



EVERY APRIL, AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS PAUSE TO REMEMBER THE ANZACS LANDING AT GALLIPOLI. IS THERE ANOTHER EVENT FROM THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN THAT IS EQUALLY DESERVING OF COMMEMORATION? EXPLAIN YOUR CHOICE WITH REFERENCE TO PRIMARY SOURCE EVIDENCE.

The Battle of the Nek



The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915 by George Lambert

YEAR 9
CHARLIE BLUNDELL

...a deed of self-sacrificing bravery which has never been surpassed in military history – the charge of the Australian Light Horse into certain death at the call of their comrades need during a crisis in the greatest battle that has ever been fought on Turkish soil...

Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent for WW1 about the Battle of the Nek.¹

Every April, on the 25th, we pause at 5:30am to commemorate the landing at Gallipoli in 1915.² We pause to remember the landing as it is a time of reflection and commemoration to honour the courage and sacrifice of the ANZACS and all that have served before and after. However, the Battle of the Nek also deserves equal national recognition alongside the landing. This is not because of its success as a military campaign, but because of its powerful display of ANZAC spirit. The Battle of the Nek was an event of intense bravery that embodies not only what the Australian and New Zealand troops stood for, but also for what we as Australians should admire, remember and look up to. This event also embodies the camaraderie demonstrated between the Australian and New Zealand soldiers throughout the 8 month campaign, cementing the ANZAC spirit.² Charles Bean witnessed the ANZAC spirit and described it as, “reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat.”³ This observation perfectly illustrates the qualities shown by the ANZAC troops in the Battle of the Nek and will act as the foundation to justify why it is a significant event worth equal commemoration.

The Nek was a crucial position on the end of the ANZAC front line in Gallipoli, Turkey. It was a narrow strip of land that stretched between the ANZAC held Russell's Top, and Turkish held trenches on the slopes of Baby 700 (see Appendix 1).⁴

An attack was planned for the 8th and 10th regiments of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade to take this crucial position on the 9th of August 2015 and to divert Turks from the heights of Chunuk Bair so their comrades, the New Zealanders could take that position with more ease.⁵ The problem, however, was the Nek was heavily fortified with Turkish

¹ Charles Bean cited in Lighthouse.org.au , 2025

² Department of Veterans' Affairs , 2025

³ Australian War Memorial , 2023

⁴ www.awm.gov.au , n.d.

⁵ www.awm.gov.au , n.d.

trenches strategically placed with machine rifles ready to be able to fire down the slopes onto the Nek.

The charge was planned with artillery support, including several warships and a destroyer, to begin at 4:00am, and to finish simultaneously when the first wave of troops went onto the Nek at 4:30am⁵. The artillery support would force the Turks to seek cover from the bombardment away from their machine gun and rifle positions and give the 3rd Light Horse Brigade a better chance of getting to the opposition trenches before being seriously injured or killed by Turkish machinegun fire (see appendix 2). Charles Bean described the bombardment as the heaviest since the 2nd May.⁶ However, the artillery shelling abruptly finished at 4:23am, seven minutes earlier than planned.⁷ It was later discovered that the reason for this mistake was because the artillery officers' and the assault officers' watches were not synchronised.⁶ This left the assault officers in the ANZAC trenches with a choice, to start the assault seven minutes early and risk being fired upon by their own artillery, or wait it out until 4:30am. They decided to wait as to not disrupt and confuse earlier plans. Because of this decision, the Turks had time to reassemble their front line, with soldiers repositioning themselves with machine guns and rifles.

After seven minutes of anxious waiting in the ANZAC trench, when 4:30am came, and the first of the four waves of light horsemen went over (two from the 8th regiment and two from the 10th) were obliterated. Within 30 seconds, most of the Australian men were shot down.⁸ The second line, also from the 8th regiment, watched as all their mates were either wounded or killed. Then the second line of ANZACs got the order to go. They attacked, scrambling over their dead and wounded comrades of the first wave and, straight away, just like the first, were again immediately cut down.⁴

*“They went forward as if on parade, without a tremor, a murmur or a falter”
(Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett)⁹*

By the end of the second wave, the consensus among the troops was, as Private Cecil McAnulty put it, *“only suicide boys.”*¹⁰ This summarizes the collective feeling of the troops leaving the trenches.

⁶ www.awm.gov.au , 2025

⁷ Campbell, E. , 2011

⁸ Lives of the First World War , n.d.

⁹ Ashmead-Bartlett, E. , n.d

¹⁰ McAnulty, A. , n.d.

Cancellation of the rest of the attack was proposed by Lieutenant Colonel Noel Brazier, commander of the 10th Light Horse Regiment. However, it was quickly rejected by Major John Antill, who had effective command over the 8th and 10th regiments as Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Henry White, who was leading the assault had gone over with the first wave and was killed.¹¹ He had received reports that marker flags had been sighted by the Turkish trenches, indicating troops had successfully made it across what the ANZAC soldiers referred to as 'No Man's Land' and were assaulting the Turkish trenches. This report was indeed true, it was confirmed in a Turkish article after the war, however, the troops who raised the flag were killed immediately after and the flag taken down. Antill did not check the battlefield to see if another wave would be of any use, nor did he confirm if the marker flags were still in place, which they were not.⁵ So Brazier returned to his men, and famously told them, "*Sorry, lads, but the order is to go.*"¹² The third wave, now of the 10th regiment, went over onto the Nek, and, no differently to the other two lines that went before them, they met the same tragic fate.

Once again, horrific casualties were caused by Turkish rifle and machine gun fire, so Brazier again went to Antill to call off the remainder of the attack, which Antill once more dismissed. This time, however, Brazier didn't take no for an answer, and went off to find Colonel Frederic Hughes, the commander of the attack, who was stationed at an observation post away from the blood of the battle. Hughes, after hearing about the carnage, then proceeded to call off the rest of the battle.⁴

"The whole thing was nothing but bloody murder" (Lieutenant Colonel Noel Brazier)¹³

However, while Brazier was off getting approval for cancellation, the fourth and final line prepared themselves to go over the top, to almost certain death. Amidst much confusion, Brazier tried to tell the troops that the final wave had been called off, however, the right hand side of the line charged before Hughes' order could reach them. The troops on the left, while knowing that they did not need to follow their comrades into certain death, charged anyway, not wanting their mates to have to face the bullets alone.⁵ Charles Bean described it as, one of the bravest acts in the history of Australians at war.²

At the conclusion of the Battle of the Nek, of the approximately 600 men who went up and over the Australian trenches onto the Nek, 234 were killed and 138 wounded. A

¹¹ Luscombe, S. , 2025

¹² Australian War Memorial , 2025

¹³ Lieutenant Colonel Noel Brazier cited in Correspondent, I.M.N.D. , 2014 ; SBS , 2015

table compiled soon after the charge at the Nek, attempts to calculate the huge Australian casualties sustained during the attack. At the time, the figure was believed to be 355 (see appendix 3).¹⁴ As Peter Burness, senior historian at the Australian War Memorial, reflected on the battle, he stated that it was, “*such a heroic failure.*”¹⁷ The ANZAC spirit shown throughout the Battle of the Nek is nothing short of inspiring. The valour, endurance and camaraderie shown by all troops involved, and especially the fourth line is truly heroic.

Private Frank Merritt of the 8th regiment wrote a personal account which encapsulates that battle precisely:

*“I am sending you this letter which I thought I would never be lucky enough to write. We have been out for a big job and our poor regiment has almost been wiped out. Only two officers left, and I am one of 20 to return out of 600 of the poor old 8th....Old timers, who were at the landing, said that was like hell but that this was like 20 hells in one.”*¹⁵

The Battle of the Nek event captures the ANZAC spirit like no other. That level of courage, of sacrifice, is what truly defines the ANZACs. It’s what makes their legacy worth remembering, not just as history, but as a reminder of what true bravery and unity look like. Just like the landing, which we remember and commemorate on ANZAC day, the sacrifice that was shown in the Battle of the Nek event is equally deserving as it reflects the heart of the ANZAC legacy. Not victory, but selflessness, for paying the ultimate sacrifice for a cause greater than themselves to give us the freedoms we hold dear. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, the British Daily Telegraph’s war correspondent during the Gallipoli campaign, wrote a deeply moving account of the lead-up to the Battle of the Nek, and sums up the collective feeling of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade going into the attack:

The men know beforehand that they have been selected for an enterprise which has very little chance of succeeding and even if it does, few of them will survive. For months past both sides had sniped across this narrow valley [the Nek] but no man had ever crossed it alive... They were told the attack was only intended as a feint to hold the Turks in their numerous positions while their comrades attempted to force the Turkish flank further down. Therefore these brave men were stirred up by none of the incentives of feeling their advance might lead to some decisive success; they knew no reserves were massed behind them to support their attack.

¹⁴ www.awm.gov.au, 2016

¹⁵ Private F.L. Merritt cited in Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2025

*They fully realised they were about to be offered up as a human sacrifice to aid their comrades in other parts of the field... Very soon I knew the hour had come but none showed depression or fear.*⁹

This captures how deeply the ANZAC spirit ran in the Australian troops at the Nek, when in the face of almost certain death, they persisted, they went over, no matter the cost. For the greater cause of protecting Australia and New Zealand.

Remembering events like The Battle of the Nek isn't just about honouring the past. It's about learning what courage, loyalty, and sacrifice truly look like. It's about recognising that the freedoms Australians enjoy today were built on the choices of people who knew they might not live to see these benefits. The Nek, though often overshadowed, equally deserves national commemoration and remembrance because it embodies the ANZAC spirit. When Australian's stand for the Last Post or hear the words "Lest We Forget," we should also think of these ANZAC heroes, not as nameless soldiers, but as Australians who gave up everything for something bigger than themselves through courage and bravery, camaraderie and mateship, for Australia.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

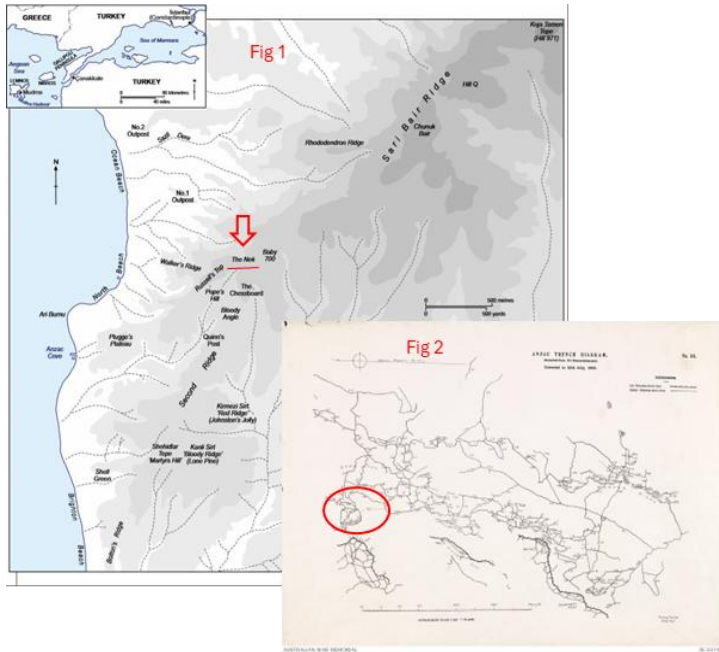
ART07965

The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915, by George Lambert

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/media/image/awm-art07965>

Appendix

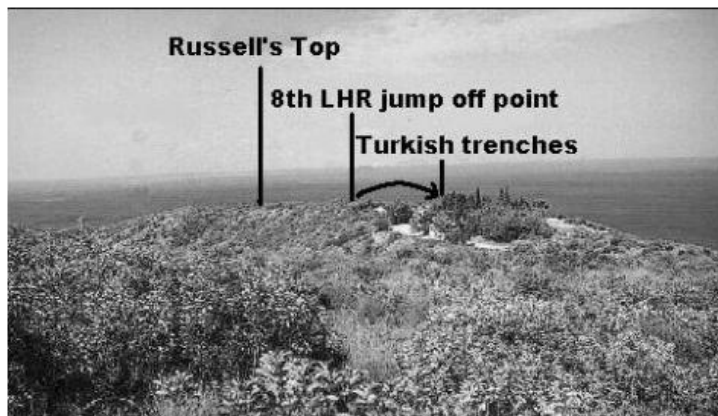
Appendix 1



<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/media/image/gallipoli-peninsula-map-1915>

<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RC03195/large/3846946.JPG>

Appendix 2



<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RC03195/large/3846946.JPG>

Appendix 3

State Showing losses August 20, 1915.

Date.	Place and Time.	3 rd Light Horse Brigade.												Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
		Efforts			Killed		Wounded		Army Sick		MIA	Trans.	Total.	
Visit	Offs	OR	Total	Offs	OR	Offs	OR	Offs	OR					
B.H.Q.	5	14	19	-	-	1	1	-	9	-	2	13		
3 rd Sig Troop		20	20	-	-	1	1	-	14	-	-	16		
5 th L.H. Regt.	12	164	176	14	164	6	146	4	172	5	5	516		
9 th L.H. Regt.	9	354	363	3	34	3	78	10	190	4	4	326		
11 th L.H. Regt.	16	313	329	8	84	11	98	6	174	3	3	392		
	42	885	907	25	282	22	324	20	559	12	19	1263		
		1263			307		346		579					
		907												
		2170		Total landed.									Reinforcements - 498.	

C.1166A.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/anzac-voices/august-offensive>

Bibliography

Sources

Ashmead-Bartlett, E. (n.d.). *The 8th Victorian Light Horse at the Nek (2p.)*. [online] Trove. Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1599089960/view> [Accessed 21 Jul. 2025].

Australian War Memorial (2023). *Anzac Spirit | the Australian War Memorial*. [online] Australian War Memorial. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/anzac/spirit> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

Australian War Memorial (2025). 'Sorry, lads, but the Order Is to go': the August offensive, Gallipoli 1915 / David W. Cameron. [online] Awm.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/LIB100025985> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

Campbell, E. (2011). *Revisiting the Charge at The Nek | The Australian War Memorial*. [online] Awm.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/revisiting-the-charge-at-the-nek> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2025].

Department of Veterans' Affairs (2025). *Gallipoli Campaign 1915 | Anzac Portal*. [online] anzacportal.dva.gov.au. Available at: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/where-australians-served/gallipoli> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

Ian McPhedran National Defence Correspondent (2014). 'Nothing but Bloody Murder'. *news.com.au* — *Australia's leading news site*. [online] 5 Aug. Available at: <https://www.news.com.au/national/anzac-day/nothing-but-bloody-murder-the-charge-at-the-nek-in-gallipoli-was-military-disaster-on-an-epic-scale/news-story/02cb4e4d4452c9342c0d610d87eaa683> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

Lighthouse.org.au. (2025). *Charge of the 3rd Light Horse at the NEK – Australian Light Horse Association*. [online] Available at: <https://www.lighthouse.org.au/charge-of-the-3rd-light-horse-at-the-nek/#> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

Lives of the First World War (n.d.). *Story: Battle of the Nek | Lives of the First World War*. [online] livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk. Available at: <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/story/34854>.

McAnulty, A. (n.d.). *Diary of Cecil Anthony McAnulty, [1915]*. [online] www.awm.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG0000915?image=54#display-image> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

SBS (2015). *How Anzacs' Battle at Nek Went Wrong*. [online] SBS News. Available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/how-anzacs-battle-at-nek-went-wrong/14cnmbuvv>.

www.awm.gov.au. (2016). *The August Offensive | the Australian War Memorial*. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/anzac-voices/august-offensive> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

www.awm.gov.au. (2025). *Chapter XXI – the Feints of August 7th*. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1069529> [Accessed 21 Jul. 2025].

www.awm.gov.au. (n.d.). *Charge at the Nek*. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84701> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

www.awm.gov.au. (n.d.). *The attack at the Nek | Australian War Memorial*. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/gmaps/trench/nek> [Accessed Jul. 2025].

Images

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/media/image/gallipoli-peninsula-map-1915>
<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RC03195/large/3846946.JPG>
<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RC03195/large/3846946.JPG>
<https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/anzac-voices/august-offensive>
<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/media/image/awm-art0796>
<https://www.mhhv.org.au/the-august-offensive/>