

As young people in the 21st century, the Anzac war effort can often feel distant, but its significance to our lives in a modern Australia remains profound. The 'Anzac Spirit' serves as the foundation to our culture of mate ship; the deeply ingrained value that embodies loyalty, respect, and sticking with your mates through thick and thin. This culture shapes our national identity to this day, as well as the freedoms and privileges that are apart of the way of life we now enjoy. All of this can be attributed to the courage and selflessness of the ANZACS – sacrificing their lives and futures to ensure we had ours. Today, we gather to remember the sacrifices of the Australian and New Zealand troops – those who fought, those who fell, and those who returned forever changed.

Many of these ANZACS, who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country, were young people with the same aspirations, dreams and goals that most of us in this room have today. Instead, they were sent away to unfamiliar places, with no idea when or if they would return home. Some of these men were members of our school community, sharing the same spaces we do today. One of these soldiers was Roderick Alexander Cameron, who attended Brisbane State High and was a graduate in the class of 1931. After enlisting in July of 1940, he left his job as a schoolteacher and was sent to serve in the 2/26 infantry, infamously nicknamed 'The Gallopers'. Cameron, along with his battalion, were sent to Singapore, before deploying to Malaya and Yong Peng. While stationed, they endured intense shelling from Japanese forces, and on the 8th of February, Allied forces were overwhelmed, with the British commander declaring surrender. During this brutality, Cameron and his infantry were captured as Japanese Prisoners of War, where they remained for the rest of the conflict. After four years of captivity, Cameron passed away due to the harsh conditions of the camp.

Prisoner of War camps were military facilities where enemy combatants were detained and held during wartime. The soldiers were often subject to forced labour, and extreme conditions, harbouring illnesses, disease and death. During World War 2, approximately 22,000 Australians were captured and held in prisoner of war camps in Japan.

One of these prisoners was George Bell, who was taken captive by German troops during the battle of Bullecourt in April 1917. A bank officer from Western Australian, George's name has become synonymous with the ANZAC spirit through his commitment to share the stories of himself and his fellow prisoners, by keeping a written record of his experience in the camp and bravely hiding the papers in a tube of toothpaste. George wrote about the dire conditions he experienced while captured, documenting being, "Under shell fire. No soap or change of clothing in intense cold. Wet clothes. Deliberate cruelty by Commandant at Reprisal Camp. Sick men worked & then clubbed until unconscious, then hospital." George's act of defiance, and the information he recorded is still a crucial part of our National Archives and understanding of the conditions of these Prisoner of War camps, and for us a school community, understanding what past students such as Roderick Alexander Cameron went through during their service. Personally, George's actions under distress are a true embodiment of the Anzac spirit.

I believe that it is not only our duty to have conversations about the Anzacs, but in our best interest to do so. Although a distant part of history for many of us, the ANZACS were young Australian and New Zealand men who gave up their own lives to ensure ours, fighting not only for their own survival, but for the generations of young people that would follow. They were not invincible heroes, but kids who were sent to fight in a war that wasn't theirs, giving up on their aspiring careers and life goals, saying goodbye to their family and friends, and leaving home with no knowledge of when or if they would ever return. The famous quote by George Santayana, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" is a reminder of each of our roles in keeping the memory of the Anzacs alive, in honouring their memory, and celebrating the freedom they fought to give us. It is our duty to not only look back in remembrance of those lost, but to carry their legacy forward.

Today, as we gather to reflect on the sacrifices of those who served, we acknowledge another of our own—Captain Karl Baudistel, from the Class of 1956. Captain Baudistel was killed in action in Vietnam in August 1967 at just 28 years of age.

In recognition of his service, commitment to our country and ultimate sacrifice, we are privileged to receive a commemorative plaque, generously organised by Karl's family and the Brisbane State High Alumni. This plaque will be placed in our school museum, alongside the World War II Roll of Honour and other treasured memorabilia that pay tribute to the legacy of our past and present serving alumni.

It is with great respect and gratitude that I now invite from the State High Class of 1962, Colonel Colin McCowan OAM to present the plaque in honour of Captain Karl Baudistel.

Lest we forget.