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On 25 April 1915, Allied forces landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in present-day Turkey to secure the sea route between Britain and France in the west and Russia in the east. After eight months of terrible fighting, they would fail.

Turkey regards the victory to this day as a defining moment in its history, a heroic last stand in the defence of the nation's Ottoman Empire. But, counter-intuitively, it would signify something perhaps even greater for the defeated Australians and New Zealanders involved: the birth of their countries' sense of nationhood.

Now approaching its centenary, the Gallipoli campaign, commemorated each year on Anzac Day, reverberates with importance as the origin and symbol of Australian and New Zealand identity. As such, the facts of the battle – which was minor against the scale of the First World War and cost less than a sixth of the Australian deaths on the Western Front – are often forgotten or obscured.

Peter FitzSimons, with his trademark vibrancy and expert melding of writing and research, recreates the disaster as experienced by those who endured it or perished in the attempt.

Gallipoli Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2014 by Random House Australia (first published October 29th 2014)

ISBN : 9781741666595

Author : Peter FitzSimons

Format : Hardcover 824 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Cultural, Australia, War, World War I, Military, Military History

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From Reader Review Gallipoli for online ebook

Shawn Stone says

I shake my head in wonderment at the prolific pen of Australian author/historian Peter FitzSimons. Presenting this pivotal work on the 100th anniversary of the battle of Gallipoli, the events of that fateful episode of the Great War, Australia's first baptism of fire, are brought to light in this accessible history. FitzSimons writes for the everyman and is often criticised for his unapologetic artistic license and über-emotive, nationalistic style; still, this work remains informative laying down the key players, dates, pivotal battles and heroic acts of those thrown into the maelstrom by military bungling and political circumstance. For all its technical shortcomings, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this and learned a lot. It gave me a good foundation to tackle more extensive accounts of the campaign and further appreciation of the men cut down in their prime in a war they could not hope to comprehend. Looking forward to reading his next WW1 account on the battle of Fromelles and Pozières.

Luke says

Thoroughly researched. Brought to life the people and the events that continue to shape our nation today.

Donald Grant says

Having traveled to Australia twice now, I have been curious as to why a country would "celebrate", what seemed to me, a major defeat in World War I. To me this seemed like the United States celebrating the day we left Vietnam. This book clarified it for me.

Australia had just unified as a commonwealth of Great Britain, and World War I became the unifying factor, especially the battle fought on a small beachfront in Turkey. The story of Gallipoli is one of amazing bravery, comradeship, incompetent politicians, and soldiers who did not question orders that led to so many deaths.

Peter Fitzsimons has compiled an incredible amount of research, combined with a writing style that makes this a page turner, in a book of over 700 pages. Detailing from both sides of this battle, he gives a very accurate picture of not only what happened here, but paints a vivid account of what it is like to fight a war.

The soldiers are remembered to this day in Australia as the country gathers on ANZAC day to both mourn the losses and celebrate the bravery of those who fought. I am writing this as Memorial Day approaches in the U.S., and we could take a lesson in patriotism from the Aussies and Kiwis.

The sad part of the book is the reminder of how in so many wars, those who lead us in, are often politicians who sit back and make decisions, some bad, some good, that result in the loss of so many of a country's finest. Fitzsimons does not shy away from documenting both types of decisions at Gallipoli.

This book will enlighten you, anger you, make you tear up, make you smile. An incredible read!!

Kim says

This book deserves more than five stars. Most of the time it was very hard to listen to as the reality that this was fact and not fiction. Every Australian needs to read/listen to this book. Thank you Peter from researching and collating this important stage in Australian history that needs to be known by all. RIP Sgt Albert Ernest BURN d 25 April 1915 Gallipoli

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

The story and the history of Gallipoli is one that needs to be continually told again and again, to educate the younger generations of the bravery of their forefathers but to also keep the spirit of the Anzac alive. Peter Fitzsimons, an author of over 20 something books in the military history field, does this well in his accessible tribute to Gallipoli, which was released on the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings. Initially I was very daunted by this 700 page plus, heavy looking book that works to comprehensively document the Gallipoli campaign. Once I settled into the embrace of Mr Fitzsimons engaging form of presenting his take on Gallipoli, I was hooked. I liked the format Fitzsimons uses to approach his version of events. He utilises a good mix of sources from diaries, letters, newspaper articles, personal statements and maps. All these sources are tied together neatly, a sign of the extensive research Fitzsimons has obviously undertaken to write this treasury. He works hard to present both sides of the story, enabling the reader to understand Gallipoli from both the Australian/New Zealand Corps point of view, as well as the Turks enemy side. He highlights the bungled decision making from the top political players of the time, resulting in so many senseless deaths. He also draws out attention to specific campaigns such as the Battle of Hill 60. His personalised approach seemed to have impact on this reader, with my understanding of Gallipoli only extending to primary school history education only. What left a stain on my mind were the instances where Fitzsimons takes you right inside the trenches, where you can feel, smell and hear everything the ANZACS felt from death, disease and comrades. His insertion of key figures that stay with the entire book add an individualised element from the story. I was enthralled by the stories of the war correspondents such as Charles Bean and the diligent nurses, such as Lydia King. The final chapters based on the evacuation of these soldiers after a disastrous campaign was compelling to read. The epilogue was the finest feature of this novel, bringing together all the essential elements of the Gallipoli story. Most importantly this part of the text is essential in showing us how vital this terrible loss of promising young lives was to the birth of our nation. Peter Fitzsimons Gallipoli is an essential text, it is one that should be on high school textbook lists and a mandatory read for all Australians. I applaud Mr Fitzsimons on bringing such a defining moment in our nation's history alive for readers to appreciate.

Ietrio says

The book in itself it is okay. But the guy seems to be paid by the word. He has a lot of time to mindlessly write or he was terribly in debt. Quotes, motto, everything is written in a long form than the text is parsed again to inject more words. Is this a nationalist text? Is this a pro-war text? Is there any drama packed inside? It is hard to tell with so many words that make any noun shine to the point that the page is almost meaningless.

Mikeynom Thomason says

Not a fan of Fitzsimon's pose but the structure worked well. Present tense and short, sharp sections made it an easy read for the 700 pages.

Was surprised by the lack of details about the battle of Lone Pine.

Its a gripping story and just needs meat on the bone, which the author has done here.

Deb says

I think I have a soft spot for anything written about Gallipoli. I did love this, even though it frustrated me listening to the mistakes made and the horrific loss of life. Probably not much in here that I haven't read before, but I liked how it was presented.

Mrugesh says

It's to read like a novel. It does.

It's to be historically accurate. It is.

It's to provide an objective look at the Gallipoli campaign. It does.

It's to recall the Anzac experience in Gallipoli. It does.

It's to be enjoyable. It is.

Given that it achieves everything it aims to, this book is a success. But beyond this, what I really like is that it really is quite objective. Even when it focuses more on the Anzac experience, it spends a good deal of time with the Turks. It doesn't try to vilify anyone, and at every opportunity chooses to highlight the human side of this quite inhumane a campaign. The Turks' treatment of the (view spoiler) was.. unexpected, but quite welcome, for instance. There is also some time spent with the Turks, most prominently with Mustafa Kamal.

I did perceive a few minor negatives. Some 'linguistic mechanisms' (I don't know what the a good word for this is) feel overused at times. There were some others, but I'm just nitpicking at this point.

The book does however, spend a considerable time on the actual experience of being at Gallipoli and there are a few individual story lines that are carried throughout the book. Most notable of these are the two war correspondents - Charles Bean and Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. This kind of story telling is quite successful here.

The Epilogue also manages to round off all the threads of the story very nicely - individual, national and military. And like this Epilogue, the book is extremely satisfying as a story with a beginning, middle and end. The events in the story themselves are quite harrowing and, as is the case with all the other WW1 books

I'm reading, portray the war in a very ugly light. But then again, so does the human side illuminate a hopeful light.

This is a must read for the military history and the human experience of the Great War. Though, given that the book chooses to focus on the Anzac experience, it doesn't spend as much time with the British and the French, if at all. There aren't too many details about the personnel and the happenings at Cape Helles. Only the major events are recounted. Also, after a considerable time spent (very good time at that) with the crew of the AE-2, the rest of the naval campaign in the Dardanelles is completely devoid of even a mention.

Anyway, here at the end, I'm wondering what may have happened to (view spoiler).

Melanie T says

I have read this author with previous books and like his deeply researched stuff. Who does not know a bit about this event which so shaped Australian perceptions of themselves. It is a balanced book in that the author has added to my knowledge at least what the Turkish side was experiencing. Certainly my grandfather who was with the 16th battalion always thought he was well off, with just a useless right arm, courtesy of a bullet in the shoulder which caused nerve damage. He hoped the Turk who shot him had good luck and survived..

The utter stupidity of the whole campaign makes me weep. I had not realised there were French soldiers and poor French colonial conscripts, whilst the Turks had also "pressed" Arab soldiers. The book does concentrate on The Australian perspective, but I was pleased that the New Zealand contingent was also discussed. Afterall, my grandfather could easily have been with the Otago Rifles if he had not left NZ for a warm, sunny and dry spot in West Australia.

The book underscores the waste and senselessness of war, but have we learnt anything at all?

Kevin Giles says

Plenty to read and contemplate in this big book for students of war history. This is a deep and meticulous account of a terrible and witless slaughter of Australian men. Like many looks back at war, this story makes us think forward toward peace.

David Hamilton says

A great read. Lots of fantastic insights about what was faced by all parties. The characters are so well detailed that you almost feel like you know them personally. One not to be missed

Dimitri says

Gallipoli Light. Lynn MacDonald, Aussie-Style.

FitzSimons is a journalist and not a historian, so we can't expect him to write like an academic. He writes as if he's following the Aussies together with Charles Bean, scribbling anecdotes in his notebook that don't make it into the dusty tomes. His "*throw another one on the barbie, mate*" language takes some getting used to. Sometimes you start reading faster.. until you realize you've dropped from one scene into the next.

These are assets for an oral history of the ANZAC corps. Filling in the blanks of the Official History, reconstructing conversations that may or may not have occurred exactly, filling the boots and flinging himself down in the dust with those incorrigibly high-spirited warriors.

The Turks don't remain an abstract, either; the burial truces and less formal moments of compassion between the savage frenzy of the "*Allah !*"-roaring bayonet charges give the enemy a human face. Perhaps not in the "we're all in the same boat" way of the Western Front, but certainly in the mutual "*they have pluck, too*" way. There's a very touching 75th anniversary picture to go with this:

Any gripes ? There's a fair focus on the importance of the ANZAC "*spray de corps*" to the nurturing of a nationhood for the young Dominions... but that is an aspect that hardly resonates with a foreign audience... and it helps to have read up a bit on the campaign, because this casual cruise is not the best at painting the big picture

Vicki Caton says

What an amazing book my heart went out to the men and boy who fought and gave their lives for the King and Country, to learn that it wasn't just the Turks that were the enemy but the English War Cabinet and Generals like Kitchener and Hamilton. I am so proud to be an Kiwi, and I will always remember every 25th April what ANZAC Day really stands for.

Elle Smith says

I was never taught Australian war history in school, so my knowledge of the Gallipoli campaign was limited to the stories told at ANZAC day dawn services.

This book has made me laugh, cry (a lot) and above all, feel immensely proud to be Australian. It's fabulously written and told as a novel with the stories of specific people followed throughout. The tails of the war are truly horrendous and shocking. I don't think I'd ever fully comprehended the enormity of the task handed to the ANZACs before reading this.

It'll take me a few more days to process yet, but I believe this book has made and will continue to make a profound impact on my comprehension of war, Australia's sense of self as a nation, and my own respect toward veterans. I cannot recommend it enough.

Peter Fitzsimons, I dip me lid.
