



"Sitrep, Over!"



OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA REGIMENT ASSOCIATION INC.

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EDITOR DAVID LAING

DECEMBER 2025

Australian ADF Christmas at War

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**Hard copies of
this newsletter
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by the Office of
Senator Andrew
McLachlan CSC
MP
Senator for SA**

For the past century, many Australian servicemen and woman have had to celebrate Christmas away from their families and home in foreign lands.

In the first year of the Great War, many Australians of the newly formed Australian Imperial Forces were stationed in Cairo, Egypt waiting to be deployed in battle and thus had a very unique Christmas spending time bartering in marketplaces with the locals and generally having a good time. From home they received packages that contained items such as tinned pudding, biscuits and cakes.

Later years in the war were far different experiences for Australian soldiers with many having no choice but to spend the holiday in the trenches or at military hospitals not far away.

During World War Two, Australian servicemen and women once again left the comfort of home to fight the enemy across the globe. Many Australian soldiers also received food and gift packages from home and used Christmas as a brief time where they could relax and have fun.

In the Korean War, Australian forces were a part of the larger United Nations forces fighting against the forces of the North. Australian servicemen and woman had to deal with the freezing temperatures of the Korean Peninsula while they celebrated the Christmas season.

Whenever our Battalions soldiers are deployed overseas or on Border Protection duties, they receive a Care Package from this Association, to remind them that they are thought highly of "back home" and their service is valued. Pro Patria

EDITORIAL



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As this year comes to an end I have put a few words of thanks together with an article on Page 6. It's once again been a busy year for me juggling commitments between various associations and retirement, which makes me wonder sometimes how I ever found time to work! Suffice to say I can't do what I do without the wonderful support I receive from the Committee, Vice President Des Hawkins, the CO & RSM and their staff, and from all of you out there in "Sitrep, Over!" land! Keep it up!

I'm still waiting for a flood of emails from members applying for the position of Secretary of this wonderful Association. I take it they've been held up in the Ethernet or are just proof-reading their applications, but I can wait. The Secretary's job is crucial to the smooth operation and good conduct of the RSAR Association, and although not time consuming, is very rewarding. Check out the vacancy on Page 3. Even if you don't wish to apply for the position, maybe pass it on to a member who may be interested Thanks.

And on Positions Vacant, I am happy to announce we've had a new member join our team as the **Association Welfare Officer**. WO2 Phil Stuart from 10/27 Bn has successfully applied and been accepted by the Committee of Management, and commences his task immediately. Phil has previously assisted our group by providing stores and equipment to assist us in our catering exercises, and has made our role much easier. Members requiring welfare support should contact Phil, whose details will be posted soon. Welcome on board Phil.

One of our largest gatherings for the year, the End Of Year Lunch has again been a great success, with over 60 members and partners and guests gathering for traditional camaraderie, a few drinks, a sumptuous feast prepared by Col Abel & Co, and some presentations to worthy recipients. All the pics are on the following pages plus on our Facebook page. (Two extra pages of pics on Page 21 and 22.)

In December 1915 Allied Command made the decision to evacuate their troops from Gallipoli after a disastrous campaign that left thousands dead on both sides. Our soldiers and their allies adhered to plans that saw many thousands of ANZAC troops depart without a single fatality. The story is on Pages 12 to 17.

In the November edition I added a short survey to see who was actually reading the newsletters. Sadly, to date only 30 have responded as requested. Are there any more out there still interested in this newsletter??
Let me know!!!

That's it for this year. Stay safe and stay well. Cheers

David Laing

Pro Patria

SITUATION VACANT - SECRETARY



Having carried out the role of Secretary since 2009, I have helped the RSAR Association become more visible by instigating this monthly newsletter, starting our own Facebook page, and helping first Frank Morony and then Jesse Humphrys set up our very prominent website www.rsara.asn.au

I have had much pleasure in performing these tasks, but since taking on the role of President from our late mate Rod Beames I have also taken on more duties, such as being a member of the Regimental Council, and I feel it's time to hand the Secretary's reigns to someone else. I will do this job as long as I can, but with age comes certain other challenges, and I feel it's time for someone with similar talents to step up and lend a hand.

I shall continue to edit this newsletter and manage our Facebook page, but I need someone to help "shoulder the load!"

Here's the criteria:

- The Secretary is to liaise with the President and Committee and set dates for Committee meetings, Annual General Meetings, various support exercises and End of Year functions.
- The Secretary is to book venues for AGM's (1) and support exercises, (3 per year) and arrange access for members to enter restricted areas, i.e. RAAF Base Edinburgh, Murray Bridge Training Area etc. via the Battalion Adjutant.
- The Secretary shall arrange and attend all meetings (4 per year) and take note of all proceedings, prepare and present a true record of all meetings, conduct all correspondence, take all necessary steps to carry out the directions of The Committee and of the assembled members. The Secretary is responsible for the setting of the agenda for each meeting and the recording of Minutes for the same.
- The Secretary shall also be responsible for duties associated with applications for membership as set down in Clauses 13.2, 13.3, 13.4. of the Constitution. (On our website)

It's not a hard job, but it takes more of my time than I can afford, so I am prepared to mentor a new Secretary for as long as it takes for them to become accustomed to the duties required.

This position is open to anyone with minor computer skills, a good attitude and an urge to assist this wonderful organisation. The successful applicant will be required to join the Committee of Management after nomination.

Applicants are invited to send an email to davidlaing49@bigpond.com with their current details and skills. If you are a Serving Member of the Battalion, that does NOT preclude you from applying, and all applications will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

We have a new Welfare Officer. We just need a new Secretary to join too.

Give it a go. You'll enjoy it!

Cheers

David Laing. President, Secretary, Editor & Public Officer

END OF YEAR LUNCH 2025



The weather was again kind to us and 60 members joined together to celebrate the RSAR Association End of Year Lunch at the Warradale Barracks Sergeants Mess. Some major presentations were made to certain personnel and you can see all the pics here and on our Facebook page. Chief Baitlayer Col Abel once again made sure nobody went hungry by whipping up a glorious feast of cold meats, seafood and mixed salads plus fruit platter dessert. Well done Col and Howard.

Thanks also to WO2 Mark Blondell who arranged the use of the Sergeants Mess and the extra seating, plus he set the Mess up a few days earlier. A highlight of the day was the unveiling of the "Rodney Beames Memorial Bench" by his daughter Narelle. The pine bench was hand made by Rod a few years ago and was donated to the soldiers of A Coy 10/27 RSAR by his family. Our Patron Major General Neil Wilson and Brigadier Graham Goodwin assisted with the presentations.

The Regimental Sergeant Major, WO1 Mark Broadbent was presented with a personalized Pace Stick Stand for his outstanding support, guidance and friendship to the RSAR Association and its members throughout the year.

In October I asked the Committee members to again vote for one of their peers who they thought had done a little bit more for the Association and the Battalion throughout the year. Vice President Des Hawkins and I weren't included in the process, and didn't have a vote, as that would be counter-productive to our roles, but the votes are now in. The "Most Valued Committee Member" for 2025, (drum roll) voted by their peers was presented by Major General Neil Wilson to CPL Selina Laing. Congratulations Selina. Your President (and Dad) is very proud of your outstanding efforts.

WO2 Mark Blondell was presented with 2 bottles of wine from the Laing family for his outstanding efforts behind the scenes, for setting up the venue and organizing the 10/27 Battalion Family Day BBQ the previous weekend.

Brigadier Graham Goodwin drew a raffle for 2 bottles of Regimental Liqueur Port donated by member Wayne Burns, and the lucky winners were Phil Stuart and Lachlan Harris.



END OF YEAR LUNCH 2025



END OF YEAR LUNCH 2025



President's Christmas Message



Another year has come and gone and we still continue to grow in numbers and resolve. I am extremely thankful of the way Des Hawkins and the committee have supported me throughout the year as I find my feet in the role of President. My job is made easier with your assistance.

Our support for the Battalion also continues to grow, and thanks to some great ideas from our Merchandise Officer Selina Laing, we have provided new PT Shirts to the Battalion free of charge, and a "welcome back" event at Warradale in May when we provided selected soft drinks, potato chips and chocolate bars (also free of charge) to the soldiers returning from a very vigorous training exercise at the Murray Bridge Range.

We have also instigated a "New Arrivals" pack for the wife/partner of our soldiers who give birth, and this has been warmly received by the Battalion. The 1st pack was presented to LCPL Hanson by the RSM and the 2nd pack was presented by CPL Chris Smaling to PTE Alex Forman at Mt Gambier.

We also provided Care Packages for 21 of our soldiers deployed on Transit Security Element 116 Border Protection duties, and these were received with much enjoyment by the troops. We will continue this service as required.

Unfortunately the Simpson Trophy Shoot at Murray Bridge was cancelled due to other constraints on the Battalion and on 9 Brigade. It has been rescheduled for August / September 2026 and we look forward to providing support whenever we are called on to do so.

We had much pleasure in attending the 2025 Battalion Awards Presentations at Warradale Barracks and we congratulate all those who won awards or were promoted. You do the Regiment proud. (The list is on Page 12 and the pics are on our Facebook page.)

Your Committee have once again voted for one of their own to be "Most Valued Committee Member" and this year I'm proud to announce CPL Selina Laing, our Merchandise Officer won the accolades and was presented with a framed certificate by Major General Neil Wilson. Congratulations and well done Selina.

The Battalion has taken on a more active role this year and they now become the most important Defence element in South Australia and the Northern Territory, assuming responsibility for the protection of vital infrastructure and its' properties. This is a challenging task and we shall stand by the Battalion as they strive to achieve their new goals.

The Commanding Officer LTCOL Darrin Tyson and his staff have continued to work very closely with us, and the Regimental Sergeant Major WO1 Mark Broadbent has been a very reliable "go to" man when we have asked for guidance and support. I sincerely thank them both.

The uncertainty of our national security is always under threat, but our Battalion, along with other units of the ADF will stand up to protect our interests and ensure our safety and wellbeing into the future.

I thank them all for their continued service.

As the Christmas season approaches I urge you all to embrace your loved ones, remember those who are "doing it tough" and continue to support those who defend us.

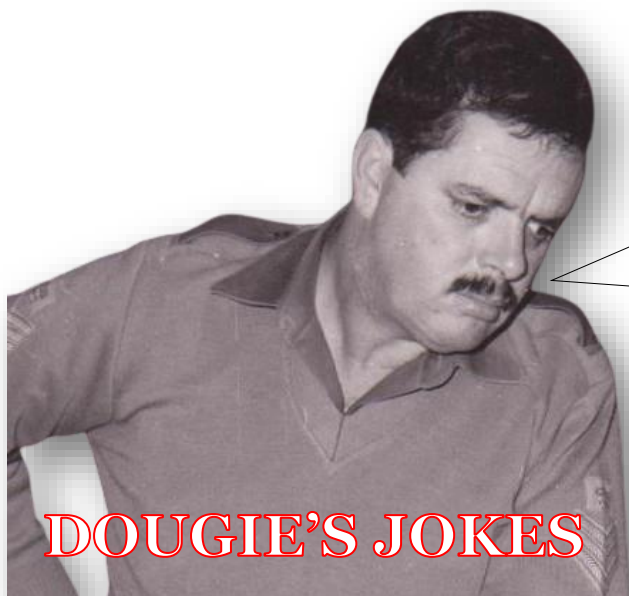
Merry Christmas to you all and we'll catch up next year.

Stay safe and stay well.

David Laing

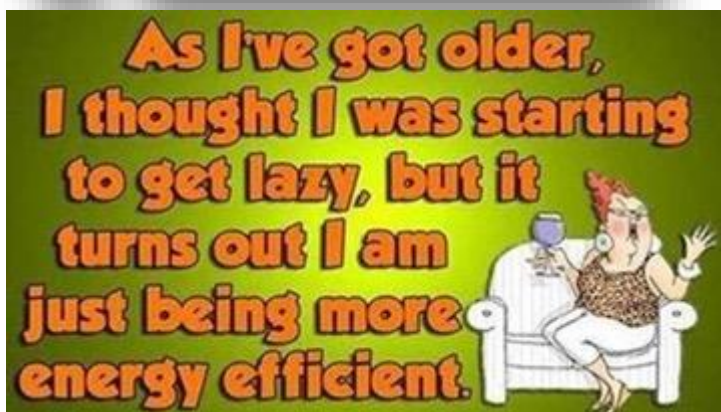
Pro Patria





DOUGIE'S JOKES

....AND HERE ENDETH
THE YEAR! MERRY
CHRISTMAS !!!



I TOLD MYSELF THAT
= I SHOULD STOP =

DRINKING

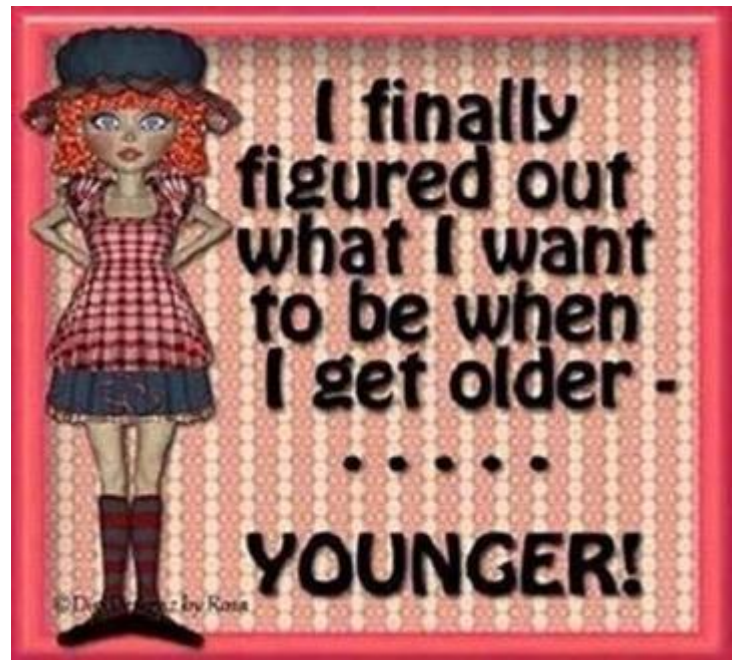
BUT I'M NOT ABOUT TO LISTEN TO
A DRUNK THAT TALKS TO HIMSELF

The most terrifying
moment in life is when
the toilet refuses to
flush at someone else's
house

I just realized
that I haven't
done the "Hokey
Pokey" in over
10 years. I guess
when you get
older, you just
forget what it's
all about.

FB/TokethePiss

I was shocked to read
in the papers today that
a dwarf had been
pickpocketed and
I just thought to
myself "How can anyone
stoop so low?"



Do you ever get the urge to start organizing and then 2 hours later you're just looking around at a mess like... what the heck have I done?

kitchenfunwithmy3sons.com

I'm gonna quit my job and travel the world until I run out of money!

I estimate I'll be home again around 10 PM this evening...

Hired a handy man and gave him a list. When I got home, only #1, 3, & 5 were done. Turns out, he only does odd jobs!

I just switched my "20 year Home Mortgage" to a "Student Loan."

Follow me for more financial advice.



RSAR Award Recipients for 2025

We attended the Battalion 2025 Awards Presentations at Warradale Barracks on Saturday 6th December and were honoured to participate in the presentation of awards to high achieving soldiers. Shields with RSAR logos and engraved plates were provided by the RSAR Association as part of our ongoing support to the Regiment.

Well done to all for your efforts, your dedication and your service.

Best Soldier – PTE C.D.A Wilkinson - RAINF

Best JNCO – CPL T.K Carpenter - RAE

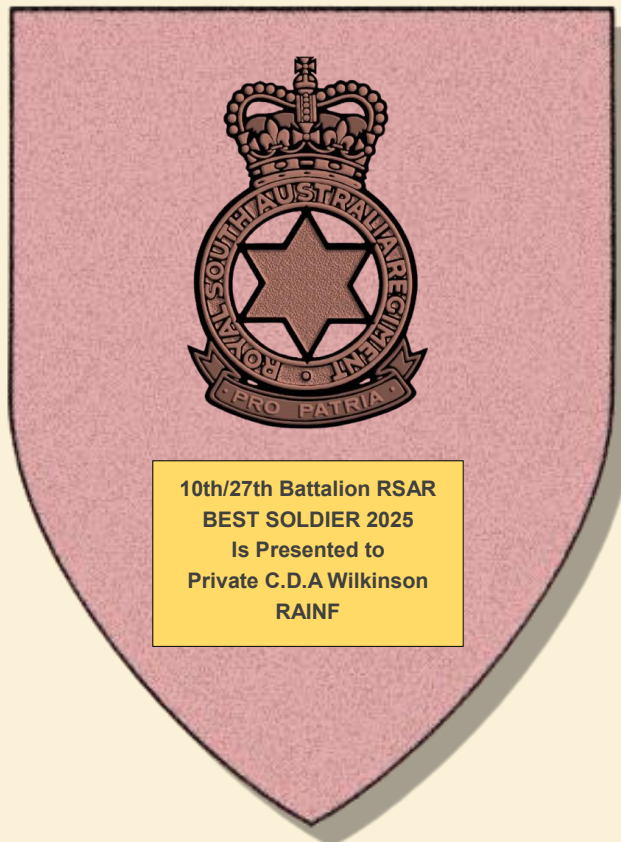
Best SNCO –SGT A.W.G Raymont - RAINF

Best Officer –CAPT D.S Williams - RAINF

Best Musician –PTE E.B Dennis - AABC

Best Fitness –SGT C.R Stephens - RAINF

Rodney Beames Perpetual Shield –SPR B.J Easson – RAE



Padres' Ponderings

By Padre Stephen Albrecht - Chaplain 10/27 Battalion RSAR

Christmas reminds us that hope is never lost. As soldiers, we understand better than most the tension between the world as it is and the world as it ought to be. We stand in the gap, serving with courage and conviction, longing for peace even as we prepare for the realities of conflict. And in that longing, we can rediscover the heartbeat of Christmas.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the world was far from peaceful. The Roman Empire stretched from Great Britain to Mesopotamia and from North Africa to Greece. Into that world marked by uncertainty, conflict, and fear, God chose to enter that arena. He entered not into comfort but into chaos, not into palaces but into a humble manger. His arrival declared that even in the darkest night, the light of a new day will come.

As soldiers, we carry something of that light. We live with a hope stronger than despair, a conviction that goodness still matters, and a belief that our service contributes to a better world. Christmas strengthens that hope. It reminds us that humanity is not abandoned, and that peace is always worth pursuing.

The message of Christmas is not sentimental optimism; it is a resilient kind of hope, a hope that can bring change. It also reminds us that every act of service, every sacrifice, and every moment of compassion pushes back the darkness in small but meaningful ways.

So this Christmas, as we gather with family, friends, or fellow soldiers, may we remember that hope is not wishful thinking, it is a way of life. We express the heart of Christmas every time we choose courage over fear, generosity over selfishness, and peace over conflict. In these everyday choices, we become part of something greater than ourselves.

May the hope of this season steady your spirit, strengthen your steps, and remind you why your service matters. And may we, as soldiers be committed to a better future and continue to carry that hope into every place we serve.

Merry Christmas, and may the God of hope be with you.

Stephen Albrecht

Chaplain 10th/27th Battalion RSAR



In the Devil's world, are we a happy prisoner?

Christmas at War in 1914



On Christmas Eve 1914, soldiers of the British, French and German armies were hunkered down in trenches on the Western Front, their thoughts on their loved ones at home. As night fell, the sound of German soldiers singing carols drifted across no man's land, and small fir trees and lanterns appeared on the tops of their trenches. Messages were shouted between the two sides, and some soldiers ventured out to meet and exchange gifts. The momentum for goodwill gained pace, and on Christmas Day more men met to talk, take photographs, and even play football.

Christmas and war are not compatible, but too often they are thrust together. The Christmas truce of 1914 – a series of unofficial ceasefires – was a statement of peace and humanity amid one of history's most brutal wars. These ceasefires were permitted by some officers to allow the men a chance to improve living conditions in the trenches. But not all troops took part: in some areas, time was given only to recover and bury the dead; in other sectors, there were casualties as fighting continued. The following year, strongly worded orders from the high commands of both sides were issued in the lead-up to Christmas warning against further fraternisation. A small number of ceasefires were declared, but they were not nearly as widespread as in 1914.

By the time Australians experienced Christmas on the Western Front, the British command saw the date as an opportunity to wreak even more havoc on the enemy. Australian official historian Charles Bean records that on 25 December 1916, "at the hour when it was thought probable that the Germans would be sitting down to their midday feast, every gun of the [British] Fourth and Fifth Armies fired two rounds at the points where the enemy's troops and staffs might be foregathering". Bean notes that the order was considered "ruthless" and "repugnant" by many of the British troops, who were "by no means opposed to 'disgracing' Christmas by exhibitions of brotherliness and good humour".

Hundreds of thousands of Australians have spent Christmas at war: freezing in First World War trenches, as prisoners of war of the Japanese, or on reconnaissance and ambush operations in Vietnam. Even today Australian soldiers find themselves spending Christmas far from home, on operations in Afghanistan.

Soldiers are not forgotten at this time of year, and efforts have always been made to bring a little joy – and a decent meal – to those serving, or those recovering from wounds. For Christmas 1915, the Australian Comforts Fund Committee distributed 20,000 boxes containing handkerchiefs, cigars, cigarettes and matches to men in camp in Egypt. Many had just returned from Gallipoli. In a letter home in early January 1916, Sister Letitia Moreton of the Australian Army Nursing Service described the efforts that had been made for wounded men recovering at the 2nd Australian General Hospital in Egypt:

"We gave our patients out at Ma'adi Hospital a very nice little Xmas. A very nice dinner, roast turkey, chicken, ham, plenty vegetables, plum pudding, claret cup, beer, soft drinks, sweets, etc. They did enjoy it, poor things. The Drs helped us with it too, one carved the turkey and ham while the other gave out the drinks. The place was rather nicely decorated and everyone enjoyed the day."

Sadly, that was Sister Moreton's last Christmas: the following year she was posted to India for service, and died there of enteric fever in November.

[Source AWM.com.au](http://SourceAWM.com.au)



Unidentified staff and patients at No. 4 Ward, No. 14 Australian General Hospital, decorated for Christmas. In the background tables are set for Christmas dinner. Streamers hang from light cords.

Gallipoli. Tragedy or Triumph



In a well-planned operation, Allied forces withdrew from Anzac and Suvla between 15 and 20 December 1915. After the failure of the August Offensive, some senior officers began to question the value of remaining at Gallipoli. The British forces really needed reinforcements on the Western Front and at Salonika. In October, the British replaced General Sir Ian Hamilton with Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Munro. Munro immediately proposed evacuation.

On 22 November, the British decided to evacuate Anzac and Suvla. Planning moved quickly and efficiently. The evacuation of Anzac started on 15 December. Over 5 nights, 36,000 troops were withdrawn to the waiting transport ships. The last party left in the early hours of 20 December from North Beach at Anzac. British and French forces remained at Helles until 9 January 1916.

Gallipoli was a failure for the Allies, with some 44,000 soldiers killed in an attempt to take the peninsula from the Ottomans. Victory came at a high price for the Ottoman Empire, which lost at least 87,000 men during the campaign.

Situation on Gallipoli

After August, the British mounted no further major attacks at Gallipoli. The British Government grew alarmed at the failure to break through to the Dardanelles. Public criticism was mounting over the whole venture. When winter arrived in November, men froze at their posts and over 16,000 troops with frostbite and exposure were evacuated. It was decided that the campaign could not meet its objectives and the British Empire forces on Gallipoli should withdraw. Many thought withdrawal would result in heavy casualties. However, elaborate precautions were taken to deceive the Turks into thinking nothing unusual was happening.

Between 8 and 20 December 1915, 90,000 men were secretly embarked from Suvla and Anzac. On 8 and 9 January 1916, a similar evacuation was conducted at Helles. Only a handful of casualties were suffered in these well-executed operations.

Decision to evacuate

At about 1:40pm on 13 November 1915, a small boat arrived at North Beach. From it stepped Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War. He had come to see the Anzac positions for himself.

As Kitchener walked up the pier with other generals, the men recognised him. They came running from all over and surrounded him on the pier. War correspondent Charles Bean watched Kitchener walk up from the pier:

The tall red cap [Kitchener] was rapidly closed in among them-but they kept a path and as the red cheeks turned and spoke to one man or another, they cheered him-they, the soldiers-no officers leading off or anything of that sort. It was a purely soldiers' welcome. He said to them, 'The King has asked me to tell you how splendidly he thinks you have done-you have done splendidly, better, even, than I thought you would.'

[Kevin Fewster, Frontline Gallipoli – CEW Bean's diary from the trenches, Sydney, 1983, p.176]

Kitchener spent just over 2 hours at Anzac surveying the Turkish line from Australian trenches inland of the Sphinx and at Lone Pine. After another 2 days consulting with senior commanders, he recommended to the British War Cabinet to evacuate Gallipoli (Anzac, Suvla and Helles).

Gallipoli. Tragedy or Triumph



In Kitchener's opinion, little progress could be made against the strengthening Turkish trenches without significant reinforcements and artillery resources. This was especially so at Anzac where another surprise attack, such as the August Offensive, was virtually impossible. Moreover, local commanders were extremely worried about the problems of supplying Gallipoli throughout the winter with its many severe storms.

Plan for a quiet withdrawal

After much discussion, on 8 December the British War Cabinet finally decided to end the campaign. Unknown to them, senior officers like the commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, General Sir Charles Monro, had anticipated this decision. An evacuation plan was already in operation. Could the Anzacs just sneak away, unseen? There was a view that any evacuation would result in heavy casualties but, in the event, there were virtually none.

At Anzac and Suvla, an Australian staff officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Brudenell White, devised a plan to gradually withdraw men and equipment while convincing the Turks that everything was normal. The troops carried out 'silent stunts' to trick the Turks.

Nearly all firing from Anzac ceased to make the enemy think preparations for winter were underway. At the end of the stunt, an irregular rifle and artillery fire of the sort to be expected by the Turks was kept up. Hopefully, the enemy would not interpret these silences as a withdrawal.

A lot of equipment was taken away at night, but some material was still brought ashore at the Anzac Cove and North Beach piers during the day to maintain the appearance of normal operations. According to the evacuation schedule, the troops would leave Anzac in three stages. First and second stages

The 'preliminary stage' was set in motion while awaiting word from London that the British Cabinet had approved Lord Kitchener's recommendation to evacuate. In these early days, the Allies only removed enough men and equipment to make it look to the Turks as though a garrison was preparing for a defensive winter campaign.

After receiving Cabinet approval, the 'intermediate' stage commenced. Now the Allies reduced the number of soldiers on Anzac to a point where they could still hold off a major Turkish attack for about 1 week.

During the first two stages, the Anzac garrison was planned to fall from 41,000 to 26,000 troops. Final stage

On 17 December, just 2 days before the final evacuation, a famous cricket game at Shell Green was played while Turkish shells passed overhead.

By 18 December, at the end of the second stage, only 20,277 soldiers were left at Anzac.

Gallipoli. Tragedy or Triumph



The last AIF troops were withdrawn over 2 nights in the 'final' evacuation - 18 to 19 December and 19 to 20 December 1915.

Although Anzac Cove was used, the main evacuation points were the piers at North Beach. So many Australians spent their last moments on Anzac at North Beach, where they caught their last glimpses in the dark of the Sari Bair Range as they pulled away from the piers.

Activity at Williams' Pier

During the evacuation, movements to the piers took place in the dark. An Australian observer watched a busy night scene at North Beach:

I went down to see the sending away of the British Labour Corps [the 'Old and Bold'] and Egyptians and Maltese. Flares were burning on Williams' Pier and Walker's Ridge. Baggage was piled on the wharf—mostly field ambulance; four gun-teams made their way through the crowd out towards the left; ammunition was being carried in on gharries [a type of horse-drawn Indian carriage] and taken on to the pier or stacked on the beach ... truck-load after truck-load of warm winter clothing was being sent running down the little railway on Williams' Pier.[Quoted in CEW Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, Sydney, 1924, Vol II, pp865-866]

Quietly moving mules

At night, from the positions north of Walker's Ridge stretching through the ranges to Hill 60, mule columns looked after by men of the Indian Mule Corps brought material for evacuation to Williams' Pier.

Once on flat ground and heading south for North Beach, the mule columns passed a stretch of coast opposite the Sniper's Nest where they might be heard by Turkish patrols. Mules were constantly going up the line with supplies so there was nothing to tell the enemy that they were now returning, equally heavily laden.

The Indian mule handlers were so skilled that hardly any noise was made. After seeing a mule column, an Australian wrote in his diary:

At once I thought—'My goodness, if the Turks don't see all this as it goes along they must be blind'. But as I went along behind them I began to notice how silently these mules behaved. They had big loads, but they were perfectly quiet. They made no sound at all as they walked except for the slight jingle of a chain now and then ... I doubt if you could have heard the slightest noise ... I doubt if at 1,000 yards [915 metres] you could see them at all—possibly just a black serpentine streak.[Quoted in CEW Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, Sydney, 1924, Vol II, p.866]

Although much equipment was removed from Anzac, a great deal, especially foodstuffs, was left behind or destroyed.

Reactions to the evacuation

The objectives of the first two stages were kept secret from all but those who needed to know.

Gallipoli. Tragedy or Triumph



It was not until the second week in December that the ordinary soldiers realised that a full-scale evacuation was in progress. Charles Bean felt that everyone knew by 13 December.

Men's reactions varied, but a common sorrow was the thought of leaving behind their dead comrades.

I hope our poor pals who lie all around us sleep soundly, and do not stir in discontent as we go filing away from them forever.

Charles Bean noticed soldiers in the cemeteries, alone or in groups of two or three, tidying up graves.

Bean tells us their reaction to the news of the evacuation:

For days after the breaking of the news there were never absent from the cemeteries men by themselves, or in twos and threes, erecting new crosses or tenderly 'tidying-up' the grave of a friend. This was by far the deepest regret of the troops. 'I hope,' said one of them to [General] Birdwood on the final day [19 December], pointing to a little cemetery, 'I hope they won't hear us marching down the deres [valleys]'.

[Charles Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, Vol II, Sydney, 1924, p.882]

As he left, Padre Walter Dexter went through the cemeteries and gullies scattering silver wattle seed:

If we have to leave here, I intend that a bit of Australia shall be here.
Last troops to leave Anzac

HMS Cornwallis, the last ship to leave Gallipoli in the evacuation of 19-20 December 1915, returns fire to the Turkish guns shelling her as she prepares to sail. In the background stores at Suvla Bay, set alight to prevent their use by the Turks.

On 19 December, the British cruiser HMS Grafton lay in off North Beach ready to take the soldiers on board. The ship was ready to open fire on any enemy attempt to hinder the final withdrawal. An observer on the Grafton noted:

It is about 9 o'clock. An ideal night for the job. No ships (only a few lights) visible at Suvla. One ship about a mile on our port beam. Barely a wrinkle on the water. Soft air from the north. Moon at present quite invisible. The wash of the destroyer has been lapping against our sides like wavelets at the edge of a pond.

10.00 pm- Three ships just gone in ...

10.35 pm- Five trawlers coming out with cutters in tow.

On 19 December, only 10,000 men held the lines of trenches from Bolton's Ridge in the south to Hill 60 in the north. The day was spent in constant activity. They tried to convince their watchful enemy that things were proceeding as normal.

At 2:15pm, the British started a feint attack at Helles to distract the Turks.

At dusk, the rear guard began leaving for the beach until finally there were only 1500 troops left in all those miles of dark trench.

As the last contingents made their way to the piers, small rear parties manned the trenches, firing occasional shots and making enough noise to convince the enemy that the whole garrison was still there.

Gallipoli. Tragedy or Triumph



Company Sergeant Major Joe Gasparich, Auckland Infantry Battalion, was among the last to depart in the early hours of 20 December:

I came down - I got off my perch (the firing step) [and] I walked through the trench and the floor of the trench was frozen hard ... and when I brought my feet down they echoed right through the trench, down the gully, right down, and you could hear this echo running ahead ... Talk about empty, I didn't see a soul ... It was a lonely feeling.

[Gasparich, quoted in C Pugsley, Gallipoli – The New Zealand Story, London, 1984, p.343]

By 4:00am on 20 December 1915, a handful of men were left at North Beach. Among these was the commander of the 'Rear Party', Colonel John Paton, from Waratah, Sydney. At 4:10am, Paton, having waited 10 minutes for any last Anzac straggler, declared the evacuation complete and the last steamboat sailed off.

The Anzacs had successfully left Gallipoli with hardly a casualty. Anzac and Suvla were deserted. On the night of 8 January 1916, the British left Helles; the Gallipoli campaign was over.

On 19 December, as he waited to go, Company Quarter Master Sergeant A L Guppy, 14th Battalion, of Benalla, Victoria, confided his feelings in verse to his diary. His words probably spoke for them all:

Not only muffled is our tread
To cheat the foe,
We fear to rouse our honoured dead
To hear us go.

Sleep sound, old friends- the keenest smart
Which, more than failure, wounds the heart,
Is thus to leave you- thus to part,
Comrades, farewell!



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

G01302

The smoldering remains of an accidental fire which began in the supply dump on North Beach at about 1am on 18 December 1915, which threatened to alert the Turks to the evacuation in progress AWM G01302

Gallipoli. Tragedy or Triumph



Below: Williams Pier, North Beach, Gallipoli, December 1915, with the Sphinx in the background. At this time the preparations for the evacuation of the Australian and New Zealand troops from Anzac were well under way. AWM C01621



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

C01621



Panoramic view of North Beach, Anzac (Evacuation period). Photograph by veterans Sergeant Henry James Lowe and Corporal George Downes NAA 4188, A1861/1

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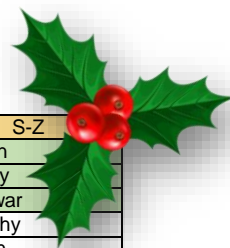
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Please welcome new members **Brian Murdock**, and **David Jolly**,
and WO2 **Phil Stuart** who is our new Welfare Officer

END OF YEAR LUNCH 2025



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