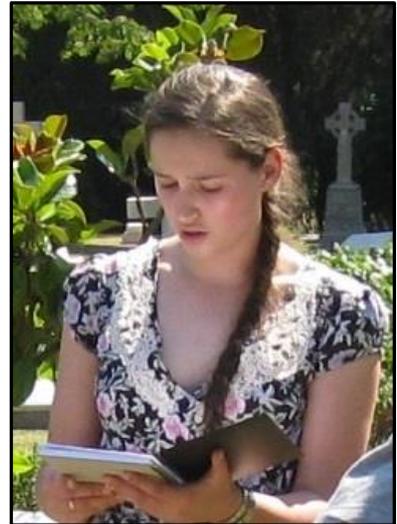

On 6 July a group of students from the Holy Spirit College, Australia, visited the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Haidar Pasha Cemetery, Istanbul.

This was their final destination following a tour of the cemeteries on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Each student picked and investigated the history of one casualty.

Here we see one young Australian's moving account of the life of Corporal Charles Harold Hodsdon of the 15th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F, who lost his life in Turkey, aged just 22.



Dearest Charles,

We've never met, nor can I begin to fully understand the experiences you've had, the feelings you've felt and the person you were in life. Yet, I wish to tell you, and the people around me, what I have learnt about you.

You were born in 1894, the exact date I know not, and you were 21 and 10 months old when you enlisted on 23 September 1914. You lived in Brisbane, your parents were John and Amelia Hodsdon (Amelia being listed as your next of kin) and you were a tailor by trade. You were physically described to be five feet, six and a quarter inches, 13 stone with fair skin, grey eyes and black hair – with not a mark or scar on your skin. This speaks to me deeply, as, though I know you were by no means a pious or self-righteous man, there was not a scar on you. There was no way that you were prepared for the horrors that would meet you at Gallipoli.

You joined the 15th infantry battalion, with the service number 750 and were trained at Broadmeadows. It was here that your mischievous and individual personality shone through. You 'broke camp' and was forfeited a day's pay for being 'absent without leave for tattoo till reveille' and were also punished with 'time' for refusing to obey an order and for insubordination to a Non-commissioned officer. Then, yet again, you were absent for 25 hours straight without leave so you could get another tattoo. At this point, I don't see you as so innocent. But, hell, I respect your spirit and your stubborn, non-conforming nature. I see you as a man who lived by his own rules and it makes me so immeasurably happy.

Despite your perceived reckless behaviour you were given the title of Corporal and were off to Gallipoli to fight another man's war. You arrived on 12 April as a part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and were wounded only six days later on the 18th, suffering a broken right leg. As a result you were transported on the hospital ship 'Galeka' and admitted to the Heliopolis

hospital a month later. You were then Charles, dispatched back to base and re-joined the fight in Gallipoli on 28 July 1915. It ruins me to think they did this to you. Yet I can imagine your spirit fought on.

Not long after re-joining the battle you were reported missing and were later discovered as a prisoner of war in Constantinople on 8 August 1915. I'm not certain what happened to you next. If you were injured before they captured you, or I hate to think it, they injured you while you were their prisoner. But regardless you were admitted to the Tash-Keschla hospital as a prisoner of war on 16 October 1915 suffering a broken hip and injured arm. Despite this Charles, you lived a further five days before succumbing to tuberculosis. Five days. In a foreign land, surrounded by foreign people you could not communicate with. I can only imagine the agony of your wounds as you laid there.

A statement made from Sergeant Bailey W. of the 15th battalion and a repatriated prisoner of war regarding your death was made: *"I knew he was badly wounded in the right thigh. His death resulted from his wound, bad treatment and neglect."*

And while it would be so easy to do in this scenario, I do not blame the Turkish, nor do I blame the Australians. In this futile and misguided war so many were lost. Including the life of you Charles, a dead man with more courage and strength than I know of any person living.

Your effects from both Gallipoli and Constantinople were returned to your family, including: letters, postcards, testament, purse, chain, medal, two tobacco boxes and half a pound of Turkish gold. How you got this gold I wonder, but it speaks to me of a rebellious spirit that could not be crushed even in the darkest of times. Along with this, you earned the Star medal, British War medal, Victory medal, Memorial Plaque and Memorial Scroll for your service in the Australian Imperial Force. There was no one more deserving.



As I visit you today in the Haidar Pasha cemetery, buried away from the majority of your comrades I wish to leave you a stone from the beach at Ari Burnu, a pinecone from Lone Pine and a bunch of wildflowers from the peninsula. A combination of our experiences from the lands of Gallipoli. As I stand here telling your story to my friends, teachers and family, commemorating your life and the lives of your fallen brothers, I wish to say that you died for us, and now we will live for you. You have inspired in me and taught me to have courage and to be true to myself. Though I never knew you I am so, so proud of you and you will live on in my memory, your legacy will remain. So Charles Harold Hodsdon, rest in peace. Lest we forget.

Your fellow Australian,

Summer Reh