

ANZAC Day Address Camden 2017

Dr Stuart Quarmby
Foundation Headmaster
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- Councillor Lara Symkoviak – Mayor of Camden
- Mr Chris Patterson - State Member for Camden
- Ms Jo Downes – representing The Hon Angus Taylor – Federal Member for Hume
- Mr Ron Moore – General Manager Camden Council
- Supt Wade Hansen – Local Area Commander NSW Police
- Mr Raad Richards – CEO Carrington Centennial Care
- Mr Iain Richard Evan – Camden RSL Sub Branch President
- Current Serving Defence Force personnel
- R.S.L. Members
- Legacy Widows, War Widows Social Club
- Members of the NSW Ambulance, Fire Brigade, Rural Fire Service
- Other distinguished guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

This time last year I bought lunch for my wife and I in a small shop outside of Amiens in France. The shop keeper asked where I came from.

“Australia,” I answered.

So why are you here”? he asked. “

We are visiting the graves of relatives”,” I answered.

“Then **Please** let me give you a 25% discount,” he said as he gave me the change.

This time last year, we visited a remembrance ceremony under the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium, on a cold evening where the last post was played, speeches were made, wreathes were laid and the New Zealanders were the guests. I asked a local how often the service was held. He answered “**every night** at 8pm.”

“Every night in summer?” I asked.

He answered “**No. Every night** of the year.”

“When did that start?” I asked.

“At the end of World War One”,” he replied.

That’s 100 years. Unconvinced, we went back the next evening. This time Canadian Mounties were the guests.

Why ANZAC Day is relevant in 2017?

For some of us here today, there is a personal reason. For all of us, there is a national reason.

My father-in-law was a Prisoner of War in Germany for three years during the Second World War. Today, most 17 year olds are still in bed, dreaming of girls and the upcoming footy match. On June 1, 1941, 17 year old Private Ivan John Willis, was captured as part of the force of 5000 men protecting the evacuation of Crete following the battle of 42nd Street against elite German paratroopers.

In the first world war, my family had lost relatives in Palestine, Gallipoli and in Europe on the Western Front.

Thomas J Tuck and his wife Margaret had 12 grandsons enlist in World War 1. They left to fight on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Five of the 12 never returned.

Albert Victor Tuck (Age 33), **Percy Clarence Tuck** (Age 24), **Reginald Grant Tuck** (Age 25) and **Herbert Joseph Atkins** (Age 33) were cousins who enlisted together and landed together at ANZAC Cove on the 25th April 1915: the first ANZAC Day. They were **cousins** and they were **mates**.

Shell Green: Plot 2 Row K Grave 1. Albert Victor Tuck was killed at Gallipoli on 26 April 1915, day 2 of the Gallipoli landing. Bert was badly wounded and whilst being carried on a stretcher to the “beach” was killed along with the stretcher party by a shell. His young cousin Reg, was distraught and **buried Bertie by hand** behind Brighton beach under a cross that he made. (The cross was later washed into the Dardanelles where it was rescued by a passing ship and taken to England. After the war, Reg saved up the fare, retrieved it from England and brought it back to Bertie’s parents.)

Herbert Joseph Atkins: shot in the stomach during the charge on Krithia (29th April – 3 days after the landing) at Gallipoli. He was hospitalised to Malta and on the 2nd of August, returned to the Unit – just in time for the battle for Lone Pine where the Australians broke through the Turkish defences and entered their trenches. Herb still lies under Lone Pine. **Nobody knows where.**

Percy Clarence Tuck. He was killed at Gallipoli on May 1st 1915 when, with his fellow platoon mates, he went to rescue some British soldiers who had become isolated under gunfire in a trench. His body lies somewhere in Wire Gully where the soldiers were trapped. **Only God knows where.**

As a granddad myself, I cannot imagine the anguish as Tom and Margaret received these five pieces of heartbreaking news in rapid succession. No time to mourn the memory of a “little” boy lost before the news of yet another. Percy was my grandmother’s uncle. She knew him only by legend.

Our freedom. At what cost?

Months after the Gallipoli campaign, Australian troops were sent to Fromelles in France to fight on the Western front. Days after arriving they were sent into battle in what is commonly described as the **worst day** in Australia’s history.

A description from the Australian War memorial, reads that - When the troops of the 5th Australian Division attacked at 6 pm on 19 July 1916, they suffered heavily at the hands of German machine-gunners. By 8am on 20 July 1916, 14 hours later, the battle was over. The 5th Australian Division suffered 5,533 casualties, rendering it incapable of offensive action for many months. Small parts of the German trenches were captured by the 8th and 14th Australian Brigades, but, devoid of flanking support and subjected to fierce counter-attacks, they were forced to withdraw. As 173 Australian soldiers made their way towards the second German line, the Germans surged back into the trench that had been taken. Among them was a 27 year old German Corporal named Adolf Hitler. **All 173 Australians** who had broken through were trapped. **For 90 years they were lost.** 144 of these soldiers have recently been identified in a mass grave through the DNA of relatives.

Among them were soldier 1520, Acting Sergeant William Polding Ryan, from Crystal Creek NSW: 8th Brigade, 31st Battalion, Killed in Action July 19 1916 – Age 20. Body identified by surviving family member’s DNA in 2010. My mum’s great uncle.

Among them were soldier 1252, Corporal Alfred George Tuck: 8th Brigade, 29th Battalion, Killed in Action July 19 1916 – Age 21. Body identified by surviving family member's DNA in 2012. My dad's great uncle.

In the 90 years that they lay in a mass grave, undiscovered, their parents passed away, as did remaining siblings. They never knew that Alfred and Will would someday be found.

Our freedom. At what cost?

It is not just a personal imperative that drives us to be here today. ANZAC Day also looms large on our corporate conscience.

Last week I visited Hiroshima and remembered the devastation and nuclear fallout that affected that city and still affects the population of Japan through birth defects today. Unbelievably, at the same time, watching the posturing of an unhinged leader of a rogue state who is developing nuclear capability **10,000 times more powerful** than the bomb that devastated that city. **Lest we grow complacent.**

Last year I stood at Gallipoli and watched bus-loads of Turkish children drive past ANZAC Cove, Shell Green, Wire Gully and Lone Pine on tours that visited only the education centre at the bottom of the hill and the victory monument at the top. We were alone on the battlefields. The shared history of Turks and ANZACs in that defining campaign as remembered to that people by Ataturk is already under refinement and redefinition. **Lest we grow apathetic.**

Last year on the cold, wet seats at the Villiers Brettenoux ANZAC Day service, we listened to the voice of a World War One Digger who said "they all keep saying that we are here for King and Country – but I am here to serve a compassionate God who wants me to help these women and children to drive out their captors. That's why I am here." Finally, I **began** to understand why they still have an hour service every night of the year at 8pm to remember fallen ANZACs at the Menin gate in Belgium. I **began** to understand why a shop keeper would insist on a 25% discount to a stranger. To understand why there is a permanent sign across the playground of a little Primary School in Vilers Brettenoux saying "Never Forget the Australians". **These** are the descendants of those **same women and children** and **we** are the descendants of those who liberated their forebears.

Later today, 250 students from Wollondilly Anglican College will march at the Picton ANZAC Day service. 350 will represent our corporate memory at 11 different services just like they have done for the past ten years. They will **not** march because they have to. Not even because they choose to. They will march because they **want to**. Our integrity and morality as Australians demands that as educators, our students understand that ANZAC Day is so much more than just more than **relevant** in 2017. It is part of the fabric of **who we are and what we stand for as Australians**. That is the legacy that they will take forward into the future.

Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. In 2017, Education is the first line of defence against the powerful forces of ignorance and diffidence and the first best weapon in ensuring that the legacy of the fallen is passed onward to future Australians.

Lest we be complacent.

Lest we be apathetic.

Lest our careless indifference muddies the sacrifice of those who thought our future attitude to be worth the price.

Lest we forget.