

## The birth of the Anzac spirit

[John Torode]

On April 25, 1915, 20,000 Australian and New Zealand volunteers landed at Anzac Cove and further along at North Beach.

The first few days saw them scramble up the beach, they clambered up those steep slopes and they had to dig themselves into the base of those cliffs.

For eight long bloody months the Anzac troops barely advanced a mile inland. It was an unmitigated military disaster.

But amidst this death and destruction emerged something new. A powerful image of courageous Anzac soldiers defeated, but unbowed.

Take this letter from Corporal Smythe, from my home town of Melbourne in Australia: "I saw poor Charlton lying in the bottom of the trench. He was pretty badly hurt but very cheerful. As he was being carried away to the beach he said: 'Goodbye Corp. I'll have a good time with the girls in England when I get out.' Poor boy, he died of wounds."

The stories of resilience and mateship in the heat of battle fulfilled a much needed craving in Australia and New Zealand for a national identity.

Australian war correspondents, like Charles Bean, did much to cultivate this idea. This sense of men of grit and courage came to be described as the Anzac spirit.

But the Anzac spirit wasn't just some myth or fabrication to sell newspapers, it was a real thing. These men were truly brave and nowhere more so than here at The Nek - the site of the most infamous battle of the whole campaign.

On 7 August 1915 the Allied forces began pounding Turkish positions but the bombardment was woefully ineffective. When the bombing stopped any element of surprise had been lost.

At 4.30am the cry went up and the first wave of Australian soldiers lifted themselves from trenches like this and they charged towards the Turkish lines. The Turkish guns started up and mowed down that first line, most of the men probably only taking a few steps before they were cut down.

In just 15 minutes over 300 men lay dead, dying or wounded - an extraordinary, absolutely needless massacre.

Back at home Charles Bean put a completely different spin on this disaster. In his emotionally-charged dispatches he described the battle as the greatest act of self-sacrificing heroism in history.

From this moment on the Anzacs would be held up as a role model to Australians and New Zealanders.

It didn't just change the way we thought about war, it changed the way we thought about ourselves.

Filmed at Gallipoli, Turkey