

CHUNUK BAIR



At night we climbed a ridge
from the beach up to where
the Turks stood over us.

Finally we were equal warriors,
cresting like a wave,
not washed against a fiery cliff.

We held our ground for two days.

At daybreak, their leader –
a great man with a pocketwatch
and a whip – rose up.

His men surged towards us,
firing from their motherland,
and we fell like rain.

When the snow came,
we left our dead behind.

Robert Sullivan

The fighting at Gallipoli went on for nine long months. During this time, over two hundred thousand Ottoman Turkish soldiers defended their homeland. They were led by Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa Kemal. In early August 1915, the **Allied soldiers** attacked the high ground overlooking Anzac Cove. On 8 August, the New Zealand soldiers took Chunuk Bair, one of the peaks. Two days later, at dawn, the Ottoman Turks counter-attacked. It's said that Kemal used his whip to signal to his men that they should begin firing. During the battle, he was hit in the chest by **shrapnel**. The watch in his pocket was smashed to pieces, but it saved his life. Kemal became a national hero. After the war, he went on to be Turkey's first president and was given the name Atatürk, meaning "father of the Turks". Today, there are memorials in Turkey and New Zealand to remember the more than 120 000 men who lost their lives at Gallipoli. Several of these memorials display Atatürk's famous words:

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us, where they lie, side by side here in this country of ours ... You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well."

Kemal Atatürk, 1934

Chunuk Bair

by Robert Sullivan

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