

**Kate Armstrong** makes a pilgrimage to Gallipoli to find the grave of a lost great-uncle.

# In the arms of the enemy

**M**ANY Turkish soldiers died in the embrace of Allied soldiers," booms the voice of Ali, the Turkish tour guide at Gallipoli. His voice reverberates through the megaphone and into the cypress trees. "I think you would also like to pay tribute to the Turkish soldiers."

The 18 Australian, New Zealander and English travellers are solemn when they board the mini-bus. They disembark a few kilometres later at a towering statue of a Turkish soldier.

Ali, a small wiry man and ex-naval commander, delivers a seemingly spontaneous soliloquy about life and death, the meaning of friendship and hate, war and peace. We are silent.

From the group he chooses me to pluck a flower from the manicured borders surrounding the statue. I place it gently in the hand of the soldier, the flower's yellow contrasting against the shiny dark bronze.

Earlier, during the ferry ride from Cannikale across the Dardanelles, I tell Ali of my private pilgrimage. No member of my family has successfully tracked down my great-uncle Herb Hunter's final resting place.

I have seen him in a sepia photograph. This 33-year-old dentist from Bendigo, with neat side part in his hair, stands dressed in his university athletic uniform — baggy shorts and a sports blazer — one elbow resting on a mantelpiece, his tight, bulging quadriceps and calf muscles eye-catching to any viewer.

The day before, I'd booked into Anzac House. I chose to stay there because it shows nightly re-runs of Peter Weir's film, *Gallipoli*.

I set off around town to select a one-day tour of Gallipoli. At closing time, I book into one that covers the northern part of the peninsula, not understanding that the 31

cemeteries are located throughout the peninsula and are impossible to

The tour company also tells me about the Cannikale branch office of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that holds records of all those lost or killed during the Gallipoli campaign. Perhaps the office can help me locate my uncle's grave.

The next morning, an hour before the tour departs, I am on the doorstep waiting for the office to open. A cheerful-looking office worker unlocks the door and bustles me in.

He returns to his desk to rustle papers while he mutters urgently to himself (he tells me his bosses are visiting from the UK). I browse through the visitors' book. There are hundreds of testimonials: "The Diggers Club of Sydney would like to thank you for the efforts you have given to keeping the Peninsula well preserved." — Bob.

"Thank you very much for your help and assistance. Looking forward to putting flowers on the grave for great-grandmother at home." — Philippa.

Steph writes: "I've tried to find his memorial in Kings Park, Perth, and never found it. Then I come to Turkey and find the remains of my great-uncle buried and plaqued. I get goosebumps." She's not the only one.

The worker directs me to a shelf of thick bound books with colored spines. Each volume contains the names of soldiers or marines, alphabetically by regiment, who were missing or killed in the Gallipoli campaign. Each book is arranged by memorial or cemetery.

Also listed are the location details of the cemetery and corresponding panel on which each name is engraved.

I am content to flick through the books on my own. With moist palms and racing heart, I select a book and rustle through the pages to "HT".

Nothing. I try again, this time in the edition marked Helles Memorial. I take in



**Unfinished business:** Above and below, Australians visit Gallipoli for the Anzac Day dawn service and to cherish relatives' memories.

Pictures: MIKE BOWERS

entry: HUNTER, Capt Herbert Humphreys. 7th Bn. Australian Inf. 8th/12th May, 1915. Age 33. Son of George Frederick and Elizabeth Hunter. Native of Bendigo, Victoria, Australia."

The worker clasps his hands and shares in my delight. He takes copies of the pages outlining the memorial's location and details.

Several hours later, I find myself under Ali's tutelage. His amplified voice demands respect. We are as ordered as the rows of graves.

He delivers a litany of shocking statistics: Of the half a million men deployed, 50 per cent were killed, wounded or missing. It is estimated that more than 86,000 Turks and 160,000 Allied forces were killed.

He expertly blends conjecture with fact: "And can you imagine, my friends, that on this place a Turkish soldier was found in the embrace of an Australian one."

His knowledge is endless, his delivery relentless. My attention wanes and I seek some solitude. I slowly edge my way towards one of the many kilometres of trenches dispersed throughout the area. Half a century on, this trench is still intact and accessible.

I duck down in the muddy corridor and then stand upright — my upper body is exposed. Another tour member, an ex-Vietnam veteran, stands opposite me in an

away. We catch each other's eye.

Later, the Vietnam veteran breaks down and cries. We understand everything, yet comprehend very little. The group stands on a rise to overlook the infamous Nek where the Australian troops were gunned down, one after the other. It dawns on me that Uncle Herbert was my age when he died. I reach down and pocket a small pine cone.

In this surreal and strangely tranquil stage, the scenery has changed in 55 years: from muddy trenches devoid of trees and scrub, to verdant fields, pine forests and manicured lawns surrounding

obelisks and graves.

We cover the north-west of the peninsula: Anzac Cove, where the troops mistakenly disembarked from their ships. It is marked by a Turkish monument featuring Ataturk's remembrance speech for the Anzac troops: "Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives, you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. They have become our sons as well." We backtrack to the Lone Pine Cemetery and then drive north to The Nek and Chunuk Bair Cemeteries.

I catch a private moment with Ali while he fiddles with the volume

control button on the megaphone. By now I understand the geography of the peninsula. There has been a misunderstanding. The tour is not heading anywhere near the Helles Memorial on the southernmost tip of the peninsula.

I am stunned, calculating how much time I have before I must catch my onward connection to Istanbul. I cannot extend my stay. The group is sympathetic and supportive.

Arrangements are promptly made. At the end of the tour, while the others transfer their belongings to the coach to leave for Istanbul, Ali orders me to stay on the mini-bus. I

will hire this bus for the remaining hour to head south and will catch a night bus to Istanbul.

Everybody disembarks, including Ali. We farewell each other. I sit back and sigh with exhaustion and relief and celebrate my private pilgrimage. The bus takes off and races along the narrow and bumpy dirt road heading south. I close my eyes and see the sepia photograph.

Twenty minutes later, a taxi overtakes the bus. The driver beckons us urgently to stop. Out gets a figure dragging behind him a bright blue and green backpack, unmistakably mine. It had been taken out of the minibus in error.

The figure makes a gun shape with his hand, points it at me and pulls the "trigger". It is Ali. I am too stunned to speak.

Ali jumps on the mini-bus and sits next to me, muttering under his breath, and yells instructions at the driver who forges ahead and is about to take a wrong turn.

We round a sharp corner, by now the sun almost completely gone. Silhouetted against the purple, orange and yellow streaked backdrop is a 30-metre obelisk, the Helles Memorial.

We get out of the bus and race towards the base; I go one side, Ali the other — following the photocopied instructions listing the panel and the engraved name, a tangible representation of my blood relative. Vertical rows of names cover the memorial.

There, at eye level, my uncle's name. I savour the moment. A few seconds later, Ali appears and holds up a cigarette lighter to the metal plaque. Placing a page from my sketchbook against the raised letters, I urgently run a purple pencil back and forth to capture forever the engraving.

Ali insists I say a poem. I don't recall what I uttered — an inane phrase about a sunset and finding lost souls. He responds with a well-rehearsed war poem (by whom I don't remember). I am too distracted to be either annoyed or touched by his orchestration.

That night, safely on the coach to Istanbul, my mind races. I inhale the smell of the pine cone. An interested traveller looks across at me. "Been to Gallipoli?" he inquires.

"Me too," he continues. "We had the most interesting Turkish guide. He chose me to place a flower in the hand of Unknown Turkish soldier."

## MORTAL WOUNDS OR SICKNESS AND FOUND BURIAL AT

AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY 6TH BATTALION	AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY 6TH BATTALION	AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY 7TH BATTALION	AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY 7TH BATTALION
LANCÉ C. P. L. PRIVATE	MOODY F. PRIVATE	HEANT E. J. PRIVATE	PRIVATE
DOUGLASS A. J.	MURPHY G. H. E.	ARMOUR F. PRIVATE	ARMOUR F. PRIVATE
SERVED AS	SMITH J. J.	ATKINS H. J. PRIVATE	ATKINS H. J. PRIVATE
SMITH J. J. PRIVATE	DUNKLEY H. E.	BARR D. PRIVATE	BARR D. PRIVATE
DUNKLEY H. E. PRIVATE	DERRAM F. PRIVATE	BRID G. PRIVATE	BRID G. PRIVATE
DERRAM F. PRIVATE	DYER S. J. PRIVATE	BROOKER W. E. PRIVATE	BROOKER W. E. PRIVATE
DYER S. J. PRIVATE	EMMETT J. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
EMMETT J. PRIVATE	ERKINE T. W. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
ERKINE T. W. PRIVATE	FARRILL T. R. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
FARRILL T. R. PRIVATE	FOLEY P. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
FOLEY P. PRIVATE	FOURGILL J. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
FOURGILL J. PRIVATE	GANNETT W. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
GANNETT W. PRIVATE	GANNETT W. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
GANNETT W. PRIVATE	GANNETT W. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE	BRUCE G. PRIVATE
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● The Australian War Memorial provides a free pocket guide book, outlining maps, facts and lists of Gallipoli casualties. Write to: PO Box 345, Canberra, ACT 2601. To request a conv. tel: (02) 6243 4392 or e-mail