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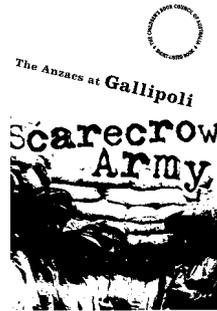
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BOOK REVIEW

Scarecrow army: the Anzacs at Gallipoli

by Leon Davidson

*Black Dog Books: Fitzroy,
Victoria, 2005, 186 pp.,
ISBN 1 876372 60 5,
RRP \$16.99 (soft cover)*



Scarecrow Army is a brief account of the military contribution made by Australia and New Zealand to the Gallipoli Campaign from 25 April to 19 December 1915. While written for children aged 9 years and older, it is also suitable for anyone seeking a concise summary of the campaign and the key battles in which the Anzacs fought.

The book places the campaign in its strategic context and then tells the Gallipoli story beginning with the raising of the Australian and New Zealand expeditionary forces, including the journey by ship to Egypt, training in the desert, leave in Cairo and guarding the Suez Canal. It then describes the landing at 'Anzac Cove' and the fighting to secure the beachhead from 25-30 April; followed by each of the subsequent major battles – the failed Turkish counter-offensive of 19-23 May and the unsuccessful Allied attempts to break out of the beachhead from 6-10 August; and, finally, the well-planned and executed withdrawal on 16-19 December. Each major battle is placed in its strategic context, the tactics and outcomes are explained in broad outline, and some detail is given of selected parts of the fighting, sufficient for a good impression of what it must have been like for the participants.

Leon Davidson has researched the campaign well, drawing on recent works, including Turkish works, as well as the official histories and earlier memoirs. He focuses as much on the New Zealand contribution as the Australian one and frequently refers to the Turkish perspective. Importantly, he has cut through the myths surrounding the Anzac legend, exposing the "bad" as well as the "good" at both soldier and commander levels.

Inevitably in such a brief summary, there are oversimplifications in places, including some minor errors, and the actions of the British at Suvla Bay should have been explained better, but none of this inhibits the reader from gaining an accurate overall understanding of the campaign. The book has adequate maps, a timeline, glossary, bibliography and index; and is well illustrated with photos from the Australian War Memorial collection.

With the contemporary interest among Australians and New Zealanders in Gallipoli, this book would make an inexpensive gift for anyone with a passing interest in the story or contemplating making the pilgrimage to the peninsula. It is on the New South Wales Premier's reading list for school children; and The Children's Book Council of Australia list.

David Leece