



Turkey Visit and Gallipoli 100 Event

A trip of a lifetime: On the 15 June Alan Gibbons and I had the honour of being asked to travel to Turkey to coach some University Rowers from the Bogazici University Rowing Club in the art of rowing a surfboat. Part of the deal was to also train the rowing coaches in how to Sweep a Surfboat.

The second part of my task was to look over the Gallipoli 100 event and offer advice backed by the experience I have had over many years of involvement with our own Navy George Bass Surfboat Marathon.

To start let's take a look at how the Gallipoli 100 came into being. It was the brainchild of Paul Cooper & Mark Walton, a couple of surfboat rowers from the Tamarama Surf Club – most probably over a few cold glasses, one would have to think. The next person pulled into the idea was another old Tamarama member - Paul Murphy, the Director of a tour company called Military History Tours. Paul saw great potential in having his company play a key role in developing the Gallipoli 100 concept, and so an event was born.

Paul Murphy travelled to Istanbul to meet with local Businessmen Mr Yilmaz Dagci from the Turkish Chamber of Shipping and during these discussions he was introduced to Professor Emre Otay head of Engineering BURC Campus of the Bogazici University. After discussing the concept to row surfboats down through the Dardanelles and around to Anzac Cove to help commemorate the Centenary of the Anzac forces landing at Gallipoli in 2015, all agreed that Turkish rowers should be a part of this exciting plan. On returning to Australia Paul started his negotiations with the Australian Government through the Department of Veterans Affairs and also included SLSA in what he was planning. Two more trips to Turkey for meetings, and an idea born over several cool beers by a few old clubbies from Tamarama was taking shape.



Paul Murphy – Red

From the Left

Ian Fletcher – Dept Veterans Affairs

Mr Yilmaz Dagci

Professor Emre Otay

Planning the event began and a website was developed. The News Limited organisation came on board to assist in promotion and crews from Australia and New Zealand were invited to join up for the Gallipoli 100 event to be held in 2015

The very next step was the realisation that if crews from Turkey were to be part of rowing the event, they would certainly require surfboats and to be taught the skills to use them. To this end, a plan was hatched to conduct the first ever surfboat race in Turkey. This event is now well advanced, with three Australian and one NZ boat crew heading over to Turkey on the 12 August to race the Turkish University crews at both Burc Beach on the Black Sea in Istanbul and Kum Beach on the Aegean Sea to the western side of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Four surfboats have also been shipped over with these crews and they will be presented to additional Turkish crews at the completion of this trip. The selected down-under crews were chosen as a reward for being first in with their entries for the Centenary event and they are: Yamba, Foster/Tuncurry and McMasters Beach from Australia, plus Lyle Bay from NZ. Also attending will be members of the Tamarama Surf Lifesaving Club.



View of Burc Beach looking over the Wind Surfing Centre

To initially allow the Turkish crews to be ready for the August assault from down-under, two surfboats from Umina were sent in a container back in April this year, delivered into Istanbul and they then sat on the edge of the Black Sea awaiting the arrival of the Australian Coaches in June to get the process of training underway.

When we arrived in June and took our first ever dip in the Black Sea three things really stood out. The first was that on the day we arrived the sea was completely flat. The second was just what a big pond of water the Black Sea is and the third and most peculiar was swimming in something as big as the Black Sea and discovering that it is completely a fresh water sea fed from the major European rivers.

Day two we woke after a night trialling what was probably the worst Red Wine made in Turkey, headed down the steps for a swim to find a beautiful body wave running at 1.2M, but we still hadn't gotten used to cracking a wave with no salt in the eyes. We also found Gibbo, the fitness freak, coming back from what was to be his long early morning run each day. This was also day one for our Turkish crews to have a crack at the Aussie Surfboat. It was an absolute pleasure to be part of watching young Stillwater rowers experience their first taste of climbing over a perfect small boat wave and then to feel the speed of a shooting surfboat. A few crabs, a lot of whooping, and the start of a wonderful journey.

Some of our Turkish crew:

Unfortunately I don't have the full list of names for all the rowers that joined us which included a couple of girls and a young man that we titled as Turkey's first ever Surfboat Rower because he had never rowed before and made a very good fist of it.

Batuhan Salih Barutçu(trainer)

Tuncay Kocabıyık (Gibbo's drinking mate)

Kutlu Kaan Haliloğlu

Metin Morgül

İsmail Danacıoğlu

İsmail Volkan İnek

Sefa Burak Özgülük

Özgür Tüfekçi (first martyr of Turkish surfboat :) Ozgur managed a small crab on a runner which took him out of the foot stretchers, he regained his spot only to cop a second crab of the more serious kind, and this one was the doozy. Out of the stretchers, across the boat, over the gunwale, out of the boat backwards under the oar and head first into the water. Not happy Jan!!!

Nuğman Su

Bora Aydın

Yasin Eroğlu

Koray Başkent



A happy bunch at the official hand over with our happy driver Joseph proudly holding the Turkish Flag

That night, feeling pretty good about what had just happened, Paul Murphy insisted that I con myself a lift to the nearest bottle shop to make our own selection of the Turkish Red. Armed with 4 bottles of Red that, like a fool, I thought would last a few days I returned to the hotel for a Bira and a quiet dinner with my two Aussie mates. Enough to say the result wasn't pretty. Gibbo never ran again on tour and Murph required collection from the surf the next morning. Did you know that fresh water doesn't have the same recuperative powers as salt water?

Training continued. We held a wonderful handing over ceremony of the two surfboats to the Bogazici University, attended by Mr Ian Fletcher of the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs from the Australian

Embassy in Turkey. We were also joined by a coach and crew from the Golden Horn Rowing club that is based in Istanbul for several sessions, which we held on both mornings and afternoons.



Two very proud Turkish gentlemen: Mr Yilmaz Dagci & Professor Emre Otay are handed the Aussie Surfboats by Mr Ian Fletcher

One of the really pleasing aspects was to watch the Stillwater coaches embrace our boats and rowing style. In fact the three coaches have all been top level National Turkish rowers and they each made a pretty good fist of sweeping a surfboat and when thrown into the seat proved that they could row. A bit of sideways, a bit of sitting down on the quarter bar, an occasional overboard, a lot of laughing and some pretty wide turning circles, but nothing we don't see at home with any new sweep.

Our plan was to train the crews up to the point that they could race each other on the last day. During the 2 weeks we encountered a range of sea conditions from flat to a 1.5M (Perth style) wind-built sea. Some of the swells out the back were quiet large, fast, and steep as they moved across sand bars. By the last day our crews and sweeps had worked in some varied conditions and were making a pretty good fist of surf boating.



On the last day we put out the buoys and the racing was on. It's marvellous how a competitor is a competitor on any side of the world. Winning wasn't important - it was everything, as the crews pushed themselves to the limit and loved it. If these crews kept up the work and rate of improvement after we left, don't be surprised to see them push the crews from down south in a week's time.

Well our job was done for this visit, so all that was left was to buy the crews a few cold beers so we could show them the other side of rowing a surf boat. Back off to the bottle shop for me while the crews prepared a

fantastic Turkish BBQ for us. Beers and food were going well when Tuncay (the only thing I learnt of the language is that the C is pronounced as a J), one of the coaches and real characters, produced a bottle of Raki to share with his new Aussie friends. Well now I'm not sure how many of you have had a crack at Raki, but let me tell you it isn't to be tangled with. The mix involved a lot of Raki into a glass and a very little amount of water. The Raki immediately reacted with the water to produce a smokey, white crystal liquid. I'm told real Turkish men don't add the water. Of course the game was chug-a-lug and with the Aussie pride on the line, the rest as they say, is history. Not that Gibbo will remember after really lifting for the pride of his country by putting away 2.5 glasses of Raki in short time, while playing a game of "here's to me and here's to you" with Tuncay (big mistake) before last being seen stumbling into the darkness - not to return.

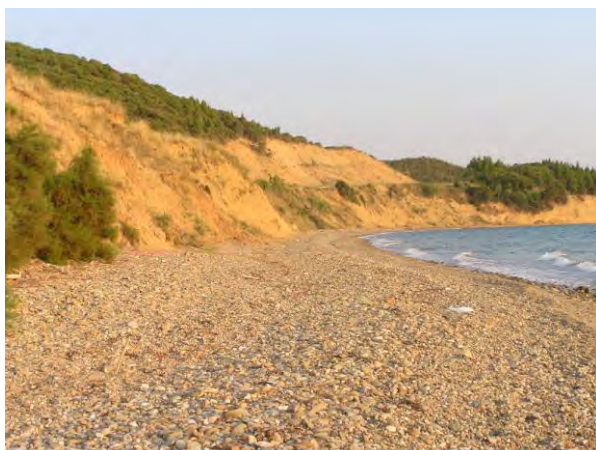
About the Raki Challenge -Today in [Istanbul](#), drinking raki has its own traditional rituals. Most important is what it is to be partaken with. White cheese is the main and unchangeable "[meze](#)" of raki. Due to the aniseed it contains, raki changes colour and becomes a milky white when water is added.

The Bloke on the left finished a poor second



Gallipoli Visit:

We did find the time on the middle weekend to take a tour of the Gallipoli Peninsula, which is some 5 hours drive south of Istanbul. I don't intend to provide a history lesson here, but the experience was something that we will never forget. To see and understand just what these poor soldiers from all sides of this senseless battle endured, was gob smacking. To stand at the Anzac memorial looking up at the Sphinx sitting hundreds of feet over our heads and realising that our forefathers not only climbed up these escarpments, but did so while others were throwing everything at them, is amazing.



One of the most amazing experiences was to have a Turkish gentlemen overhear us talking to our guide and in Turkish, he asked if Gibbo and I were Aussie. He then retreated to his bag and presented us both with an Australian rifle shell that he had retrieved from the water that morning. Standing near Anzac Cove with a 95 year old bullet in your hand that is the real deal, is an unreal feeling. It will forever be a treasured reminder of my visit to Gallipoli.



The Gallipoli 100 Event:

As well as being tourists, we tripped right around the Peninsula to suss out the course for the 2015 event. The first thing that was obvious is that this will be a major logistical exercise. We found about 3 sandy beaches as we know them. The majority of the coast is rocky, grassed and completely unsuitable to land a surfboat on.

As it will be April and the northern hemisphere is coming out of winter, the water will be pretty cold and not conducive to doing wet changes. Remember the Dardanelles is pretty narrow in spots, it is a major shipping channel with something like 50,000 ship movements a year and it has strict no go zones, so there are some real issues here for us to deal with.



View of the Dardanelles looking across at Canakkale. This is a city of 80,000 and it is where your Hotel Ship will park

Anzac Cove and the close by beaches are all very special places in history and obviously hallowed turf, so we won't be attempting to land on any of them. Even if we wanted to, they are all rocky, so if we were to land we would damage most of our boats.



Anzac Cove – what were they thinking?

After looking very carefully at what the Gallipoli 100 is trying to achieve, several things were very obvious.

1. The event would be between 60 to 70K in distance;
2. Boats will need to be trucked from Istanbul in their containers and unloaded on the edge of the Dardanelles. We found a spot (one of very few) where this can be accommodated but all the permissions are yet to be sorted;
3. The boat unload spot is about 6K upstream from our start point, so crews will need to row them down to the start line. The water current runs at about 5 knots through that spot we are reliably informed, so that will help;
4. It is certainly too far to row in one day, so the event will be staged over two days on the 23 & 24 April 2015;
5. It is up to individual crews, but to row that sort of distance on bench seats will ensure a very uncomfortable flight home, so you will be invited to fit rolling seats to your boat;
6. All crews will be living on the cruise ship and transported to and from racing each day as part of the deal;
7. For the majority of crews it will be too far to row the entire distance with just 4 rowers, so in most cases I would see you needing 2 crews per boat, but some may choose to use more than 2 crews. Basically you tell us (after understanding how the event will run) what your crews are capable of;

8. We won't have any ability to do water changes (George Bass style), so all changes will be made on shore;
9. From our reckoning, this will mean that the starting crew will firstly row the 6K to the start line and be in the boat for about 16k before a change is possible. The second crew can either row the remainder and complete day 1 at V Beach (where the British troupes landed), or we do have another change point between the first change spot and the finish of day one;
10. Day 2 will start at V Beach and we can find no accessible change points until we reach Kum Beach some 16K away. A crew change at Kum and the second crew will complete the course to finish off shore between two markers at Anzac Cove, roughly another 16K. It will be very difficult to find a spot to change the crew in this area so the finishing crew will in all probability have to row the boat back to Kum, or at least some of the way as we may yet find a change spot;
11. At Kum you will say goodbye to your boat, as it will need to be repacked into a container here for the return trip into Istanbul;



Sun setting over the beautiful Kum Beach looking across to the Greek Islands

12. Remember this is an open water row so conditions can throw up just like at home, so when crews start to decide if they can row the full distance as a single crew, you will need to consider this. It is our intention to visit the course in April in the next couple of years, so we can properly ascertain the sort of conditions we may encounter at that time of year;

13. As you know, the deal is to transport your boat to Gallipoli and after the event it will be donated to a European boat club. You will need to understand that your oars, rowlocks and bench seats, along with your boat, will not be coming home, so if you fit rolling seats and want to pull them out, you will need to be organised for that. We will have a work team and tools on hand, so everything that we can organise to assist will be done;
14. As stated up front, this is going to be a costly exercise to get all the on-ground stuff organised for you. A lot of gear transport to and from Gallipoli, a packing team to get the boats out and into the containers, moving containers from the start to collection points and safety support boats - just to scratch the surface. We will be looking for an event sponsor to offset these costs, or the event will never happen. This means that while we understand and respect that as crews you will be working very hard to obtain your own sponsorship, and that will require a lot of space on your boat, we need to make it a condition of entry that some space must be made available for signage for the event sponsor. We won't be coming the heavy re this and between us we can work it out so everyone wins, but the on ground costs simply have to be found to make the event work.

Finally, because we believe a range of crews across all ages, with varying rowing ability and fitness levels, will be taking part in this event, it will be necessary to break the event up into several divisions. For example, if we have crews wanting to do the whole event without change, that will be one division, while sharing crews will be spilt in other divisions. You should plan for these eventualities and at some point you will be asked to advice of your intention to either "race" the distance or "row" the distance. Once we have this information, along with the age brackets of the crews entered, we can devise a range of events to satisfy all and give plenty of notice.

Above all else, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity that none of us will ever repeat, so the event is about the occasion, enjoyment, companionship and being part of something very special.

For specific details about the Gallipoli 100 as a total event including tours and accommodation costs you need to visit the www.gallipoli100.com.au website.

Bert Hunt



President ASRL

6 August 2010