



by

T.G. Millner

It was a great thrill to become one of the pilgrims to the 50th anniversary of the landing on Gallipoli and to take part in the re-enactment of that historic occasion.

My wife and I set out from Sydney on 31st March, 1965 and flew to Singapore via Djakarta to see the spot where the 8th Australian Division were held prisoner by the Japs.

Both my eldest son Jim and youngest brother Noel were in the 8th Division.

After visiting Changi and other places in Malaya, on 5th April we joined a Qantas flight at Singapore with other members of the pilgrimage and flew via Cairo to Athens. Here buses met the party and drove them to their hotels.

The 314 tourists (216 Aussies and 78 New Zealanders) took part in a wreath-laying ceremony in conjunction with the Greek Navy and Army at the Tomb of the Greek Unknown Soldier.

In Athens all spare time was spent at the Acropolis and other well-known Greek spots of historical interest in what has been described as "Her Golden Past".

Our cameras shot the place to pieces but Athens is also a modern bustling city with crowds of people everywhere and new buildings going up everywhere also.

After Athens we embarked on a most interesting and unique cruise of the Mediterranean Sea on the Turkish ship "Karadeniz".

Sailing from the busy port of Piraeus, which was chock full of ships, on the afternoon of 6th April, we passed through the Straits of Messina between the mainland, Sicily, on our first night. The moon was shining and both shores displayed a long string of lights, a wonderful sight.

We woke up the next morning in Palermo Harbour another port full of ships and presenting a busy scene.

Sightseeing was the order of the day and we visited several churches including the beautiful Norman Royal Cathedral. We also went into the catacombs where thousands of skeletons are hanging in rows from the walls. In the afternoon we saw the handsome opera house capable of seating 3000 people.

We sailed from Palermo about dinner time for Malta and made port after breakfast on 9th April in Valetta Harbour.

Malta was one of the most interesting places which we visited, largely on account of its long association with the Knights of St. John.

Throughout their long history these Islands were conquered and ruled by many people.

Primitive man arrived here about the year 2300 B.C. but disappeared again.

About 1390 B.C. the Phoenicians appeared followed in turn by Carthaginians, Romans and Saracens who made the place a piratical stronghold. Then came Roger the Norman who restored Christianity, and the place was afterwards ruled in turn by Norman, German and Spanish kings.

Malta was an important port during the Crusades but was pawned for 30,000 gold florins by King Alphonso in 1420.

In 1530 the Emperor Charles V ceded the Islands to the Knights of St. John.

They were besieged by the Turks without success in 1565. The knights continued to trade and plunder shipping amassing great wealth, much of which was lavished on cathedrals and churches.

Below: Some of the original Anzacs who landed on Gallipoli.



The Knights began to gradually lose their high religious ideals and lived a softer life and in course of time their power faded.

Eventually Napoleon Bonaparte captured the Islands in 1798, seized much treasure and the precious metals were melted, down to pay the troops.

Napoleon was blockaded by Nelson's fleet and forced to leave and the Maltese appealed to Britain to take over sovereignty. The bashing that Malta received from the air in World War 11 and the fortitude of the people is too well known to bear repeating.



Handing Skeletons in the Catacombs in Rome

We met a daughter and nephew of Sir Gerald Strickland, one time Governor of New South Wales who was a Knight of St. John.

The 10th of April was spent at sea and we arrived off Tobruk on the morning of the 11th. The Royal Air Force took the party ashore in motor barges and then drove us to the cemetery in their trucks. A wreath was laid and the party served with refreshments. We were also presented with a can of beer and an opener.

Afterwards we were taken back to the ship by our hosts. They serve for two years in this place – poor fellows.

On 12th April the ship arrived off Alexandria before breakfast and had to wait its turn to enter port with other ships in the roadstead. We were taken to the inner harbour and disembarked about 9 a.m. By bus to El Alamain for wreath laying and tour of the battlefield.

In the afternoon we drove 20 miles as far as King Farouk's garden and palace, now the property of the people. This 20 mile road is lined all the way by fine apartment houses.

The 1914 people could not all recognise Alexandria again.

On 13th April we left Alexandria about 8 a.m. for the 60 mile drive to Cairo lunching at Mena House en route.

After lunch we visited the Pyramids and the Sphinx which were as crowded as Bondi Beach on a public holiday.

The old camp site of 1914 has altered, so much that it was hard to imagine where it had been.

The drive to Cairo was continued and after settling in at our hotels we went along to a cocktail party given by the Australian Ambassador in our honour.

Our hotel had 2 out of 3 lifts out of order and the dining room was on the 9th floor.

The following morning we toured the Mohammed Ali Mosque and the Citadel and also visited the Egyptian Museum which was fabulous.

After lunch the party boarded our buses for the return trip to Alexandria and the ship. We passed many irrigation works in hand by the Egyptian Government.

There is also extensive planting of trees which in a few years should be very attractive.

We could not recognise Cairo and its inhabitants are well dressed these days.

We sailed from Alexandria for Lebanon about 6.30 and after a smooth passage arrived at Beirut the chief seaport about 4.30 the next afternoon.

The following morning 16th April was a warm sunny day. We did a tour of the city and got well and truly tangled up with traffic in its narrow streets. Every horn was blaring but this had no effect on the traffic so we walked and came across a small street given over to flowers, fruit and vegetables, most attractive lots of strawberries, grapes, bananas and oranges.

Beirut is a rich town with lots of trade. It is connected by rail to Baghdad and Damascus.

As well as being of commercial importance there are remains of Roman and Greek temples at Baalber up in the hills. There

Margot Fonteyn danced a ballet amongst the ancient columns as background and I believe an Australian ballet company intends to do likewise.

Many of the pilgrims journeyed up the mountains to see these ancient relics of the past. The journey was very interesting amongst snow-clad mountains, the sides of which are terraced and cultivated.

Some members of the party also visited Byblos said to be the oldest inhabited city in the world. The Knights of St. John also left their mark on this part of the world in the form of a fortress and a church. We laid a wreath of the Tomb of the Lebanese unknown Soldier.

We next came to Rhodes sailing in an dropping anchor in the roadstead amongst a nest of American destroyers about lunch time on 18th April.

Rhodes is the spot where the Knights of St. John retired after being expelled from Palestine in 1308. This place was most favourably placed strategically for their purpose. They grew in power and prestige and in the 214 years of their sojourn here, became the terror of the Levant. They built a fortress-like city and their galleys ruled the seas and gathered in the spoils.

We thoroughly enjoyed our tour of the Island with its narrow quaint streets, one the street of the Knights leading up to the castle of the Grand Master. It was here that we attended the performance of *Son et Lumiere*, in the evening – a most dramatically told story by sound and light of the last stand by the Knights when besieged by the Turks in 1522.

The Turkish Commander as so impressed by their heroic stand that he allowed them to depart with the honours of war and

it was from here that they settled in Malta and ruled this place for another 200 years or so.

From Rhodes we sailed to Crete and had another early arrival at this hilly island which is very fertile and the people most hospitable.

We drove up to Knossos to inspect the recent excavations of some very old ruins. There are a lot of missing bits which have had to be filled in. Crete like other Med-

iterranean countries has had its share of troubles in the past having been taken over by Dorians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and Turks at one time or other.

A party of Crete returned soldiers came to pay us a visit. By some misunderstanding the Turkish Q.M. would not let them on the ship. However this was cleared up and they were invited on board and entertained, presents exchanged and they went away happy. (continued in next issue).



Contingent parading in front of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens.

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



(continued from December Issue)

By T.G. Millner

Our next port of call was Izmir a flourishing Turkish city in Asia Minor.

The Turkish Navy-Army gave us a rousing welcome and treated us to a little spot of goose-stepping, very smart indeed.

We docked alongside a wharf in front of a statue of Kemal Ataturk erected in the centre of a most attractive plaza. A wreath laying ceremony on the statue was carried out with military honours.

After the ceremonies, two of us took a taxi to the highest part of the city from where we looked down on a large park and decided to explore it. It turned out to be very large and well laid out with tree lined drives, lawns, gardens and fountains. It also had plenty of gadgets for the kids to amuse themselves with. A really delightful spot.

Opposite the wharf was an ultra modern new hotel. This too was beautified and

landscaped. Flowers, trees, lawns, woods and swimming pools adorning the entrance grounds. The appointments inside were also first class.

After leaving Izmir we sailed through the night to the Dardanelles arriving off the peninsula in the early hours of the morning and passed through the Narrows without most people being aware of it.

We were taken for a wonderful cruise up the Dardanelles for 20 miles to the entrance of the Black Sea and then turned around and came slowly back to tie up alongside the Customs House.

From the point of view of the first war digger this trip up the Dardanelles was of the most absorbing and unique interest, apart from the pleasures of enjoying the scenery with the many towns and hundreds of minarets on each shore as well as ships plying their busy trade.

Back at the wharf a military band played the ship alongside and a crowd of Turkish veterans were there to do the honours.

We filed down the gangway to pass along a line of veterans whom we shook by the hand, each in turn as we passed along. A legless Aussie and a legless Turkish veteran embraced each other and the old Turk's eyes filled with tears as they did so.

The main sight that arrests the eye here is the many ferries that hurry about at peak hours to all points on the Bosphorus every few minutes. They are very picturesque and carry a tremendous number of people.

One feels sorry at the passing of the Sydney ferries, buses don't look half as good.

In the afternoon we visited the Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Mosque) built between 1609-1616. This is considered the most lovely of the Mosques in the city, with its domes, six slender minarets and gracious proportions.

After the Blue Mosque we walked over to St. Sophia Museum. This was built as a Christian Temple, later used as a Mosque. It was destroyed and rebuilt, destroyed again by earthquake and again rebuilt and converted into a museum by Kemal Ataturk.

Our guard spoke 12 languages.

On our second morning a big ceremony was held in the city centre but by some mistake several of our buses did not arrive until it was all over. This part of the city abounds in modern and attractive shops.

Our last day was wet, so that morning we explored that part of the city adjacent to the waterfront.

We went up and down narrow steep streets by means of steps lined with small shops and workshops.

In the afternoon we went to the old and new palaces of Topkopi and Dolmabahee. Topkopi was built over a long period between the 15th and 19th centuries, its diverse architecture gives the Palace its charm. It is now a museum and houses the huge priceless collection of the Turkish Sultans placed on display there in 1924. The Chinese porcelain section is the richest known and the treasury contains extraordinary jewellery, the value of the gold being said to be worth 77 million dollars.

The Dolmabahee palace is one vast delight to the eye, its 200 rooms and 20 salons being sumptuously furnished in many styles.

The palace contains priceless examples of tapestries, paintings, vases and crystal as well as work in alabaster, marble and porphyry. The Sultan's bathroom was all in alabaster.

The ladies' quarters were beautiful and as the guide remarked "life in the harem could be most agreeable".

Kemal Ataturk died here.

With some reluctance we said goodbye to this lovely city and put in a full day at sea before arriving at Moudros Harbour on the island of Lemnos, the following afternoon.

What a different sight met our eyes. This big harbour instead of sheltering hundreds of ships of all sorts and sizes, from freighters to battleships was now empty. Nor were the shores lined with military camps and hospitals as we used to know it 50 years ago.

I did not go ashore.

We sailed during the night for the great day on the morrow at Anzac to land once more at Anzac Cove.

(continued in next issue).



MARCHING TO THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER'S TOMB IN ATHENS 1965.

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A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



(continued from January issue)

By T.G. Millner

We arrived at our destination in the early hours. It was a beautiful day and the sea like a millpond. The ship's boats were lowered over the side, the gangway went down and we filed into the boats.

These boats were manoeuvred with a lever which turned a screw – a new method of rowing. Eventually the ship's motor boat took the life boats in tow and we headed for the shore.

The Turkish Engineers had constructed a jetty, at North Beach and we were able to get ashore on this occasion without even getting our feet wet.

We were met by Veterans, pressmen, photographers, and sightseers and it was hard to tell who was who.

There were two Australian girls amongst the crowd to greet us. They were travelling in the area, managed to get to Anzac and slept all night on the beach. They were very proud of themselves and I think that we were proud of them too.

There was one casualty, a photographer stepped backwards off the jetty into the drink ruining some valuable equipment.

After greeting our opposite numbers and giving away some small presents we started to look around.

The remains of our fresh water condenser which the Turks put a shell through the first night it was in operation was still on the beach and it was a good guide to our location.

Most Diggers quickly recognised the feature known as the Sphinx, a bit more weathered than it used to be and then other spots were recalled to mind. The Turks now have a road along the waterfront and trees and scrub have grown again and covered the once bare hills.

We did not have much time for detailed exploration and were back on board ship for breakfast. We sailed almost immediately through the Narrows to Galipoli, a garrison town where we received a very warm welcome from the townspeople and the garrison.

The guard of honour all had the most fierce looking moustaches and were quite alarming but these proved to be false and on being removed revealed very nice boyish faces.

Buses took us from here to the site of the Turkish memorial, a huge plain pile where the usual ceremonies were held, the Turkish Army had erected shelters and seats and after the ceremonies we ate our cut lunches provided by the ship not forgetting our bottle of eau natural.

After lunch we embarked again for Lone Pine and placed wreaths on the Memorial. I located Dick Irving's grave (Arthur's brother) and my wife picked a spray of rosemary from the grave and sent it to Arthur. A photograph was also taken of the grave.

The next morning we again went to Lone Pine and then on to the Ari Burnu where the New Zealand Memorial is; this being the farthest point to which the New Zealanders penetrated. I thought this ceremony the best yet.

A Maori kopi had been brought from Wellington Museum to be laid on the Memorial and returned as an inspiration to the

Maori people. The singing of the Maori's lament concluded this touching ceremony.

Afterwards I walked along the ridge viewing our positions and those held by the Turks. A little bit further and we might have been fighting on rolling plains. Then I walked down to the sea from Quinn's Post and along the beach.

There are about twenty cemeteries on Gallipoli, all beautifully kept in good order where our comrades can rest peacefully in this little bit of Aussie so far from our homeland.

Alas how young so many of them were.

We went back to Gallipoli from the battlefield and left that night for Athens and the end of the pilgrimage.

We received a rousing send off from the whole population, and took away with us very warm feelings for these simple kindly people.

I should like to end this story with a quotation from a very great man the late Colonel Atatürk himself, who said:

“ O Heroes, Those who spilt their blood in this land. You are here in the Country of friends. Repose in peace you are sleeping side by side in close embrace with our little Mahomedes.

O, The Mothers of distant lands who sent their sons to battle here, stop your tears your sons are in our bosoms. They are serenely in peace. Having fallen here, now they become our own sons.”



LONE PINE, 1965. THE AUTHOR FINDS A GRAVE WITH A WELL KNOWN AUSTRALIAN NAME ENGRAVED ON IT. SEE PAGE 8.