.

Nearly all of them, even the fastidious, embellish their recollections, and their conversation at large, with language policemen call indecent in court but use off duty. The mixing of Australians from all walks of life in the ranks of the services has undoubtedly helped to spread the habit of profanity into reaches of the society where it had been unfamiliar; and for some old soldiers who enjoy the company of other old soldiers it is a kind of tribal language.

These men are Australians or New Zealanders, and they fought in the war. But they are old men, too; and that tends as much to divide as to unite them, since nobody enjoys being reminded of his own old age by the frailty of his contemporaries. "I've never felt as old as I do now," remarks a man who was eighteen last time he saw Gallipoli, "travelling with all these old men."

"It's a bugger of a thing to be gittin' old," says another man as he lifts himself out of bed. Some of them talk crossly or comically about the infirmities of other old men.

Beyond their nationality, war experience and age, it is impossible to generalise about the pilgrims other than to say that their diversity is great.

Mr Lew Roberts of Wentworthville, New South Wales, has never left Australia except as a soldier in 1914 and again in 1940; for the rest of his life, until retirement in 1956, he worked with the PMG [Postmaster-General's Department] as a linesman. Mr Max Vickers, of Tusmore, South Australia, is on his twentieth overseas journey. He has been chairman of the Onkaparinga District Council and a member of the War Service Land Settlement Committee and the Commonwealth Apple and Pear Board. On overseas visits he has carried letters of introduction from his close friend Sir Thomas Playford.

Mr Barney Turner, who is doorman-steward at the RSL Club in Port Macquarie, New South Wales, is as earthly Australian as C.J. Dennis's Ginger Mick. Mr Hector McWhae, of Melbourne, who was visiting Constantinople with his family when World War I began and was back at Gallipoli less than nine months later, is so cosmopolitan that one could easily mistake his nationality.

Some pilgrims have so little money that they could never have paid for the trip themselves. One pilgrim, well known in Victoria as an owner of hotel properties, is whispered to be a millionaire.

Mr R. Milner, of Narrabri, New South Wales, is going straight home after Gallipoli. Mr H. Codd, of Bombala, New South Wales,

is going to Israel and England and eventually to Belgrade, where he will attend an international conference on local government.

Mr A.H. Edmonds, of Hunter's Hill, New South Wales, who landed at Gallipoli on the first day and left on the last, has read widely in the history of the campaign and published articles on it. Some men on board know little more now about the campaign than they knew when they were in it.

Colonel W.H. James, of Mayfield, New South Wales, was chosen at the end of the war to be a photographer with the Australian Historical Mission, which returned to Gallipoli under C.E.W. Bean. Later he discovered that he had been chosen because he was a teetotaler. He is one still. Other men on board have enjoyed the booze all their lives, though none can take too much of it these days.

Two of the men on board who fought for king and country are republicans.

One man, who talks little to any other veteran on the ship, refuses to wear his medals. He sees the campaign as a massacre of the innocents by murderously negligent planners, and he leaves his medals off as a protest. He wears the RSL badge in memory of the dead, but he does not march on Anzac Day. Why is he going back? "For a spiritual reason. I want to look at those boys and say, 'I'm looking at you. You are not neglected.'"

7. 10,000 miles and back to commune with Anzac dead

The Canberra Times, 1 May 1965

The Gallipoli pilgrimage dispersed at Athens on Tuesday. Some pilgrims are home already, and most will be back in a few days. Some have gone for holidays in Britain, and some are coming home slowly via the duty-free airports of Asia. Twenty-nine of them, still led by Sir Raymond Huish, have gone on to Israel, where they are guests of the Israeli War Veterans' League on a journey which has been planned for a long time but kept quiet in case the authorities of the United Arab Republic, hearing of it, should refuse to let the pilgrims land in Egypt.

But the pilgrimage really ended as the *Karadeniz* pulled out of Gelibolu in the Dardanelles, in the evening of 26 April. New Zealanders were singing "Now Is the Hour" and a band on shore was playing "Waltzing Matilda." Among the people waving from the wharf were Turkish civilians and soldiers, Australian hitch-hikers, and a young man dancing wildly on crutches.

Five days earlier the ship had sailed through the Narrows to the Sea of Marmara and into the Bosphorus. Istanbul, unlike Alexandria and Cairo, was unfamiliar to nearly all the pilgrims; one said, "So *this* is where we tried to get!"

The ship had called already at Turkey's third city, Izmir, and had been welcomed by veterans, war widows, a high-stepping naval guard of honour and a number of smiling civilians. At a pic-



At Gelibolu, the Anzacs are greeted by a band and a detachment of Turkish troops dressed in the uniforms of 1915.

Photo: Ken Inglis

nic lunch in the ruins of Ephesus, where St Paul once exhorted people to stop worshipping Diana, a girl student interpreted for some New Zealand and Turk veterans. “Fifty years ago,” she said to a younger man, a survivor of Changi, “they were trying to kill each other. Now they are so happy together. I could cry.” In Istanbul there was another band and another party of war veterans. Lacking a common language and having few interpreters, the old men shook hands, exchanged badges, and smiled.

An Australian without a right leg and a Turk without a left leg posed on sticks for a photograph which appeared next morning on the front pages of Istanbul newspapers. Later, at a party on board, an Australian and a Turk sat grinning side by side, each with his only remaining arm around the other’s neck.

The whole company of pilgrims were guests of the Ministry of Tourism and Information for a splendid banquet, at which a hotel band played “Waltzing Matilda,” “Tipperary,” and “Daisy,” and 300 Anzacs sang, “For they are jolly good fellows!” At Gelibolu, where the ship berthed late in the morning of 25 April after going round to Anzac Cove and back for the dawn landing, the whole population of the small town seemed to be clapping and smiling in the streets or from rooftops; and the pilgrims were greeted not only by a band but by a detachment of troops dressed in the uniforms of 1915 and decorated with neat waxed moustaches stuck on for the occasion. There was a reception in Gelibolu, too, put on by the army. The star turn was a dance by eight wild and colourfully clothed young men pretending to slash at each other’s heads with swords while protecting themselves with shields, and doing it all with precise rhythm and terrifying realism.

Special stamps were issued in Turkey for the jubilee. One shows a Turkish, a British and an Australian soldier before the memorial to the Turkish dead at Anzac Cove (to Turks, Ari Burnu). When a reporter asked a senior public servant whether this was the first time an enemy had been depicted on a Turkish stamp, the official said “a *former* enemy,” checked with his director, and replied that it was, indeed, a unique gesture.

The Ministry of Tourism and Information gave every pilgrim a pamphlet about the battle of the Dardanelles (or as the Turks call it, Canakkale). “More than half of the Turks who took part in this battle,” the visitors read, “closed their eyes in death on a victory the like of which has seldom been seen.” One reader observed gravely, “They don’t say who won the war!” But by and large the pamphlet was received well. It referred to the campaign as a battle waged by the Turks “to protect their freedom and country” – a notion which seemed to strike some of the old invaders, for the first time. One veteran of Gallipoli, discovering from this account how lightly defended Anzac Cove was at the time of the landing,

said, "It doesn't look too good, does it?" and went on to compare World War I leadership unfavourably with that of World War II. The pamphlet said that the battle showed "the strength of character" of the Turks, and thus used the exact word which the Australian official historian, C.E.W. Bean, chose to explain why the Anzacs held on as they did.

Kemal Ataturk, as Dr Bean once pointed out, did not want to fight the British. "They are a nation of character," he said. Ataturk's own participation in the defence of Gallipoli has helped to make Turks almost as enthusiastic as Anzacs in their commemoration of the campaign. The visitors saw Ataturk looking down from monuments in Izmir, where he flung the Greeks into the sea in 1922, and Istanbul, where he died in 1938 after dragging his country into the 20th century. They saw his picture everywhere and heard his name spoken with reverence. "Canakkale is our most magnificent battle," said a lieutenant who was acting as a guide. Why? Because Ataturk was there, he answered. As a lieutenant-colonel in charge of the 19th Infantry Division at Ari Burnu he saved the day on 25 April, and as a full colonel in charge of six divisions he drove the British back to the water after their last throw in August at Suvla Bay.

Ataturk's respect for the British sheds further light on the Turkish attitude to Canakkale. In 1915, the Turks were engaged for the first time in ages against top people. Here was no underdeveloped semi-European enemy such as the Turks had been fighting in the years before 1914. Here was the mighty and civilised British Empire; and the Turks, despised in the West as scruffy and murderous, first turned back an Armada and then resisted the greatest amphibious operation in history. In a speech at dawn last Sunday, the president of the Turkish War Invalids Association said (according to the official translation), "Although our history is full of heroic victories our generation remember the Dardanelles war full of heroism, sacrifice and valour; because

we were opposed by the soldiers (our dear guests) the most courageous, rich, well-equipped and armed on whose lands sun never set and they were you.” The invaders of Anzac Cove were hailed at home for silencing the mockers and knockers who called them six-bob-a-day tourists and kiwi lancers and colonials. The defenders of Ari Burnu were celebrated by their countrymen for proving that their nation was fit to stand alongside any.

There is another and a simpler reason why the encounter is remembered in Turkey as in Australia. Hundreds of thousands of people are still alive who mourn soldiers killed there. Some Turks, when asked last week about the commemoration, mentioned this fact as sufficient. There may be other reasons that elude the casual visitor. Is it possible, for example, that the Turks find it more pleasant to dwell on the defence of their homeland against invasion than to recall the simultaneous act by which, as a deliberate policy, the Turkish government killed nearly a million of its Armenian citizens?

Last Sunday, Armenians outside Turkey were commemorating this pioneer essay in modern genocide at the very time when the Turks were playing hosts to the Anzacs at Ari Burnu.

The old enemies are now allied, of course, against Russia, which is a traditional enemy of Turkey. In words spoken by a Turk on the beach at dawn, “If an unwanted war takes place, this time we are confident to fight together with you against enemies and the victory will be ours. In such a war our common friend and ally will be the Americans.” But this strategic factor is of little interest to the pilgrims. When they talk of the Turk, it usually is not as a potential ally but as a manly and chivalrous opponent.

Mr Hayden Ewart, of Melbourne, spoke often on the voyage about a Turkish sniper who let survivors from the battleship *Triumph* escape after she was sunk, who fired warning shots at a raw soldier swimming recklessly in Anzac Cove, and who demonstrated in other ways a kind of moral restraint. “He was a man

among men,” Mr Ewart said. “He was dinkum; he was human; he was a sport.” Mr Ewart tried to have the man traced early this year and wrote to the Turkish authorities describing and praising the man. A few weeks ago Major General H.G. Aran, director of foreign relations for the Turkish Veterans Union, read Mr Ewart’s letter to a meeting of university students in Ankara who received it, General Aran says, with enthusiasm. The sniper had not been found when the pilgrims left, and may well be dead; but General Aran had the letter published in an Ankara newspaper on 25 April.

For Turks the great day to remember is not 25 April but 18 March, when the shore batteries on each side of the Narrows turned back a British and French fleet. Like Anzac Day in this country, it is celebrated in every Turkish town with speeches and laying of wreaths. But when the commemorative stamps were being designed, the postal authorities decided not to include this date on any of them. Since Turks remember 18 March and Anzacs 25 April it was thought fitting for the stamps which commemorate their encounter to bear only the dates “1915–1965.”

The Turks are probably as ignorant about Australia and New Zealand as the Anzacs are about Turkey. “You are not English?” asked one of the guides. “Descendants of English,” answered a pilgrim. The guide looked as if he was not sure what distinction was being made, and he went on calling Lone Pine an “English cemetery.”

Certainly the Turks consider the two Anzac nations as one. The Australian and New Zealand pilgrims, on the other hand, have remained vividly aware of their difference of nationality throughout the voyage. Some New Zealanders never gave up their sense of grievance at being assigned to stark and crowded cabins on the lowest deck. Relations between the two Australian and New Zealand leaders were at best icy. Many New Zealanders were angry that although the program permitted wreaths to be laid on the

Australian memorial at Lone Pine on 25 April, the New Zealanders could not get to their own memorial at Chunuk Bair that day.

This was the most painful of several troubles in Turkey. At Istanbul, a wreath-laying ceremony at the Ataturk Memorial had ended before four bus loads of pilgrims arrived. At Anzac Cove at dawn on 25 April, the guests and the hosts had two different notions about how and where the groups of old enemies should meet, and some confusion followed. Some pilgrims were indignant at having to pay £7 for ground transport before they could set foot on Gallipoli: they objected rather as someone might object to having to pay before entering a place of worship. These and other difficulties in Turkey arose, in part at least, from a division of responsibilities and a lack of adequate communication between the leadership of the party, the Turkish Ministry of Tourism and Information, and the Turkish Army. Liaison was not made any easier by the fact that 23 April, when the pilgrims were preparing to leave Istanbul for Gallipoli, was a national holiday in celebration of Ataturk's establishing the Grand National Assembly at Ankara in 1920.

Dissension over the £7 fee became tangled with another issue which had bothered some passengers long before the ship reached Turkish waters. Some men said that the two VC winners on board, Mr Laurie McCarthy and Mr Bill Ruthven, should not be required to pay any such fee. Some men also said that as wearers of the supreme decoration, the VCs should have been involved officially in ceremonies, or at least given formal recognition. (It was not until 21 April, after more than two weeks at sea, that Mr McCarthy and Sir Raymond Huish met each other for the first time.) And there were other criticisms of the leadership, which some pilgrims said they would convey to their RSL sub-branches or to newspapers or to [well-known journalist] Eric Baume when they returned.

There were, finally, some sources of discontent on board which no leader could have removed. Although the veterans on board were perhaps the fittest men still alive out of the 300,000

who returned from World War I, they were suffering from the disabilities of any old men and from the mild but depressing illnesses which spread on ships. The long sweep around from Athens to Istanbul wearied many, especially those who were not much interested in the relics of antiquity. "When you get to our age," said an Australian at Izmir, "you want comfort, not travel and bloody romance. I'm never going to leave the country again." At the palace of King Minos in Crete, one man asked, "Didn't they build anything in these places except bloody ruins?" The most extreme critic of the tour was perhaps the Australian who said at Beirut that the pilgrims should have flown from Australia to Istanbul, caught a bus to Gallipoli, then flown back home.

Many of the complaints are likely to be forgotten when the veterans have had a good rest at home. What they will go on talking about is the experience of returning to Gallipoli on 25 April and 26 April.

As the ship sailed past Cape Helles for the last time, passengers were seeing a film made for the jubilee of Anzac by the Commonwealth News and Information Bureau. Near the end, the makers of the film intertwine Anzac and Troy, rather as Sidney Nolan has done in his Gallipoli paintings; and the script hints, as George Johnston hints in the April issue of *Walkabout*, that in contemplating at the same time the plains of Troy and the neighbouring hills of Gallipoli, men might make of Anzac a legend not merely for the warriors of Australia and New Zealand but for all mankind, past and present.

Such a diversion, or enrichment, of the Anzac legend is unlikely to appeal to most of the Gallipoli pilgrims. Vehicles of the Anzac Troy Travel Agency, run by a Turk who used to work for the Graves Commission, were hired by members of the party to get them around Gallipoli; but nobody took time off to visit Troy. The pilgrims had come to visit the place where they them-

selves fought half a century ago and where men they loved were killed. When they had done that, most of them wanted to get back across the world as fast as Qantas could carry them to the homeland from which the living and the dead had set out in 1914.