

trends

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Anzac spirit burns bright

A visit to the Shrine of Remembrance is much more than just an excursions for today's students

WORDS
Malcolm Rock
PICTURES
Tom Campbell

Cover picture: Mallika, 7, has a close look at a Union Jack signed by war veterans.

AT WHAT point does delight in toy trucks, camouflage pyjamas and cushion forts turn into sentiment for the sacrifices of war?

Among ambiguous sentiment and increasing apathy, the politician, the artist, and the individual are working to remind new generations how acts of valour by common Aussies became part of the national psyche.

The State Government has implemented an education program to help show school students the Shrine's relevance in multicultural Victoria.

The program is linked to VCE national history studies and is run by the Shrine of Remembrance trustees.

"It's about keeping the Anzac spirit alive in younger generations," Shrine education officer Kate Williams says.

"We're helping students honour the service by looking at the building in a new way."

Ms Williams says that as part of the program, students are taken to the Shrine once in primary school and again in secondary.

"They partake in pre- and post-excursion activities consolidating and reflecting on what they discover," she says.

The program's ultimate aim is to encourage remembrance of war veterans among Victorian students.

"So far we've had positive responses from participating schools," Ms Williams said.

None of the Australian men who took part in the landing on Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula on April 25, 1915, as part of the

Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) is still alive.

But Ms Williams says more and more young adults are taking the initiative to research the event.

"As a working memorial and sacred space that has become an important part of Melbourne, the Shrine provides a good opportunity to tap into that field of study.

"We envisage interest will increase." Through a photographer's lens, Dandenong artist Sue Jarvis has done her part to capture the spirit of the annual Anzac Day services.

For eight years, from 1997 to 2004, Jarvis photographed onlookers and participants at the ceremonies, capturing a range of emotions that has culminated in a stirring exhibition, *Changing Faces of Anzac Day*.

"Every year, I used to watch my father march and I would also observe the expressions of all the people in the crowd," Jarvis says.

"For me, it was always moving to see young service people and young cadets among onlookers or taking part."

Jarvis says stories in her grandfather's diaries from World War I motivated her.

"They provided a humanising background. I also found it interesting how my father said little about his involvement in World War II," she says.

Jarvis says that despite the sweltering heat of one year and the goosepimple-inducing cold of the next, the subjects of her photographs could not be deterred from paying tribute.

CONTENTS AUCTION

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Exhibiting photographer Sue Jarvis.

“As the rain dripped off umbrellas I could see soaking soldiers in the trenches,” she says.

Ms Jarvis says she has noticed a marked increase in the number of young people attending services.

“Some people are against youth who weren’t directly involved in wars taking an active part in services, but veterans won’t be around forever. These days my 18-year-old son marches for his dad and grandad.”

Changing Faces of Anzac Day is now on display at the Shrine’s information centre.

Stories of valour and self-sacrifice have rung true for 15-year-old Desiree Kane, prompting her for the past five years to march in honour of her grandfather.

Desiree says she has begun to understand the significance of the Anzac Day memory.

“Stories of the front line, Japanese POWs and Changi prison camps can be frightening,” she says, “Especially when told to you by people who were actually there and know how many men died.”

With her mother Marlene and grandmother Jacqueline looking on, Desiree plans again this year to don her scouting uniform and march for her late grandfather, sergeant-major Fernand Begue.

“I think it’s important to remember and pay tribute to everyone who’s been part of war,” she says.

But if push came to shove, would Desiree follow in her grandfather’s footsteps and join the armed forces?

She blushes: “I’d rather be a school teacher.”

“ Stories of the front line, Japanese POWs and Changi prison camps can be frightening, especially when told to you by people who were actually there and know how many men died

— Desiree Kane, 15



Lest we forget . . . The entrance to the new visitors’ centre as seen from the top of the Shrine. N42MP600

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