

The ANZAC tradition of Australian mateship

EVACUATION OF GALLIPOLI

*Not only muffled is our tread
— To cheat the foe.*

*We fear to rouse our honored dead
— To hear us go.*

*Sleep well, old friends, the keenest
smart*

*Which more than failure, wounds
the heart,*

*Is thus to leave you, thus to part.
— Comrades, farewell!*

A.I Guppy.

CQM, 14th Battalion A.I.F
1887-1917

ANZAC Day — April 25, 2009

By Anne Fairbairn AM

While outwardly supportive of our troops' role in World War I, the former Australian Premier of New South Wales, Prime Minister of Australia and then first High Commissioner to London (for two terms) during World War I, Sir George Houstoun Reid, my grandfather, held private reservations about the ANZAC deployment to the Dardanelles in 1915.

He received a letter at the time from his friend, the First Sea Lord in the British War Cabinet, Lord "Jackie" Fisher, who resigned from his position in disgust because of what he saw as the misguided push by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, for the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign.

Reid had travelled to Egypt in early 1915 and inspected the Australian troops and had been hugely impressed with their standard of training before they embarked for the Dardanelles.

However my father, Clive Reid, George Reid's younger son, who was



Sir George Reid, High Commissioner for Australia in England, addresses the 1st Light Horse Brigade, commanded by Colonel H G Chauvel, at Maadi camp, Egypt, on New Year's Day, 1915. He is standing up his Rolls Royce.

a young boy at Westminster School in London at the time, told me that his father, George Reid, was extremely concerned about the concept of the Dardanelles because he believed it was a misguided attempt to fight the Germans through the back door and was not sufficiently thought through.

Part of the basis of Reid's and Fisher's friendship was Reid's agreement with Fisher that the war could have been shortened considerably if Fisher's plan — to invade German soil from the Baltic and thus divide the enemy forces — had been put into action instead of the Dardanelles venture.

It is perhaps not historically recorded but my father always said that his father had many worries about this and he certainly discussed his concerns confidentially with close friends, including Lord Fisher.

Fisher wrote to Reid when the tragedy of the Dardanelles was unfolding with huge Australian casualties.

I found this letter in my parents' attic in their Sydney home when my mother died in 1987 and I had it verified by the present Lord Fisher; it is now in the National Library in Canberra.

Fisher stated in his letter: "...The inexcusable criminal disaster of the Dardanelles and no punishment for the butcher politicians — Yours till hell freezes." (signed) Jackie Fisher. He also wrote at the end of his letter "Please burn and destroy." One would only write this kind of confidential letter to a close friend.

George Reid, as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, would have been acutely aware of the growing number of casualties among the Australian forces on the peninsula.

According to my father, his older brother, Douglas, always maintained that their father was convinced that the whole purpose of the Dardanelles venture was to endeavour to weaken the Turkish army so that a victory could be achieved in the Middle East.

Ironically, since Fisher, as first Lord of the Admiralty, had changed the British fleet from coal to oil several years before the war, it seems clear that the top echelons of the British Government were very well aware of the vast oil reserves in the Middle East.

Thus the Turks were defeated and, in the view of many, the Arabs, who had been promised their freedom from Ottoman domination, were betrayed and the area was controlled by the British and French to serve their own interests.

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ACT Branch Sub Branch Offices

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PO Box 5131
Lyneham, ACT, 2602
President: Mrs June Healy OAM
Secretary: Mr Dave Mills
1st Tues each second month (from Feb) at
5:30pm Canberra Services Club
Jun & Aug meetings at 12:30pm

BELCONNEN

PO Box 147
Jamison Centre, ACT, 2614
President: AVM Mac Weller AM (Retd)
Secretary: Mr Dennis Wilkes
2nd Tue each month at West's Rugby
Union Club 7.30pm Oct-Apr,
11am May-Sep

BRITISH

11 Hopetoun Circ
Deakin, ACT, 2600
President: Mr James Cullens MBE
(02)6282 1407(H)
Treasurer: LTCOL B.P. (Paddy) Mahony
(Retd) (02)6254 3934(H)
3rd Wed each month, 2pm Canberra Ser-
vices Club

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PO Box 461
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Secretary: Mr Tom Roberts
Last Thu each month, 12:30pm Yowani
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CITY OF CANBERRA

27 Bragg Street, Hackett, ACT 2602
President: Mr Jan Paulga
Secretary: Mr Paul Bohun
Third Wed each month
11am at The Cottage, The Braddon Club,
Cnr Donaldson & Torrens Street,
Braddon, ACT

GUNGAHLIN

11 Mawalan St, Ngunnawal, ACT, 2913
President: Mrs Christine Coulthard OAM
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First Wed each month 7:30pm Lakes Com-
munity Club

HELLENIC

136 Lambrigg St, Farrer, ACT, 2607
President: Mr Peter Tsikleas
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Third Tue each month at 7:30pm Hellenic
Club, Woden

PEACEKEEPERS

C/- Branch HQ
President: Mr Greg Lovell
Secretary: Position vacant
Periodically at the Canberra Services Club,
Manuka

TUGGERANONG

PO Box 351, Erindale, ACT, 2903
President: Mr John Giersch
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First Wed each month, 7pm Erindale
Rugby Union Club

VIETNAMESE

PO Box 7107, Canberra Mail Exchange
ACT, 2910
President: Mr Thi Van Truong
Periodically at the Migrant Resource Centre

WODEN VALLEY

PO Box 1637
Woden, ACT, 2606 ph.(02) 62851931
<http://www.rslwoden.org.au/>
President: Mr Peter Collas
Secretary: Mr Ross Thomas
Last Tue each month
7pm Yamba Sports Club, Phillip.

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40-20A Don Eleuterio Ave
Don Bonafacio Subdvn
Angeles City 2009, Philippines
<http://www.rslangelescity.com>
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SUBIC BAY

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1601 Massachusetts Ave N.W.
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