

The Gallipoli Oaks Story



How the Gallipoli Oak Trees came to grow here

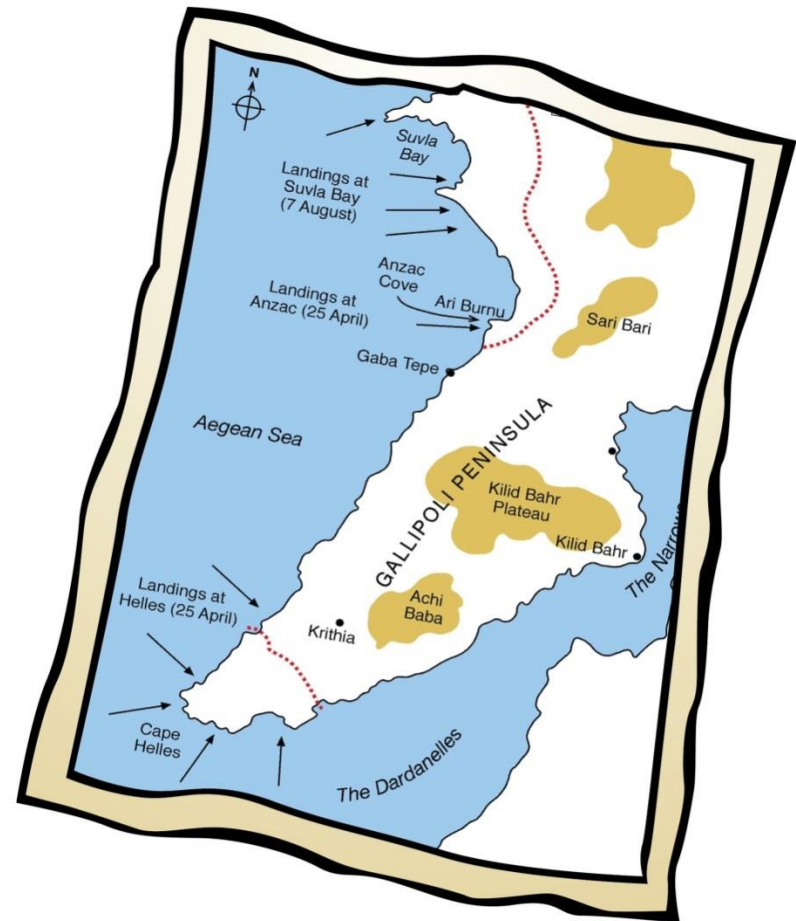
In 1914 William Winter Cooke was a young farmer aged 23. He came from a farming family in Victoria, Australia. When the first World War started in Europe he joined the Australian Army.



On the 25th April 1915 (later known as ANZAC Day),
William landed from a ship on a beach at Gallipoli in Turkey.



The purpose of the landing on Turkish land was to take and hold the rugged hills and beaches so that the British and French ships could safely sail through the Dardanelles, a narrow strait of sea between the Gallipoli Peninsula and the eastern part of Turkey.



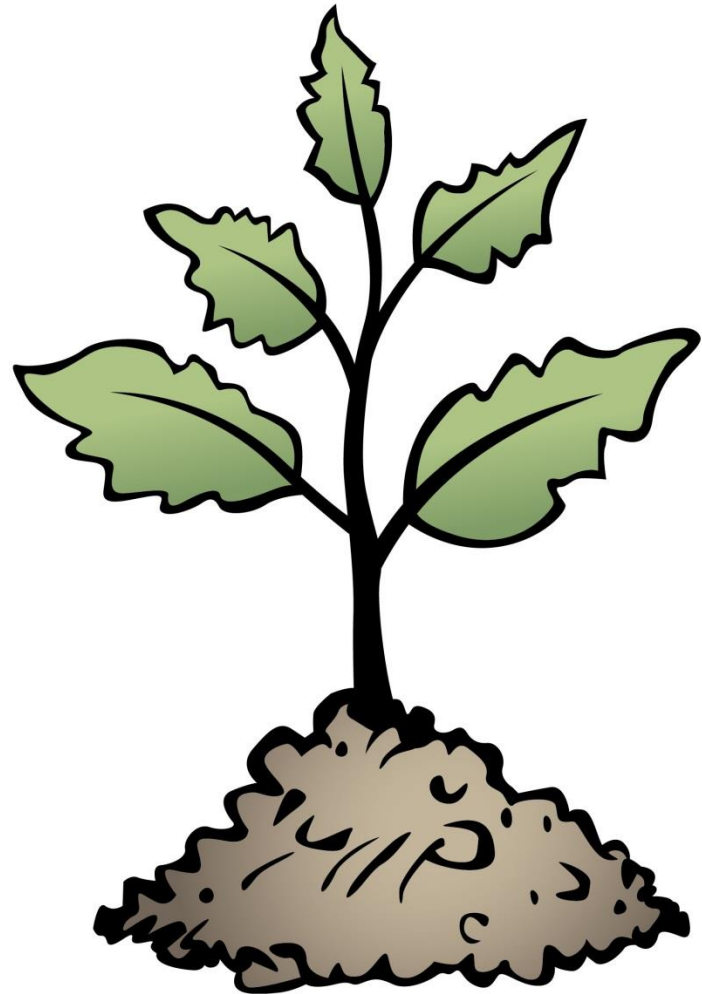
William was fighting in the hills for 8 months and endured many hardships. He noticed there were many small prickly trees that looked like holly bushes, but they had acorns, just like those on an oak tree.



He decided to send a small parcel of these acorns to his uncle, Samuel Winter Cooke who lived on a farm in Hamilton, Victoria. His uncle had always been interested in unusual trees.



In 1916, Samuel decided to plant one acorn on his farm and gave the remaining acorns to other farmers and his old school in Geelong. It seems that only three of the trees, including the one at Hamilton, are still alive today nearly 100 years later.



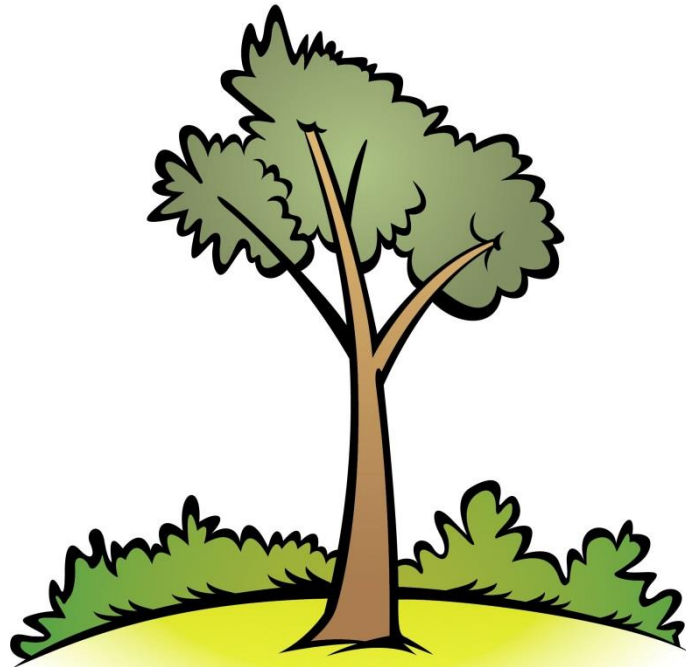
William returned safely after the war and started farming again.

He became the owner of the farm in Hamilton in 1929 and his children and grandchildren still live there.

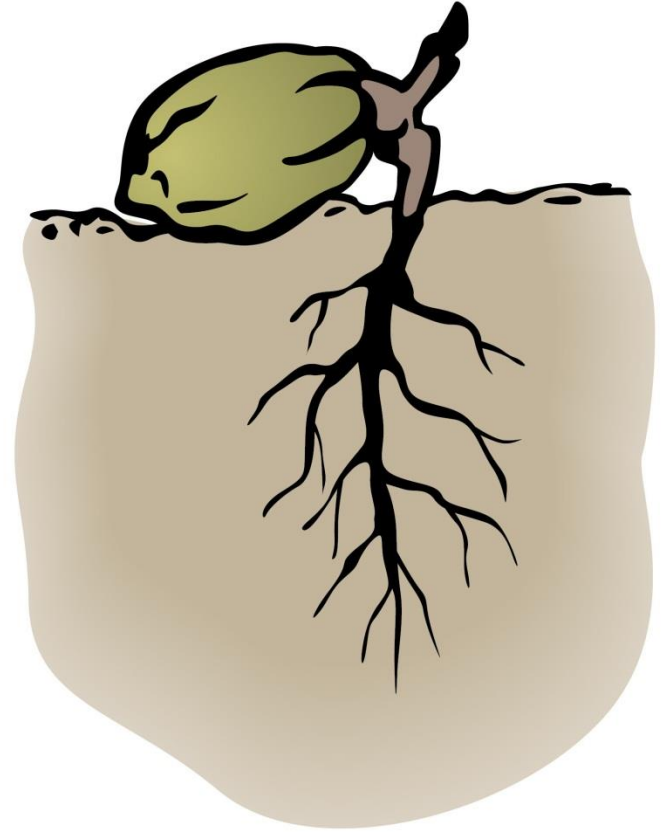
His original acorn has now grown into a wonderful Gallipoli Oak tree that is now 10 metres tall.



Some of the acorns from the original trees now have son or daughter trees around Victoria. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is now collecting acorns from these trees to grow enough seedlings to plant one in every primary school in Victoria in the years 2015 to 2018.



Experts from plant nurseries in Victoria wait until the acorns are ripe before they plant them in pots of soil. After some weeks, the acorns will germinate and open to send a root downwards. Soon after, a shoot will appear. The plant will gradually use up the food stored in the acorn until it is strong enough to survive from food it creates with its roots and leaves.



The Gallipoli Oak trees are a symbol that helps us to remember the brave servicemen and women who fought in World War 1, especially those who landed at Gallipoli about 100 years ago. The trees will be planted by schools with the help of the Returned and Services League of Australia, an organisation that supports our servicemen and women, those who returned from war and the families of those who did not return.



Each tree will have a planting ceremony. Schools and students will be asked to care for their young tree by protecting it from damage and providing regular watering.





William Winter Cooke



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www.gallipolioaks.org

