Year after year, pilgrims and tourists alike make journeys to the battlefields of World War I and II. Pilgrimages to battlefields are not a new phenomenon as battlefields have historically drawn large visitor numbers. As Smith has observed, ‘War is so deeply imbedded in human activity and memory that despite the horrors and destruction, the memorabilia of warfare and allied products probably constitutes the largest single category of tourist attraction in the world.’ Indeed, so great was the demand in the 1920s that, as Lloyd has shown, an entirely new form of travel industry developed around the battlefields, complete with maps, guidebooks and tours with ‘agents keen to take commercial advantage…At least thirty guidebooks to the battlefields were produced in the three-year period from 1919-1921…fifteen…by the Michelin Tyre Company.’

Scale of battlefield tourism

For Australians, these battlefields are inextricably linked to our history as a nation, to notions of national identity, of the ANZAC tradition and spirit, of personal homage and reconciliation. Indeed, since the first official Australian pilgrimage of 86 relatives to Gallipoli in 1929, visitor numbers have steadily increased with approximately 18-20,000 people now attending the annual Anzac services. Interestingly, the numbers of young people being drawn to Gallipoli are also increasing, with one Turkish tour company reporting a 43.9 percent increase in backpacker numbers from 180 in 1999 to 410 in 2000.

Global interest in commemorating wartime events and in visiting battlefields appears to be on the increase. For example, the Sandakan Memorial (Borneo) has attracted over 48,000 visitors since its opening in 1999. At the Hell Fire Pass Memorial (Thailand), over 770 visitors a week were recorded since its opening in 1998, and in 2000/01, a total of 147,392 visitors had been received. Closer to home, the numbers of people observing Anzac Day parades in Australia are growing, while the opening of a new visitor centre at Melbourne’s Shrine in 2003, has seen ‘attendances double with an average of 1000 people visiting a day’ and 500,000 visitors anticipated for 2005.

In France, the Theipval memorial recorded 20,000 visitors during April 1998 and approximately 140,000 visitors across the entire year. A 1996 study of South Korean veterans of the Vietnam War demonstrated that ‘more than 70 percent of these veterans were enthusiastic about…visiting Vietnam again as tourists, [with] Korean travel agents anxious to develop specifically-designed tours for them.’ In Hawaii, more than a million people visit the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor each year; whilst the beaches of Normandy drew large crowds for commemorative events such as those associated with the recent sixtieth anniversary of the D-Day landings.

Sites of atrocity also draw large visitor numbers with over 25 million people having visited the Oświęcim museum in Poland (Auschwitz and Birkenau) since the Holocaust, and the Dachau museum in Germany receiving over 900,000 visitors a year.

More recently, thousands attended the newly constructed memorial in Yerevan (Armenia) for the ninetieth anniversary of the ‘Great Celamity’, regarded by some as the first genocide of the twentieth century. In his address, the President of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, said that the site could expect 1.5 million visitors in the future.

Battlefield tourism as thanatourism (‘dark tourism’)

Worldwide interest in visiting battlefields has been bolstered with recent anniversaries and commemorative markers of twentieth century wars and other notable events (i.e. the bombings of Pearl Harbour, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, and the Battle of Long Tan). Such visits represent what Lennon and Foley have described as tourism associated with sites of ‘death, disaster, and deprivations’.

This concept has been refined by Seaton who describes ‘dark’ tourism, as ‘a form or sub-set of thanatourism; a form of travel to a location wholly, or partially motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death’. In his study Seaton divides tourism behaviour into five broad categories: (a) to witness public enactments of death; (b) to see the sites of mass or individual deaths after they have occurred; (c) to visit internment sites and memorials to the dead; (d) to view the material evidence, or symbolic representations of particular deaths in locations unconnected with their occurrence; and (e) for re-enactments or simulation of death.

According to Lennon and Foley, there are additional aspects to the thanatourism experience beyond those of experiencing ‘an actual or symbolic encounter of death’. They emphasise that ‘events must pose questions or introduce anxiety and doubt about modernity and its consequences’. In addition, they suggest that such ‘events must be within living memory; that they become commodified and commercialized, and that sites are designed as both products and experiences’.

One of the main criticisms of this thesis is that limiting a discussion of ‘dark tourism’ to events within living memory ‘define[s] away one of the more fascinating questions about the role of time’.

Seaton addresses this by suggesting that the process of site ‘sacralisation’ is ‘never-ending’ and as such, may influence the motivations of people for visiting ‘dark’ sites. He suggests that over time, sites may become contested, their themes may mutate or diminish; motives (become) situated and perspectives change, and often morals need to be redrawn or rethought. For example, Holt laments the perceived changing trend in museums wherein once they were the preserve of the veteran…they are now moving towards a ‘culture of tourism’…They are moving away from the personal, object-orientated versions…to the shallower, ‘interpretative’ designs that set out to attract new visitors (and the young) with high-tech presentations. The target market is changing from the traditional British pilgrim, who came to remember,…to the European visitor whose sympathies lie more easily with the celebration of peace.

Not only is the process of site sacralisation ‘never-ending’, the landscape also undergoes enormous physical transformation...
following war. These transformations begin with the clearance of debris and restoration of the war-torn landscape as nations seek a return to normality and economic stability. The landscape is further transformed as geographical and ethnic boundaries change, memory and identity are reshaped, monuments and memorials destroyed or removed, or sometimes added. Although some governments are quick to recognise and appreciate the value of preserving battlefield landscapes from nationalistic, ideological and economic perspectives, imperatives change over time. For while the historical fabric of war becomes an amenable tourism product, government policy and the pressures of development bring about change. This is evidenced by Somme tourism authorities, who actively sought to change visitor behaviour by encouraging visitors to experience more of their country beyond its battlefields and cemeteries. The more recent attempts by French authorities to destroy a number of Commonwealth war cemeteries in order to develop a new airport and related infrastructure also threaten change. These examples show how policy changes over time have the potential to impact upon culturally sensitive landscapes and emphasise the role of government agencies in the ‘site sacralisation process’.

As can be seen, site types, their functional use over time, their cultural/historical connections, their ongoing development and their interpretation are all important factors in developing destinations and in determining visitor motivation. One way to examine a site’s transformation over time is to use the process of site ‘sacralisation’ as described by MacCannell and Seaton: naming, framing and elevation, enshrinement, mechanical and social reproduction. Using such a framework, Slade has explored Gallipoli and the ‘meaning of Anzac’ and questioned visitor motivation. He fundamentally disagrees with the definition of thanatourism, suggesting that people are not necessarily motivated by curiosity about death at sites where death has occurred, and those who visit for other reasons should not be excluded from the definition. Some ‘people might have travelled to a site associated with death in an incidental manner’ and are there primarily ‘because it is the place and a point in historical time at which their (nation) came into being’; as such ‘their motives are concerned with nationhood’. Given that little or no research has been undertaken on the motivations of visitors to ‘dark sites’, Slade like Seaton, suggests ‘that if thanatourism is defined according to the motivations of the people engaged in it, it there remains an empirical issue to ascertain the reasons why they might be at a particular site where death once occurred’.

Until recently no research had been undertaken on visitor motivation to war-related sites or events although two recent thanatourism studies by Yuill (Holocaust Museum in Houston) and Preece (Port Arthur) provide some insights into visitor motivation at ‘dark sites’. In the case of Port Arthur, the site provides a twofold experience, one related to the early themes of convict transportation, confinement and labour gangs and the other incorporating the 1996 massacre of 35 people within its grounds. The aims of this study were to ‘gain an understanding of the motivations of visitors to the site; determine whether motivations were influenced more by the recent tragedy, or by the destination’s historical convict past, and whether visitor motivations had changed’ following the 1996 massacre.

In a similar vein, a study of war-related sites sought to gain an understanding of the motivations of visitors, whether motivations were influenced by various forms of media and education, by curiosity and historical location and sought to determine propensity for visiting other war-related sites. A series of four surveys were conducted at Gallipoli (Turkey), Helfire Pass (Thailand), the Somme (France) and Anzac Day (Melbourne) during 2000, 2001 and 2004 to address these issues.

**Australians at war: Gallipoli**

One of the defining moments in Australian history was its military involvement in World War I and the Dardanelles campaign of 1915; the objective of which was to overthrow the Turkish regime, disrupt the German advance through Europe and capture Constantinople with the aim of gaining control of the Straits and its shipping activities, along with access to the Black Sea. The campaign conducted over a ten-month period was only one facet of World War I and considered by many at the time to be a ‘side-show’ to the real conflict being waged in France. The campaign commenced with a naval assault in March 1915 and following its failure, an eight-month land battle ensued culminating with the evacuation of troops from the Peninsula by January 1916.

**Brief history of the transformation of the battlefield**

Following the end of the war and a declaration of peace (Treaty of Lausanne 1923), a period of four years followed before the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was able to complete the task of identifying, marking and constructing cemeteries for the burial of the dead. Work was completed in 1926, by which time some 31 cemeteries and five memorials to the missing had been created. The Treaty declared the Gallipoli Peninsula as the ‘perpetual resting-place’ for those who were buried there, and following the designation of a 33,000 ha. National Park in 1973 the battlefields were further secured (in part) from development. The cultural landscape has become steeper in history, symbolism and national identity with cemeteries marking points of particular events and tragedies while their epitaphs tell of lost youth. The landscape has become further imbued with the addition of monuments, memorials and statues and prophetic words concerning death, grief, national pride and the futility of war, enthralling all who visit to be mindful of what has occurred here.

Amongst the messages inscribed, the most moving is that written by the Turkish Commander, Mustafa Kemal Bay ‘Ataturk’, in 1934. This message indelibly etched in stone greets all who visit the battlefield and symbolises the depth of feeling and respect the Turkish people have toward all those who fought and died during the conflict:

- You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country.
- Therefore rest in peace.
- There is no difference between the Jonnies and the Mehnets to us
- Where they lie side by side
- Here in this country of ours.
- You, the mothers,
- Who sent their sons from far-away countries
- Wipe away your tears.
- Your sons are now lying in our bosom
- And are in peace.
- After having lost their lives on this land
- They have become our sons as well.
Since the establishment of the formal cemeteries there has been a constant transformation of the Gallipoli battlefield. This includes the erection of interpretative plaques in 1988 by an Australian, Dr. Ross Bastian, through to the establishment of an international competition in 1997 to solicit ideas for further transforming the battlefields into a ‘Peace Park’. This competition sought to transform and transcend the battlefield landscape beyond that of a cemetery, with ‘Peace’ being seen as its ‘new supra-identity’. The last feature to appear on the landscape was the Anzac Cove Commemorative site constructed in 2000 as an attempt to relieve the pressure of visitors on the Ari Burnu cemetery.

Unfortunately, the numbers now visiting Gallipoli far exceed the capacity of this new commemorative site and raise problems for its ongoing management. In an attempt to address problems of access and safety, the Turkish Government in 2005 undertook to improve access roads and car parks within the Anzac area; however, much controversy has arisen over these works. The road-works were considered excessive, destroying portions of MacLagan’s Ridge and affecting the marine environment of Anzac Cove. Human remains were said to have been uncovered and a temporary halt to construction was called for while investigations were conducted. Despite worldwide condemnation of the road-works, construction continued. The public response was such that a Senate Committee Inquiry was convened to examine the role of the Australian Government in acceding to the road-works and its failure to undertake appropriate consultation concerning the destruction of a valuable heritage resource. A report has since been published and a range of recommendations made. Gallipoli is an important historical, archaeological, cultural and politically sensitive landscape and any transformations have the potential to both positively and negatively affect the heritage fabric and landscape as well as impacting on visitor motivation and experience.

To assess the motivations of people visiting Gallipoli a number of surveys were conducted. These surveys sought not only to explore motivational factors for visiting a battlefield, but also examined the propensity for visiting other war-related sites, examined visitor satisfaction, attitudes on war and peace and provided general demographic information. A database of 700 surveys across all sites (including Gallipoli and all years) was compiled.

**Gallipoli Survey results**

At Gallipoli a total of 285 people participated in the survey over the three years. In addition, a series of responses to open-ended questions provide anecdotal evidence on the problems associated with large visitor numbers to Gallipoli. These results represent a first stage analysis with further cross-tabulation and analysis to be conducted:

**General demographics**

Age profile: the largest percentage of respondents, 66.6 percent (172) was identified within the 50-80+ age range. Although a larger number of younger people are now visiting the site, those aged between 15 and 49 represented only 33.3 percent. A larger number of respondents (33) aged 20-29 was obtained in the 2004 survey compared to previous years. A total of 140 males and 118 females responded to the surveys, of whom only 29.7 percent had served within the armed forces.

**Motivations for visiting a war-related site**

Authors who have undertaken a study of the motives of people attending a ‘dark site’ have suggested that motivations fall within four broad categories: historical interest, desire for learning, satisfying curiosity of the abnormal or bizarre, and remembrance. From these categories a list of 24 motivational factors was constructed and responses ranked. Responses were summarised into five categories of motivational behaviour: Commemorative, Knowledge Seeking, Satisfying Curiosity, Cathartic and Identity. These categories suggest that the primary motivations for people attending Gallipoli are based on ‘Commemorative activities’ linked to remembering those who have died in the service of their country, that there is a need to reaffirm that their death was not in vain and that a debt is owed to those who have fought on our behalf.

**Category 1 – Commemorative**

The five most important factors for respondents were: ‘remembrance’, followed by ‘visiting a famous battlefield’, ‘attending a commemorative service’, ‘gratitude for freedom enjoyed’ and ‘affirming shared values’. The five most ‘unimportant’ factors were: ‘relieve inner tensions’, ‘prompted by a movie/film’, ‘sense of release’, ‘happened to be in the area’ and ‘school education’.

**Category 2 – Knowledge Seeking**

The next category ‘Knowledge Seeking’ shows that visitors are also keen to improve their knowledge of a battlefield site, are nostalgic concerning the historical nature of the site and may have been encouraged to identify with a particular gravesite or have a personal connection to a site. School education was not an important motivating factor. This is perhaps surprising given the schools programs conducted by Returned Servicemen’s League and the Commonwealth Government’s heritage program activities.

**Category 3 – Satisfying Curiosity**

It appears rather than being an ‘incidental type of visit’ (Slade), a visit to Gallipoli is a deliberate and planned activity and not necessarily influenced by others. Visitors seek an authentic experience of an actual battlefield and are somewhat curious. From these results, they are not driven by: school education, books, or films such as ‘Gallipoli’ or other recent war films. Despite these results it is recommended that the role of movie-induced tourism should be considered as part of the management process.

**Category 4 – Cathartic**

With the recent commemorative events and anniversaries
associated with the cessation of World Wars I and II as well as other conflicts, it was thought that a large number of veterans would attend sites such as Gallipoli. It was also thought that attending Anzac Day services at Gallipoli would be a cathartic experience for veterans and that they would identify more readily with the site being a war-related site, a site of death and disaster. However, from the veteran perspective, a cathartic experience was not the primary motivating factor for visiting Gallipoli. They did not come to rid themselves of any demons associated with their own personal armed service, nor did they come to experience a sense of release. That is not to say the experience was not cathartic for many who attended. Visitors did experience a sense of duty although mourning a relative/friend was deemed less important, indicating that the link to relatives of the conflict has diminished. Some empathy as a veteran was experienced although this appears less important than the commemorative category and perhaps reflects the numbers of veteran responses.

Category 5 – Identity

There was some sense of identity in that visitors felt motivated to visit Gallipoli because they wanted to affirm shared values, either with those killed and buried at the various sites around the Peninsula or with those attending the site for Anzac Day. They were also motivated by the freedom enjoyed in Australia today and felt that in some sense this was attributable to those who died on behalf of the nation. They were not there to accompany a relative or veteran and therefore their motivations were considered self-serving.

Figure 2 North Beach – Commemorative Site – Anzac Day 2000 – visitors scaling hillocks.

Visit again

Respondents were asked whether they would visit this site again. At Gallipoli (all years) 157 (60.38%) indicated they would revisit again, whilst 103 (39.61%) indicated they would not. The propensity to return differed across age ranges and sites. For example, in the 2000 and 2001 surveys, although 98 respondents (56.3%) indicated a willingness to revisit, 78% of these respondents were in the 50-80 year age range.

Visit another war-related site?

In gauging the likelihood of people to make a return visit, it is difficult to determine whether this interest will translate into an actual visit to either Gallipoli or another war-related site. The emotional experience of attending an Anzac Day service at Turkey may engender a desire to visit other sites; however, economics, age and other personal constraints may prevent this desire from being realised. Of those surveyed at Gallipoli, a high percentage of respondents 81.4% (211) indicated a willingness to visit another site, whilst 48 or 18.5% had no desire to do so. Respondents indicated a particular preference for visiting other war-related site in the following locations: France and Belgium; Africa and Egypt; Papua New Guinea; Thailand and Vietnam. For surveys conducted in Thailand, France and Melbourne, the first preference for visiting another war-related site was to Gallipoli.

The appeal of sites for continued visitation would rely heavily on a number of conditions. The level of government support, particularly the Australian Government in maintaining its financial support in promoting its military heritage and tradition; the consideration of destination life cycle issues, regional stability, ongoing improvements to levels of interpretation, the provision of services, facilities and infrastructure to cater to large numbers of visitors and an assessment of the needs of an ageing population. These issues combined with an ongoing level of co-operation with the Turkish Government would be essential to the longevity of Gallipoli as a visitor destination. The fluctuations observed in numbers attending Gallipoli on Anzac Day can be attributed to specific anniversaries, the impact of 9/11, the re-occurring threat of terrorism and the foreshadowing of the hundredth anniversary in 2015.

Satisfaction levels

Satisfaction levels were recorded across two years. The majority of respondents indicated that although they were dissatisfied with the level of comfort at specific ceremonies and with the toilet amenities, their overall personal expectations were met. This would seem to indicate that although people suffered some discomfort, they were prepared to tolerate it for the overall experience. Of course comparing this against age ranges would highlight age groups less tolerant to certain problems. Anecdotal evidence gathered from the open-ended question highlights that, although respondents ranked satisfaction high, some areas of concern to their experience remain. Many of the problems identified at Gallipoli in 2000, 2001 and 2004 were again evident at the 2005 Anzac Day services. These problems included: toilets, transport/shuttle bus service, crowd control and access, seating, alcohol consumption, music/PA system and rubbish. The numbers now visiting the site on Anzac Day are exceeding expectations and the respective governments must begin to look strategically at this event and consider what actions are needed to alleviate some of the problems. The roadwork construction activities were an attempt to rectify the continual traffic problems, however the carrying capacity of the site may need to be considered in the overall management of the site.

War and peace

Although the results are not presented here, the survey attempted to ascertain visitors' perceptions on war and potential actions for encouraging a culture of peace. Such responses were seen as forming an important element within the study of 'thanatourism', and its ability to generate empathy. To extend the model further, it is suggested that a visit to a 'dark site', particularly a battlefield site, should engender people to consider 'action' as an important component of their visit. Battlefields are often referred to as sites that educate, warn, and teach lessons. If such visits are to provide education,
warnings and lessons, it remains to be seen whether visitors are encouraged to action and what form it might take.

Conclusion

Governments around the world have begun to use battlefields and sites of conflict as mediums of peace through the creation of peace parks. The physical transformation of Gallipoli since 1915 highlights the change in focus from a battlefield site to that of a potential peace park. As the then Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Mr. Bruce Scott commented in 2000: ‘No visitor is left unmoved by this place’. Not only are visitors overwhelmed by the scale of death represented by the numerous headstones and cemeteries on the Peninsula, they are also confronted by its terrain. Backpackers are seen scaling the cliffs above Anzac Cove in an attempt to understand the futility of the landing and of its dire consequences. They tour the sites, attend the Anzac Day Services, visit the museums, and bring with them their personal and strong perspectives on war and peace. The visitor experience is therefore informed and modified by the various transformations that have taken place across the landscape and those potentially planned for the future. Knowledge of visitor motivations is important and will assist organising authorities to maintain the appropriate balance between the values espoused by different groups attending the site and its functional intent.

The survey results, although preliminary, provide insights into the motivational factors influencing people to visit a war-related site and, in particular that of Gallipoli. The surveys provide an indication of the propensity to visit another war-related site in the future and their locations. The results provide further evidence of visitor satisfaction levels and concerns over the lack of infrastructure and services at the Gallipoli site. These results are informative for the ongoing development of a thanatourism model, a tightening of its definition and for the strategic management of the site. The research is ongoing and as such more extensive analysis is required. The surveys conducted at Hell Fire Pass, the Somme and in Melbourne will provide a comparative base against which to test the data and draw further conclusions concerning motivation.

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6 OAWG 2000a
7 OAWG 2000-01: '60% of which were from Australia and the United Kingdom, and 40% from Malaysia'.
10 CDT 1999: 18.
11 Ahn Jong-yun and McGahen 1996.
12 Mites 2002: 175-1176.
13 Alien and Zaman 2005:11.
14 Lennon and Foley 1999: 46: 'e.g., the use of rational planning and technological innovation used to undertake the Jewish Holocaust, as well as the industrial scale of death in several wars this century'.
15 Seaton, 1998:131. examples are: (a) Roman gladiatorial combats in Roman times; political executions with modern manifestations in sightseers who rush to disaster scenes such as air crashes, terrorist explosions; (b) holocaust sites, Pompeii, Kennedy assassination site, and visits to battlefields; (c) graveyards, catacombs, crypts, war memorials and cenotaphs; (d) museums, Madame Tussaud's, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC; (e) the Passion Play, re-enactments of battles such as the Civil War battles.
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