

# Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize

Question 2:

*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.*

Why do Australians pause every year on ANZAC Day to remember and commemorate the Gallipoli landing, when other arguably more significant battles, such as the Battle of Lone Pine, are more deserving of commemoration? The Gallipoli Campaign was a British-led Allied operation aiming to support Russia by securing the Dardanelles channel supply route and knocking the Ottoman Empire out of the war by securing Constantinople (Adams, 2015). The campaign ultimately failed, with little strategic advantage gained and immense casualties resulting from poor planning and execution. The Battle of Lone Pine was part of the August offensive, trying to break the stalemate by diverting Ottoman forces from the main allied forces. ANZACs managed to secure the Ottoman frontline and defend it against several counterattacks in the days that followed. The Battle of Lone Pine deserves national commemoration for the heavy casualties and brutality, the immense courage and bravery shown by Australian Soldiers, and the battle's success in a campaign mostly marked by failure.

Although the Gallipoli landing is commemorated for its significant importance, the Battle of Lone Pine should also be commemorated for its immense casualties and the intense close-quarter combat, making it arguably the most brutal and bloody battle of the Gallipoli campaign. The Battle of Lone Pine was part of the August offensive, where ANZACs aimed to draw Ottoman forces from the British landing at Suvla Bay (Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2024). In just four days, ANZAC forces managed to capture Ottoman trenches through brutal close-quarters trench warfare. According to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (2023), approximately 2300 Australians were killed in the Battle of Lone Pine, and the Australian War Memorial (2019a) estimates that 8709 Australians were killed in the whole of the Gallipoli campaign. This signifies that over a quarter of deaths in the Gallipoli campaign were from the

Battle of Lone Pine. While the Gallipoli landing marks the beginning of the campaign, Lone Pine showcases the sheer brutality of trench warfare, where mere metres of space cost hundreds of lives to gain. Private John Gammage recorded in his 1915 diary,

“The wounded bodies of both Turks and Anzacs were piled up 3 and 4 deep ... the bombs simply poured in but as fast as our men went down another would take his place” (Gammage, 1915).

This illustrates the sheer scale of casualties and how Australian soldiers pressed forward despite the devastating losses. The sheer scale of loss and casualties at Lone Pine makes it a critical battle in the Gallipoli Campaign that deserves commemoration.

The Battle of Lone Pine should be commemorated for the extreme bravery and Anzac spirit shown by Australian soldiers, who endured what can be considered one of the most brutal and dehumanising battles in the Gallipoli Campaign. The qualities of ANZAC spirit include, “endurance, courage, ingenuity, good humour, and mateship” (Australian War Memorial, 2023). Eyewitness, Sergeant Lawrence described the battlefield as,

“just one mass of dead bodies... within a space of fifteen feet, I can count fourteen of our boys stone dead... men and boys who yesterday were full of joy and life, now lying there, cold – cold – dead” (Lawrence, 1981).

This description of the horrific conditions faced by Australian soldiers on the battlefield shows the sheer scale of suffering and loss. Soldiers, despite being surrounded by the dead and being exposed to such horror firsthand, continued to fight for Australia, demonstrating their immense emotional strength. According to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (2023), when Australian forces reached Ottoman trenches, they found timber roofs, forcing Australian soldiers to either drop, almost suicidally, into enemy trenches or run behind enemy front lines. Australian soldiers were able to adapt to the unforeseen circumstances and run blindly into enemy trenches and territory, showing immense bravery and courage, two qualities of ANZAC spirit. Seven Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest decoration for bravery in the British Empire (Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2023). Australian soldiers' strength to continue fighting in enemy trenches, surrounded by dead

bodies, their adaptability to their environment, and the awarding of seven Victoria Crosses demonstrate immense bravery and ANZAC spirit, the very qualities Anzac Day is meant to commemorate, arguably displayed at Lone Pine even more profoundly than at the Gallipoli landing.

While the Gallipoli campaign failed overall, the Battle of Lone Pine is notable for being one of the few successful battles in a campaign otherwise marked by failure, rendering it equally worthy of commemoration. This contrast is clear when compared to other battles such as The Nek, which took place only one day after Lone Pine. Private Cecil Anthony McNulty wrote,

“We were right out in the open and all the Turkish machine guns and rifle seemed to be playing on us... I yelled out to the other 4 chaps, ‘This is only suicide boys, I’m going to make a jump for it’” (McNulty, 1915).

The Nek and many other Battles of the Gallipoli campaign were doomed from the start due to their uncoordinated and senseless assaults. According to Gray (2021), Lone Pine was a rare and early success for Australians in the First World War. Despite limited strategic value, the Battle of Lone Pine was a success with Australian forces completing a clear objective of capturing Ottoman trenches and holding them for days against counterattacks. The Battle of Lone Pine's strategic success can also be linked to Australia's tactical success later in the war on the Western Front. For instance, Thomas Blamey, while he didn't fight in the Battle of Lone Pine, was a part of the Gallipoli campaign, witnessing Australia's strategic failures and successes (Australian War Memorial, n.d.). Later in the war, Blamey was the chief of staff of the Australian Corps led by John Monash (Australian War Memorial, 2020). His experiences at Gallipoli likely helped John Monash develop his extremely successful combined arms strategy at the Battle of Hamel. The Battle of Lone Pine deserves commemoration as it represents a rare instance where Australian planning and actions led to success, unlike the tragic losses of many other battles in the Gallipoli campaign.

The Battle of Lone Pine should be commemorated, alongside the Gallipoli landing, as a defining part of Australian military history. Across four brutal days, Australian soldiers fought

in unimaginable conditions, with extreme courage and bravery, achieving one of the few tactical successes of the Gallipoli Campaign. The Battle of Lone Pine also created an extraordinary number of casualties, making it all the more worthy of commemoration. As we consider Australia's contribution to World War I, we must ask: Should commemoration focus on where the journey began or where the courage and loss are most deeply felt by Australians? As World War I historian Charles Bean said,

“What these men did, nothing can alter now.

The good and the bad, the greatness and the smallness of their story....it rises, it always rises...

above the mists of ages, a monument to great hearted men

and for their nation – a possession forever” (Australian War Memorial, 2021).

Lone Pine; Lest we forget.

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