

Gallipoli: An Australian Encyclopedia of the 1915 Dardanelles Campaign

Ron Austin

Reviewed by Robert Stevenson

The Gallipoli campaign continues to be a particularly popular genre within Australian historiography (fact, fiction and fantasy) and one whose popularity shows no sign of abating. One might be forgiven for thinking that after 90 years just about as much ink has been spilled on this single campaign as antipodean blood was spilled on the shores of Anzac Cove. So do we need another Australian book on Gallipoli?

In answer to this question Ron Austin, well-known author and publisher of Australian military history, has produced the first encyclopedia of Australian involvement in the 1915 Dardanelles campaign. Given his previous research, including studies on the Battle of Krithia and numerous AIF units individually, it is not surprising that this work contains a comprehensive listing of more than 1000 entries. Personnel entries cover a host of individuals from the famous to some of the lesser-known characters. Topographical entries describe the most important locations including cemeteries and landmarks and these are supported by seven simple but adequate maps. While focused on land operations, the encyclopedia also provides background information on the important maritime and aerial aspects of the campaign. And while the emphasis is on Australia's part it includes references on Turks, Germans and each of the allied contingents.

The main entries are supported by useful supplementary information. There is a single page chronology and 12 appendices detailing the allied orders of battle for the landings and the August offensive; the numbers of Australian fatalities by unit; a list of Australian nursing service staff; and lists of those awarded honours and gallantry awards. The text is supported with a profuse range of photographs, and although some are not captioned, their placement in the text makes the subject evident. Although much of the information is available in other books, the author has done a creditable job in gathering and collating this material and presenting it in a readily accessible format.

Compiling an encyclopedia of this type covering such a broad subject is a difficult task. The author has to balance the subjects to include, and the detail to be provided on each to ensure it is comprehensive, without making the resulting book too large or expensive. Decisions on material included necessarily result from the author's perception of relative importance and the target audience. In this case the author has struck an appropriate balance for a general readership and most researchers, family historians and medal collectors will find this reference invaluable.

For the Gallipoli specialist or academic historian there may be some disappointment at those subjects that have been sacrificed. From the reviewer's perspective a better balance might have been struck if some additional thematic entries were included to introduce material that is usually overlooked in popular histories of the campaign. For example 'medical services' and 'rations'

receive attention but other administrative subjects such as discipline and logistics do not. The neglect of training is also an unfortunate omission. One photograph included depicts 11th Battalion soldiers being trained in bomb throwing, however many of the later reinforcements arrived on the peninsula incapable of even handling their personal firearms safely and a rifle range for training them was set up behind the line. Reference to some of these and other lesser-known issues would cater to those with a deeper interest in the campaign.

At the risk of being accused of wanting the proverbial cake and eating it too, the demands of space have also meant that some lesser-known personalities have been omitted. Among those who may have been worth a mention are Australia's first aerial artillery observer, Lieutenant Arthur Jopp, and Lieutenant Geoffrey Street, a 1st Battalion subaltern and later Minister of Defence. In a different vein, John Simpson Kirkpatrick ('Simpson and his donkey') has an entry in which Austin rightly acknowledges the 'misguided attempts' to have him awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. What might have been useful as a comparative contextual example is Francis Smith. As the sergeant in charge of the mule transport on Gallipoli that supplied the line under conditions of great danger, he was awarded the Military Medal. Following the withdrawal he saw service on the Western Front and was commissioned and cited for bravery on two separate occasions, leading to the award of the Military Cross. Like Simpson he was tragically killed but unlike Simpson he is now largely unknown.

These minor issues aside, Ron Austin has produced a useful overview for those interested in the Gallipoli campaign. Researchers and academic historians may regret the lack of detailed source references for each entry but this will not detract from the books worth for the broader market. For future editions some additional thematic entries would increase its value and utility to a wider readership, but even as it stands *Gallipoli: An Australian Encyclopedia* is a worthy addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign. ♦

Ron Austin, 'Gallipoli: An Australian Encyclopedia of the 1915 Dardanelles Campaign'; Slouch Hat Publications, Macrae; Victoria, 2005, Casebound and jacketed, 288pp., RRP \$A55.00.

