

April 24, 2015

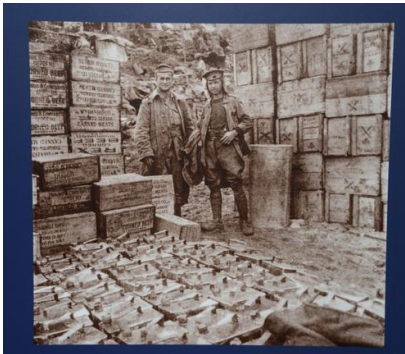
The War through his lens



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Special Arrangement

Sir Charles Ryan's photographs of the Gallipoli Campaign at PVR Cinemas, Ampa Skywalk Mall.



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A photographic exhibition in the city marks the 100th anniversary of the Great War's Gallipoli campaign

As dawn streaks skies across the world today, the events of a hundred years ago will be remembered with pride. Anzac Day that is celebrated every year on April 25 marks more than just the date of landing of troops from the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) on a beachhead in Turkey during the Great War.

The bitterly-fought campaign that took place in 1915 at the Gallipoli peninsula, teetering at the edge of Europe, was the first major military action that Australia and New Zealand participated in as independent dominions. Of the thousands of Allied soldiers who died here, 8,709 were Australian and 2,721 were New Zealanders. It is also an exceptional event where two countries share the same remembrance day, with mention of both countries in its name. As for Turkey, the campaign was regarded as a significant moment in its history, a final win before the Ottoman Empire crumbled. It was also for the first time that the world heard of Mustafa Kemal 'Ataturk', who made headlines as a commander at Gallipoli.

In Chennai, Anzac Day is being commemorated with a photography exhibition and a dawn service at the Madras War Cemetery, where 14 Australians and six New Zealand services personnel are interred. The exhibition, organised by the Australian Consulate-General, Chennai, in association with the Australian War Memorial and PVR Cinemas, has been curated by the Australian War Memorial to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.

Titled A Camera On Gallipoli, it features 20 photographs shot in 1915 by 61-year-old army officer and consulting surgeon to the Australian Imperial Force, Sir Charles Ryan. The pictures mark the passage of the troops from Melbourne to West Asia to Gallipoli — not just the difficult

physical journey often under heavy enemy fire but their experiences of their war. Ryan led an exciting life — he served in the Ottoman Army during the Serbo-Turkish and Russo-Turkish Wars, and later in the Australian Military Forces. So, when he landed in Gallipoli, he faced an enemy whose country he had served nearly 40 years ago. His pictures capture the forbidding mountains, the exhausted troops, the dead and the dying, generals and foot soldiers but, more importantly, their stoicism and their dogged endurance that went on to define the spirit of Anzac.

The crowds at PVR pause in the midst of gazing at colourful posters to take in the historic moments captured by Sir Charles in sepia. Soldiers pose alongside stores of tinned meat on a beach; nurses in ankle-length travelling cloaks stand alongside an army captain under the vaulted roof of the Ramses Railway Station, Cairo; the Australian camp located in the shadow of the Pyramids; Maj. Gen. William Bridges who commanded the 1st Australian Division and was mortally wounded by a Turkish sniper photographed with his staff officers under a date palm; Sir Charles himself posing in a sola topee; the rugged terrain, the boats at sea; the ravines of Anzac Cove with the Sphinx rising in a dust haze in the background; the charming smiles of men at work in the midst of battle, the brutality of war and the luxury of peace.

Sir Charles survived the War and was even known to have treated Australian bushranger and outlaw, Ned Kelly. But it is for his record of Gallipoli that marks the coming of age of a country, a century ago, that he is remembered today.

The exhibition is on till April 26 at PVR Cinemas, 4th Floor, Ampa Skywalk Mall.