

Topic 8: What makes a hero?

Work Sheet 8F: Stretcher Bearers at Gallipoli



CLICK AND FIND

Web pages for this activity

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/bean.html

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/bartlett/html

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/nbeach1.html

Look at the pictures of the terrain at Gallipoli and read the descriptions by CEW Bean and Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.

Consider the difficulties of providing medical treatment to sick and wounded soldiers under these conditions. Think about what was involved in collecting the wounded from the battlefield and taking them down to the beaches to be evacuated in the hospital ships which waited offshore.

Referring to the sources below, answer questions 1 to 9.

Source 1

Stretcher-Bearers



Ellis Silas, *Crusading at Anzac*, May 1915

This gives some idea of the difficulties and dangers the stretcher bearers had to contend with. Their bravery was quite equal to any heroism shown on the field of battle. When we first landed, the Turks shot at anything that moved, sparing not even the wounded on stretchers. They had been told by the Germans that the Australians were cannibals.

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/s_crusading/crusading.html

Source 2



AWM P1116/69/20

Stretcher-bearers at work during the August offensive in the Sari Bair Range.

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/nbeach4_3.html

Source 3



AWM J06392

Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick using a donkey to carry wounded men from the firing line to the hospital at Anzac Cove. He was killed by a Turkish machine gunner.

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/nbeach1_2.html

Source 4

Extract from CEW Bean, *The First Report*:

It is impossible to say which battalion landed first, because several landed together.

The Turks in the trenches facing the landing had run, but those on the other flank and on the ridges and gullies still kept up a fire upon the boats coming in shore, and that portion of the covering force which landed last came under a heavy fire before it reached the beach. The Turks had a machine gun in the valley on our left, and this seems to have been turned on to the boats containing the Twelfth Battalion ... Two stretcher-bearers of the Second Battalion who went along the beach during the day to effect a rescue were both shot by the Turks. Finally a party waited for dark and crept along the beach, rescuing nine men who had been in the boats two days, afraid to move for fear of attracting fire. The work of the stretcher-bearers all through a week of hard fighting has been beyond all praise.

www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/bean.html

Source 5

Extract from Letter to the Editor by Harold G Massey, *Sydney Morning Herald* 1916:

The stretcher bearers are great. They go up and down all the time in the open, carrying the wounded through a withering shell fire. It's magnificent to see them. They are the real heroes of the affair, because they are unarmed and are exposed to everything. With no means of kicking back.

Cited in P. Cochrane, *Simpson and the Donkey: the making of a legend*. Carlton (Vic): Melbourne University Press, 1992, p 105.

Source 6

Throughout the battle the men of the Australian, New Zealand and British Army Medical Corps, along with the battalion stretcher-bearers, worked night and day to the point of personal collapse. Some died as they tried to carry the wounded down from the heights. Corporal William Rusden saw two lots of stretcher-bearers shot within minutes as they worked their way down a valley.

Reid, Richard. *A Duty Clear Before Us*, Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2000. Chapter 4, p 3.
www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/nbeach4_3.html

1 Look closely at *Sources 1* and *2*. Describe the appearance and equipment of the stretcher bearers and explain how they transported wounded soldiers.

2 *Sources 1* and *2* are *primary* sources on conditions at Gallipoli: they were created at the scene. What *similarities* are there between the two sources? What differences are there?

3 Look closely at *Source 3*. Describe Simpson's method of transporting wounded soldiers.

4 List at least one advantage and one disadvantage of Simpson's method of transportation, compared to the method shown in *Sources 1* and *2*.

5 According to *Source 4*, what difficulties did the stretcher bearers face after the landing?

6 What is CEW Bean's opinion of the stretcher bearers after the landing?

7 What is Harold Massey's opinion of the stretcher bearers in *Source 5*? What reasons does he give for his opinion?

8 Using the information from *Sources 1* to *5*, discuss with a partner whether or not stretcher bearers could be classed as heroes. Provide evidence to support your view.

9 Stretcher bearers belonged to Army Field Ambulance units and were usually from the lower ranks. Refer to the list of Imperial awards for bravery on *Work Sheet 8C*. For which of the awards could stretcher bearers be nominated?
