

## ANZAC SYMBOLS, RITES & RITUALS

The Anzac Day ceremony is rich in tradition and ritual. It is, essentially, a military funeral, with all the solemnity and symbolism such an event entails. Below are brief outlines for some of the symbols and rituals associated with Anzac Day.

### Motto

“Lest We Forget” is the motto for Anzac Day.

### Recitations

In most ceremonies of remembrance there are recitations. Everyone is familiar with the well known lines:

*“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.”*

This traditional recitation on ANZAC Day is the Ode, the fourth stanza of the poem “*For the fallen*” by Laurence Binyon (1869–1943). It was selected in 1919 to accompany the unveiling of the London Cenotaph and, like so many memorial traditions, passed into common use across the Commonwealth. Its use on ANZAC Day might have originated with the Queensland ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee, which placed it on the cover of a collection of sermons and addresses for ANZAC Day published in 1921. It was also used at the laying of the Inauguration Stone at the Memorial in 1929.

“*In Flanders fields*”, by the Canadian officer Lieutenant Colonel J.M. McCrae (1872–1918), is another popular recitation.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.*

*If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.*

## **Red Poppies**



The Flanders poppy has been a part of Armistice or Remembrance Day ritual since the early 1920s and is also increasingly being used as part of ANZAC Day observances. During the First World War, red poppies were seen to be among the first living plants that sprouted from the devastation of the battlefields of northern France and Belgium. Soldiers' folklore had it that the poppies were vivid red from having been nurtured in ground drenched with the blood of their comrades. This powerful symbolism is now attached to the red poppy – that of the sacrifice of shed blood.

## **A Period of Silence**

Two-minutes silence was first observed in Australia on the first anniversary of the armistice and continues to be observed on Remembrance Day. The two-minute silence has over the years been incorporated into ANZAC Day and other commemorative ceremonies.

In October 1919 Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, a South African, suggested a period of silence on Armistice Day in all the countries of the empire. Fitzpatrick's idea was presented to King George V and on 6 November 1919 the King sent a special message to the people of the Commonwealth:

*"I believe that my people in every part of the Empire fervently wish to perpetuate the memory of that Great Deliverance, and of those who laid down their lives to achieve it."*

The King continued to ask that "a complete suspension of all our normal activities" be observed for two minutes at "the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" so that "in perfect stillness the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the Glorious Dead".

## **Laying of Wreaths**

Flowers have traditionally been laid on graves and memorials in memory of the dead. Rosemary, symbolising remembrance, is popular on ANZAC day. Laurel is also a commemorative symbol; woven into a wreath, it was used by the ancient Romans to crown victors and the brave as a mark of honour.

## The Lone Piper & “Flowers of the Forest”



It is unclear when pipers first became a feature of Australian memorial services. With the significant size of Australia's expatriate Scottish community in the early decades of the 20th century, represented by several Scottish battalions in the Militia, the presence of a piper probably became established during the 1920s. “*Flowers of the forest*” is the tune usually played on these occasions. It is a traditional Scottish lament (song of mourning and remembrance).

## Reversed Arms



The tradition of reversing and resting on arms as a mark of respect or mourning has been observed for centuries. It is believed to have originated with the ancient Greeks. The earliest documented instances of carrying arms reversed in more recent times are in descriptions of sixteenth-century military funerals.

## The Lone Charger



Memorial parades are often led by a lone, rider-less horse, with a pair of boots pointing backwards in the saddle's stirrups. An ancient tradition has it that Saxon people used to bury a great warrior's horse with him so that it could serve him in the afterlife. This practice was continued in some European countries until the late eighteenth century. In modern memorial parades, the horse is led along as part of its master's funeral procession; with his boots, like the arms of his soldiers, reversed as a sign of respect. In some ANZAC Day parades a lone charger is incorporated as an additional symbol of respect and mourning, often for the men of the light horse brigades.

## Rosemary



Rosemary is an ancient symbol of remembrance. This aromatic herb is believed to have properties to improve the memory. Possibly because of these properties, rosemary became an emblem of both fidelity and remembrance in ancient literature and folklore. Traditionally, sprigs of rosemary are worn on ANZAC Day and sometimes Remembrance Day. Rosemary has particular significance for Australians, as it is found growing wild on the Gallipoli peninsula.

## Anzac Biscuits

The biscuits sent to soldiers during the First World War were a hard, long-keeping biscuit that could survive the journey by sea, and still remain edible. These were known as Soldiers' Biscuits, but after the Gallipoli landings in 1915, they became known as Anzac Biscuits.

The traditional Anzac Biscuit is hard and flat - ideal for dunking in tea and then eating. Variations to the basic recipe were created by adding nuts, dried fruit and spices such as ginger. During the First World War, some soldiers used broken biscuits to make a form of porridge to add some variety to their diet.

## The Last Post



This is a trumpet or bugle call which was sounded each night on completion of the officer of the guard completing his rounds to check that the garrison was secure and the sentries were at their posts. It also served to inform soldiers that they should be in their quarters for the night. It is also sounded at military funerals and commemorative services to symbolise that the duty of the dead is over and they can rest in peace.

## The Rouse and the Reveille



Since Roman times, bugles or horns have been used as signals to command soldiers on the battlefield and to regulate soldiers' days in barracks. The Reveille was a bright, cheerful call to rouse soldiers from their slumber, ready for duty. The call has also been adopted to conclude funeral services and remembrance services. It symbolises an awakening in a better world for the dead and "rouses" the living, their respects paid to the memory of their comrades, back to duty. The

Rouse is a shorter bugle call, which, as its name suggests, was also used to call soldiers to their duties. Due to its much shorter length, the Rouse is most commonly used in conjunction with the Last Post at remembrance services. The exception is the Dawn Service, when the Reveille is played.

## Cenotaph & Catafalque

These two words, while related in purpose, are often misunderstood and misused.



**Cenotaph** - The word cenotaph comes from the Greek words *taphos* – tomb and *kenos* – empty, combined to indicate “empty tomb”. Hence a cenotaph is a tomb or a monument erected in honor of a person or group of persons whose remains are elsewhere. It can also be the initial tomb for a person who has since been interred elsewhere.



**Catafalque** - The word catafalque (*cat-a-falk*) originates from the Italian *catafalco*, which means scaffolding. A catafalque is a raised bier or platform, often movable, that is used to support the casket, coffin, or body of the deceased during a funeral or memorial service. Catafalque

decorations are known as *castrum doloris*. For ceremonial purposes a catafalque is represented by a shrine or remembrance stone or a cenotaph.

## Catafalque Party

History reveals that catafalque parties were sentries posted around a coffin to protect the deceased, particularly the wealthy, from vandals, thieves and desecrators. Today a catafalque party (also referred to as a vigil) is posted at the four corners of the catafalque, heads lowered, facing outwards with their rifles reversed as a mark of respect and to signify that the dead are now at peace. (See photo above for Reversed Arms).