

## Address to the ANZAC Ceremony

*Sir Peter Gluckman*  
*Auckland Grammar School*  
*25 April 2019*

**WE shall remember them; We shall remember them:** these simple but haunting words of the poet Laurence Binyon, end the ode to remembrance that is at the heart of virtually every ANZAC ceremony (itself the 4<sup>th</sup> verse of his poem *For the Fallen*) – and it is these four words that reverberate in my mind on ANZAC day.

We tend to focus today on the great and terrible war that ended 101 years ago, a war which gave rise to the very word ANZAC, a war that gave rise to the poppy symbol, a war that fueled the many memorials around New Zealand that Kiwis will attend today. But we must also remember today is a memorial and recognition for the many men and women who have served and are serving New Zealand across multiple wars, conflicts and in peacekeeping.

The individual bravery and sacrifice of so many who fought one hundred years ago is, for those of our lucky generation, hard to comprehend. Men like Captain James Dalton Dineen who came to Grammar in 1897, and who is on our 1901 honours board for winning a junior scholarship, as well as being a Prefect and playing in the First Eleven. After graduating with a BA he returned to the school as a Master. But with the start of the war he was granted leave and commissioned in the NZ Expeditionary Force. He lost his life in the battle of the Somme where he had been mentioned in dispatches, for he had continued to lead his men across the line despite being injured in a machine gun blast before being taken from the field by an artillery shell and dying soon after of his injuries.

Men like Corporal Henry Clark who entered Grammar in 1908 and left school to join the railways as a cadet clerk. At the outbreak of war he immediately volunteered to join the engineers as a sapper laying communication wires. He was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery at Passchendaele in 1917; despite being injured and concussed by a shell he managed alone to continue to set up his station. But three months before the end of the war he was again injured by a shell while laying wire, dying of his injuries at the age of 24.

And it is not just those who were killed but those that returned, their physical and mental health often inexorably altered by the horrors they had seen. Men like Bombardier Richard Kinloch who was a Grammar pupil from 1909. He too is on our honours board, receiving a scholarship in 1912. He graduated in law but volunteered on the outbreak of war and served continuously on the Front over the last year of the war. He survived with no physical wounds but developed what was then called shellshock but what we would now call post-

traumatic stress disorder. He rejoined Grammar as an Assistant Master but did not recover from his psychological trauma and took his own life. He was as much a victim of the war as those killed at the Front, and it is proper that his name is recorded on our War Memorial.

These were all young men in their prime – men of futures, whose promise would never be celebrated by mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, friends. So many families full of hope when their sons came to this great school, who saw that hope vanish in a bomb explosion or gun shot – such as that which befell Corporal James Comeskey. James came to the school for a brief period in 1909 before his family moved to Wellington. He served on the Western Front, being injured at the Somme and Passchendaele before being killed by a bullet from a recovered weapon. His link to our school was only recently recognised, with his name being added to the memorial last year.

All across New Zealand today, speakers will be making not dissimilar remarks and telling similar tragic vignettes. There will be much talk of the ultimate sacrifice, of gratitude for these mainly young men who experienced horrors most of us will be fortunate never to see.

In 1906, the Spanish philosopher George Santayana wrote these words that are now sadly too often clichéd rather than being deeply considered: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”.

So in thinking about those four words, “we shall remember them”, let us also reflect upon Santayana’s aphorism. Certainly in the two Great Wars, most men and women went with ideals of king, empire and country. They went with concepts of loyalty, honour, integrity and companionship. Without glorifying or mythologising the intents of those men and women in both Great Wars, they had a conviction for something they were perhaps not yet conscious of, but which was to emerge in our national iconography of Gallipoli and Monte Cassino. New Zealand was starting to mature in its own identity, cultures and values. But with the benefit of hindsight, particularly after the Second World War, it is clear those men were battling for what were to become the democratic and liberal ideals of liberty, equality, the freedom to think and to give those thoughts voice, to have autonomy and agency, and to set one’s own destiny in life.

And in the years that followed the two great wars we saw New Zealand take on more and more of its own identity, to start to confront the many issues that colonisation had brought, to be its own country, and to seek its own place in the world. Of course, it was not always easy and there is still much to do. But flowing from those sacrifices that we remember today, we were building a cohesive but increasingly diverse country. A country with values embedded in a liberal democracy. And by and large we have made significant progress, but it is progress that can be easily lost in partisanship, individualism and divisiveness, and we will go backwards if we forget the lessons and sacrifices of the past.

But equally, we must not glorify the past. War is a nasty business – innocents die, and people are maimed physically and psychologically.

And New Zealand, while not a nirvana, remains a country of progress and promise. The tragic events of Christchurch just one month ago remind us of what we need to value, and

challenge us to think about what kind of society we want to be. Consciously or not and in the context of their era, many of the people we are remembering today had similar dreams.

We have been fortunate that NZ does not directly face the geostrategic threats that many other nations confront, but we are not immune from a variety of existential threats – be it climate change, environmental catastrophe, loss of social cohesion, or the undermining of our liberal democracy and its institutions, as we have seen in some northern hemisphere countries. But living in a liberal democracy has its obligations. Hopefully not requiring the sacrifices of those we remember today, but the obligations to participate in society and in democracy – to participate by civil and respectful discourse and debate and dialogue on the many complex issues we will have to confront.

At the heart of our national and indeed global defense on such matters must be respect for truth, knowledge and civil discourse – qualities that are too easily lost in the world of social media and all that follows. Auckland Grammar and its proud and well-validated educational system must in many ways continue to strive to epitomise these qualities and promote them in the next generation of citizens.

In remembering those who did not grow old – men like James Dineen, Henry Clark, Richard Kinloch, and James Comeskey – let us ensure that the young men and women of today have the opportunity to grow old in a safe and honest democracy, one with the wellbeing of all its citizens and its environment top of mind. Democracies matter, and people matter: *He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.*