

Reflections on ANZAC Day Down Under, 2015.

Yesterday (Australian time) was Anzac Day: and this year it was the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli, the landing and subsequent fierce but ultimately unsuccessful months of struggle that are particularly remembered on that day, though it has also become a day to remember and honour all Australians who serve and have served and died in our armed forces.

Despite the very recent discovery and foiling of a plot by Australia-resident Muslims to carry out a jihad murder rampage at an Anzac Day ceremony, and the real possibility – borne in mind particularly by those of us Aussies who have spent the last ten years and more informing ourselves about Islam and becoming the more intelligently alarmed the more we learn – that there might be other Muslims around the ridges harbouring similar intentions, people turned up at Anzac day ceremonies and marches all over the country in record numbers.

In Australia's capital city, Canberra, 120 000 people – not a few of them travelling from interstate to be there – got up very early to attend the dawn ceremony at the National War Memorial. (By the way: the total population of Canberra was, at last count, 381 000, so the number of people at the ceremony was equivalent to just under a third of the city's population).

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/record-crowd-of-120000-people-attend-dawn-service-in-canberra/6420536>

“A record crowd of 120,000 have gathered for the Anzac Day dawn service at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra marking the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. Seating was full at the parade ground by 5 am, with tens of

thousands of people packing in to view the solemn service.

“An indigenous sailor (and it should be noted that Aboriginal Australians, “Black Diggers”, have served in the Australian Armed Forces ever since the Sudan and the Boer War, with many enlisting to fight in World War One and World War Two – at a time when they were not even officially counted as citizens – and others serving in later conflicts such as Korea and Vietnam; they have a long and proud tradition of distinguished service, and a high rate of enlistment per head of population. – CM) broke the silence and began the service playing the didgeridoo in commemoration of the Anzac sacrifice. The sound of Able Seaman Boatswains Mate Alan Paaterson’s didgeridoo split the dawn and echoed across the parade ground on a mild Canberra morning...

“Chief of the Army Lieutenant General David Morrison gave an emotive address on the value of the Anzac soldiers in Australia’s national history.

“He paid tribute to the generation that served in World War I...”.

In Sydney, 30 000 people gathered in Martin Place.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/anzac-day-dawn-service-draws-thousands-to-martin-place-sydney/6420504>

‘Anzac Day 2015: Dawn Service Draws Thousands to Martin Place in Sydney.’

‘Up to 30,000 people have gathered in Sydney’s Martin Place (the same place where a murder-minded Muslim, Man Monis, took people hostage in the Lindt Cafe late last year, bringing about the deaths of two people – one by his own hand and one killed by shrapnel as police broke the siege – and wounding of others – CM) for the dawn service commemorating the centenary of Anzac Day...

'Some regular Anzac Day attendees told the ABC today was the biggest turnout that they had ever seen...".

'A number of the people at the service said they felt that it was especially important to attend this year.

'One man said he had commemorated every Anzac Day since he joined the Air Force in 1957. "I remember a lot of our friends who are not with us any more. It's one of the greatest things in a serviceman's life...remembering our mates, because we're all like family," he said...

"Dawn services are also taking place in various cities around the state.

'In Wollongong, thousands gathered at McCabe Park where 75 school children held glow sticks to represent the 75 local soldiers who were killed at Gallipoli...".

In Melbourne – the very city where the recently-foiled Muslim plot to attack an Anzac Ceremony was hatched – an enormous crowd turned up, despite chilly rain; one wonders how many of the attendees were doing so as an act of defiance.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/record-crowd-expected-at-melbournes-anzac-day-dawn-service/6420488>

'Anzac Day 2015: Rain Fails to Deter Massive Crowd at Melbourne's Dawn Service'

"Tens of thousands of people have turned out for the Anzac Day dawn service at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance to mark 100 years since the landings at Gallipoli.

'Shots rang out as the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Royal Australian Air Force band played 'Abide with Me' to the crowd of thousands.

'The rain did not deter the huge crowd which filled the service...

'Charlie, who was named after his great-grandfather who served in World War I at Gallipoli, is at the service for the first time. "We brought down some pictures of him, and I just want to come down here to remember him", he said.

"Police are out in force after two teenagers (*sic: Dear ABC, that should be "two young Muslim men" – CM*) were charged earlier this week over an alleged (*sic: why "alleged"? – CM*) plot to attack officers and the public at an Anzac commemoration.

'Authorities said there was now no specific threat to the event...".

Melbourne, I should add, hosted one of the most vivid and beautiful memorial installations, possibly inspired by the waterfall of poppies that was created in London for last year's Remembrance Day.

Federation Square in Melbourne – was blanketed with some 250 000 red poppies, each crocheted by hand and each "accompanied by a story of love, loss or gratitude for servicemen and women". Click on the link to see pictures.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-24/federation-square-taken-over-by-a-sea-of-handmade-poppies/6419068>

"Dozens of volunteers worked to connect the poppies to a wire carpet, which has been laid over the steps of Federation Square in several panels.

"The panels will be moved to the Princes Street Bridge for the Anzac Day parade, to line veterans as they march between the city centre and the war memorial.

"The poppies will later tour Australia for the centenary [of Anzac] before finding a permanent home, which Ms Berry hopes will be at the National War Memorial in Canberra."

Brisbane, Australia's third largest state capital, also saw

huge crowds, both in the suburbs and at the city's Anzac Square.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/thousands-pack-anzac-square-for-brisbane-dawn-service/6420460>

'Brisbane's Anzac Square packed as young and old attend dawn service to mark Anzac centenary.

'Thousands of people have packed Brisbane's Anzac Square and nearby vantage points for the dawn service...

'Crowds spilled out of Anzac Square and onto the city's streets...

'Screens were set up in the square and in nearby Post Office Square, King George Square and the Queen Street Mall, to offer a view to the large crowds assembled.

'The scene was repeated at ceremonies across suburban Brisbane and in cities around the state as unprecedented crowds gathered to remember the launch of a military failure 100 years ago that has so marked the Australian psyche. In central Brisbane, after a long roll of drums, the lights of Anzac Square were extinguished and the crowd was led in a prayer of remembrance.

'Queensland Governor Paul de Jersey then delivered a moving speech outlining the extent of Queensland's sacrifices in World War I...

'Governor De Jersey told those assembled that 58,000 men, nearly 40 percent of Queensland's male population aged 18 to 45, signed up and fought in WWI...

"The cream of the nation was lost a century ago..."

'Suzanne Walpole said she attended the service every year in memory of her father. "My father was in the 2/9th Battalion, and we also had an uncle who died in Gallipoli, so I really

come to honour past servicemen”, she said.’

It was a similar story of huge turnouts in the other states.

In Tasmania, where thousands gathered in Hobart and Launceston

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/hobart-anzac-day-dawn-service/6420456>

In South Australia, where there was a record crowd at the State War Memorial and also at regional centres.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/record-crowd-at-adelaide-anzac-day-dawn-service/6420518>

And in Western Australia.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/anzac-day-kings-park-dawn-service/6415694>

‘Anzac Day 2015: Tens of Thousands Gather in WA to Remember Lives Lost in WWI’.

(And not only in WWI; many who attend Anzac Day ceremonies are also thinking of Aussie soldiers who were killed in action in later wars such as WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan... – CM).

‘Tens of thousands of West Australians have gathered in Perth’s King’s Park (*where, by the way, one may also find the memorial commemorating those Australians of West Australian extraction who were murdered by the Muslim jihad attack on the Sari nightclub in Bali in 2002 – CM*) in the cool air of a clear morning to commemorate 100 years since Anzac troops landed on the shores of Gallipoli.

‘Families, veterans, young people and the elderly began streaming into the park from the early hours of the morning.

‘Some had arrived on Friday night to stake their claim on a good vantage point, including Matthew Charlton, who arrived at

3.30 pm on Friday with his sleeping-bag and chair. "I have grandparents who participated in World War II, so I wanted to show my respects to the family and all those who fought in wars and conflicts", he said. "I figured this was the absolute least I could do, to spend a night out in the cold, when they'd been in the trenches."

'As the sky began to lighten over the city, the Last Post rang out, followed by a minute's silence.

'Crowd numbers have not been confirmed, but the RSL (Returned Servicemen's League - CM) had said it expected crowds of between 65000 and 75000 people, a significant increase on the 45 000 to 50 000 people it usually attracts...

'RSL WA president Graham Edwards said before the event that public safety had been prioritised. "The concern is that with increased crowds, more traffic and that sort of thing, and with people walking down roads where there's no light and it's dark, that it just creates risk issues to the public", he said. "There's no information or intelligence that would suggest in any way that Anzac Day in WA will be targeted, but yes, we will have sufficient security there".

'Mr Edwards said Anzac Day had a special resonance in WA because of the number of young West Australian men who enlisted. He said at least a quarter of the Anzac forces fighting at Gallipoli came from WA..". END.

I could finish this Anzac Day roundup with the words of the traditional "Ode", source of the words, often heard on Anzac Day, "lest we forget".

But instead I'm going to finish with a rather wobbly and very, very Australian clip of a country singer performing Brendan Walmsley's ballad "Bottle Tree Lane", about a young woman in a country town and her young man who went off to War. The "bottle tree lane" of the title is to be seen in the outback Queensland town of Roma.

Here are the words:

"Bottle trees lining the lane where she met him?

"The place where her dreams had finally come true?

"Flickering sunlight the dance of the branches?

"They walked beneath each afternoon?

"In a world going crazy, skies couldn't be clearer?"

"Til war was declared and her eyes filled with tears?

"The boy enlisted, she cried when he kissed her?

"And he whispered these words in her ear

"???Remember the good things the good Lord has given?

"Remember that love will remain?

"Here's to the wonderful life that we're living?

"We owe it to Bottle Tree Lane?

"Don't forget Bottle Tree Lane???."

"Once more they walked through the trees in the evening?

"The only one smiling, the man in the moon?

"They promised each other forever?

"The sun came up too soon?

"The whole town turned out for their boys at the station?

"Waving their flags as they boarded the train?

"He heard her voice as she ran down the platform

?“Come back to Bottle Tree Lane.”?

REPEAT CHORUS

??”Time marches on she became an old lady

“?The ANZAC parade made its way down the lane?.

“The diggers passed by recalling the fallen?

‘Cause each bottle tree bears a name?.

“Everyone knew why she stood where she did

“?Beside the same tree on that day every year?

“And her grandchildren don’t take for granted the reason?

“They’re able to play without fear.”???

REPEAT CHORUS x 2: ??Lest we forget Bottle Tree Lane.”