

This document printed below is Chapter Three from a book written by a New Zealand soldier in action on Gallipoli in 1915 – CECIL MALTHUS, compiled and published fifty years after the Gallipoli landing in 1965 in his book titled “ANZAC a Retrospect”. This third chapter has been transcribed into electronic text by Steve Butler for members of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Association in 2007 for research purposes only. Original book printed by Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd. 1965. Copyright 1965 C. Malthus.

Although Cecil’s narrative relates mainly to his unit the 1st Canterbury Battalion NZRB and therefore he was not a member of a Mounted Rifles Regiment. However his story enlightens a researcher of the Mounted Rifles as to the conditions faced by the first New Zealand troops to land at ANZAC on the 25th April 1915 – also Cecil’s involvement with the scouts describes events on “Walker’s Ridge” and “Walker’s Top” (subsequently later renamed “Russell’s Top” after the NZMR commander) where the New Zealand Rifle Brigade dug in against the Turks – these first trenches were to become the main fighting area of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade when they arrived in support on the 12th May 1915.

3

THE LANDING

Before us lies an adventure unprecedented in modern war.

—SIR IAN HAMILTON

WE ARRIVED at Lemnos on the morning of 15 April, after an interesting voyage. As we approached the island, the green hills rising all round the harbour presented a refreshing sight to our sand-weary eyes, but this was nothing compared with the inspiring sight that awaited us when we rounded the last bend of the winding entrance. There in the inner harbour a fleet of nearly 150 steamers lay at anchor, transports of all kinds and sizes, supply boats, and naval units ranging from submarines to the majestic *Queen Elizabeth* and other great battleships. There were North Sea trawlers to be used as mine-sweepers, fast destroyers and low-built patrol-boats, cutters and motor launches racing by in all directions, and several hydroplanes presenting a

curious contrast to the swarms of Greek trading boats with their old-time rig and colouring. The task of bringing such a huge fleet together, and supplying all its needs, must have been one of the greatest difficulty, and those who complained afterwards that the first naval expedition was mismanaged surely could not have realised what great obstacles opposed its success.

We had left Zeitoun on a Saturday morning. The march to the station was very hot work, but the wait that followed was hotter still, for we lay all day in the burning sun. The night journey to Alexandria, in unspeakably dirty carriages, seemed interminable, but we finally reached the wharves at daybreak and got some black coffee from a couple of enterprising natives. About midday we filed aboard an old Mediterranean tramp, the *Itonus*, and were served with bully beef; biscuits and tea. (This menu remained unchanged for all meals during the voyage and for a long time after.) The gangways were immediately raised, but in the afternoon I got on to the wharf with my French friend Pierre Vallières, a recruit to our company from the reinforcements, and we had an interesting talk with a group of Zouave machine-gunners. They were all colonials born and bred in Algeria, and spoke French with a broad provincial accent, but they had the Frenchman’s gift of terse and forcible

language and gave us their candid opinion of the way their expedition was being managed. They told us where we were going, and that they had been embarked and disembarked several times already. As Egypt was well known to be a hotbed of Turkish spies, it seemed highly injudicious to be making our plans so open.

[On 31 March Sir Ian Hamilton had written in his diary at Alexandria: 'Have made several remonstrances lately at the way McMahon is permitting the Egyptian Press to betray our intentions, numbers, etc. . . . They have been telling the Turks openly where we are bound for. . .' And later (4 April): 'My only hope is that the Turks will not be able to believe in folly so incredible.']

We spent the rest of that afternoon watching the swarms of shipping and the bustle of preparation on the wharves, and finally weighed anchor at five o'clock, the *Itonus* being the first ship away. All hands were strangely quiet and subdued throughout the evening, in marked contrast to the riotous cheering and enthusiasm when we went to the Canal from Zeitoun. The sea was steely grey and rather greasy, not at all what the Mediterranean should be. The *Itonus*, a grim and rusty tramp steamer with a Lascar crew, had been only roughly adapted for use as a transport by ripping out large parts of her inside. There were no hammocks nor bunks available, and we all slept crowded on the iron floor of the mess-deck. It was very stuffy there, and for the rest of the trip I slept on deck, though two of the nights were stormy.

The first day out there was a fresh breeze blowing, and next morning this developed into quite a heavy gale, worse than I had thought possible in the Mediterranean. Two lighters and a launch, which we were towing behind us to use in the landing, broke loose, and a thrilling scene followed. It was important that they should be recovered, and we spent an hour trying to work into position alongside them, but in vain. Then two of the ship's officers lowered a boat, but could do nothing, and narrowly escaped with their lives. With great difficulty they were got on board again with ropes, their boat was smashed, the barges were left adrift, and the launch was smashed to pieces by our propeller. The worst of the storm was soon over, but a heavy swell continued all next day.

We were now passing through the Aegean Sea, and it was the time and place to think of Ulysses:

*Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea.*

There were islands everywhere, each more lovely than the last, though mostly rocky and barren in spite of the spring, and sparsely inhabited. But some were partly forested, and many were fringed with quaint fishing villages.

So at length we were lying at anchor off the village of East Mudros on Lemnos. The green hills rose slowly all round from the shores of the large expanse of harbour, and I counted sixteen villages in sight. Strangely enough there were no detached farmhouses, but the people lived in these small, compact villages, evidently huddled for safety. Of course for hundreds of years the island had been under Turkish rule, and their ancestors had been familiar with bloodshed and terror, robbery and violence.

At this time, thanks to a peculiar omission from the recent Balkan treaty of peace, it had not been defined whether the island belonged to Greece or Turkey,

though the Turks seemed to have let it go by default. At any rate we had the pretext for occupying it without any breach of Greek neutrality.

A letter describes events of the following week at Lemnos— the week before the landing on Gallipoli:

S.S. Itonus, 24 April 1915 (Saturday)

I have spent most of the week duplicating maps of the Peninsula with Fougère, the scout corporal. It was slow, tedious work, all done by hand, but we have learnt to know the ground thoroughly, and the knowledge will be invaluable if we are advancing over fresh country every day. We expect to land on the coast opposite Maidos, which village we shall have to occupy at once to ensure a supply of water. We are sailing from here at daybreak in the morning. Last Sunday morning Major Brereton had a confidential talk with the scouts, in which we went over the map together and discussed every detail of the landing. The centre of the Peninsula rises to a considerable height, and if it is strongly defended we shall have no easy task.

[The maps in question proved to be useless, both in themselves and in the light of events. I imagine they had been filled in by someone sitting on the deck of a ship off the Peninsula, and concerning himself only with the main approximate contours. They hardly gave a hint of the great complexity of the tangled ravines of Anzac. I had pictured from them that the country was certainly steep, but was what all New Zealanders know as 'good grazing', rather like the Port Hills in Christchurch, which are about the same height, but give easy walking almost everywhere. However, in the outcome it hardly mattered, as we were not exactly 'advancing over fresh country every day' and Maidos and all the topography I had carefully memorised were soon forgotten.]

On Sunday afternoon we pulled round the shipping in a boat, and visited several of the other transports. The others, unlike the *Itonus*, were quite suitably fitted as transports. In fact, several were large and luxurious. We also got on board the *Queen Elizabeth*, the greatest battleship afloat, and saw her famous 15-inch guns, but she was too crowded for a thorough inspection. Another object of great curiosity is the Russian cruiser *Askold*, which has a line of five very tall funnels and has been christened the 'Packet of Woodbines'. On Monday the Company renewed regular parades on the boat-deck, but I continued working on the maps in the sergeants' mess. Next day we went ashore for a short route march through two of the villages, Mudros and the next one up country. On the higher ground there are a number of old stone windmills that serve for grinding corn. The island is at its best at present, with spring flowers and plenty of streams, but I should think it is very dry at midsummer. There seems to be no forest at all, at least on this side of the island. The villages are picturesque but dirty, and so are the inhabitants. The older men wear the traditional Greek costume, very baggy trousers of knee length, black stockings, with shoes and cap fringed with fur, while the young men attempt Western dress. The girls kept well out of sight, and the old women who were washing clothes by the roadside were all hideously ugly.

On Thursday we got five shillings pay and went ashore again. There had been a big wind, but it was now beautifully fine and warm. After a pleasant march we had a haversack lunch on a hilltop, from which there was a view across to Imbros and Samothrace. The latter is just a great mountain peak rising 6000 feet out of the sea.

We caught several snakes and great horrible hairy centipedes, and had a talk with a Greek hawk who had fought in the last Balkan War two years ago. He said the Greeks had far more bitter feeling against the Bulgarians than against the Turks, but he seemed to be full of fight and confident that Greece would soon be joining in the War.

On returning through the village of [East] Mudros we were dismissed for a couple of hours and had a look round. There is quite a good church or cathedral, but the shops and houses are poverty-stricken. We could get no decent provisions, only nuts and lemons, and rough black wine at five pence a litre. Powerful stuff it proved...

Every day there have been lectures by company commanders on many points concerning disembarkation, and a number of capable oarsmen have been recruited to help the naval ratings who will put us ashore. We have had considerable practice in going quickly down gangways and rope ladders into the boats, and have overhauled our kit and made thorough preparations. We have of course a full issue of ammunition, 200 rounds, together with three days' rations.

['Fine,' said Harry Pike, 'I can go all the way to hell on three days rations!'] But he didn't. He died in the Old People's Home at Richmond, Nelson, in 1960. Some of his disreputable exploits in France are legendary.]

We have been told that the Australians are to make the first landing, at dawn, and we will reinforce them during the day. We reacted to this news with mixed feelings, in which relief was the main ingredient...

My account of the next few months is largely derived from my repeated attempts at keeping diaries.

They all went lost, but they enabled me to keep the outstanding events in mind. I finally wrote one up in December-January and posted it home. As for letters, I took the censorship too seriously, and attempted nothing fit to call a letter until near the end of the campaign.

25 APRIL 1915 (The landing)

Sleeping on the deck that warm, still night, I was roused after dawn by the sound of distant guns. The ship was under way and out of harbour. Some of the transports had sailed the previous evening, and we well knew that the great day had come. The bustle and excitement, the cheering and skylarking on board the *Itonus* were incessant as the morning dragged along. To what extent was this pleasurable excitement genuine, and how far did I really share in it? I could not answer either question in set terms. We had never discussed such things and probably were not really facing them even now. We felt this great excitement and expectancy, but as we had hardly the foggiest idea of what awaited us ashore, it was only a vague emotion, based on corporate rather than personal confidence, or perhaps largely due to nervousness. Certainly there was nothing in it of false heroics. We hoped for success, and we hoped we would not disgrace ourselves, but we had no assurance of that. Every man even to himself was an unknown quantity, and could only soberly resolve to do his best. The next few days would be momentous and revealing.

Here is Sir Ian Hamilton's comment on the occasion:

Nunc dimittis, O Lord of Hosts! Not a man but knows he is making for the jaws of death. They know, these men do, they are being asked to prove their enemies have lied when they swore a landing on Gallipoli's shore could never make good. They know that lie must pass for truth until they have become targets for guns, machineguns and rifles—huddled together in boats, helpless, plain to the enemy's sight. And they are wild with joy; uplifted! Life spins superbly through their veins at the very moment they seek to sacrifice it for a cause. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The ship steamed slowly out into a fresh breeze and brilliant sunshine. Some unforeseen delay must have occurred, as we were timed to reinforce the landing parties at noon, but now we dawdled, barely moving, and did not arrive until four. Perhaps there will never be an adequate explanation of this mysterious delay. If more troops had been poured ashore in the middle of the day, as they were earlier and later, some of the ground on and beyond the summits of Sari Bair could almost certainly have been permanently won. One can hazard the guess that some senior officer gave the order to delay further disembarkation until the confusion ashore was straightened out in some degree. But the men had proved their ability to take the initiative in spite of the confusion. Major Brereton, in his *Tales of Three Campaigns*, repeats the rumour that the Navy had discontinued landing troops because the situation was so critical that the question of giving up the undertaking was being considered'. But the 1st and 2nd Companies of our Battalion, which were aboard another transport, kept their rendezvous and were ashore soon after twelve. By the middle of the afternoon they were heavily engaged.

Meanwhile there was an impressive church parade, a fresh-water shower, and once again every stitch and strap of our clothing and equipment was carefully tested and every ounce of our rations accounted for.

Our progress was still leisurely and sorely tried our patience. As we passed up the coast of the Peninsula we had a good view of the warships shelling Achi Baba and Gaba Tepe, but even with the loan of a telescope we could see no signs of movement on the shore. There were one or two slow and flimsy seaplanes which did a bit of 'spotting' for the Navy, and these no doubt had passed on some instructions as to targets. I knew from the map and from our talk with Major Brereton that we were supposed to land on a beach a little north of Gaba Tepe, a blunt and rounded cape that was unmistakable. But this beach, a broad and inviting one, was equally deserted, and we steamed straight past it towards the next slight turn of the shore, called Ari Burnu, more than a mile further on. We learnt later that the first landing parties had been carried on in the darkness and in a strong set of the current, past the intended landing place. The lie of the ground at Gaba Tepe and behind it across to Maidos is lower and much less chaotic than at Ari Burnu, and it seems probable that this initial mishap largely wrecked the whole campaign. On the other hand, the defences at Gaba Tepe (even though the beach was not wired) were formidably strong and would have severely enfiladed the intended landing place. The actual landing beach was reasonably well protected from enfilading fire by the two promontories at either end, Ari Burnu and Hell Spit.

As we neared Ari Burnu the engines stopped and we slid smoothly into contact with the destroyer *Bulldog*, which was to take our company in towards the shallows. A few shells were now falling around us. Quickly we scrambled or slithered down to the decks of the destroyer, some by the gangways, some by rope ladders, and many by a wooden chute of the kind generally used for unloading bags

and boxes of stores. In a fraction of the time that such a move would normally take we were all crammed aboard and heading for the shore. It was an exhilarating moment, in spite of the unknown perils that lay ahead. Now through the bursting shells we could hear at last the continuous rattle of rifle fire with which we were to become so wearily familiar. As we approached the beach—a narrow rocky one under an almost precipitous rise—we could see people moving in all directions like ants on a log. The destroyer in turn hove to and in no time was surrounded by boats which were plying to and fro, some singly and others in strings towed by a cutter. Soon we were off for the shore, which was only a couple of hundred yards away, but the boats were so packed as to make painfully slow progress—and we were now under heavy shrapnel fire. Our casualties were mercifully light—I think only half a dozen in the company—and none were fatal, but we heard for the first time that sickening soft thud of shell fragments or bullets meeting human flesh.

In the shallows we tumbled out knee-deep and scrambled ashore. Forming a rough line on the beach, we were led straight up the steep hill, passing many dead and wounded, and stragglers in a terrible state of fatigue. Shrapnel was still whizzing through the bushes everywhere, but thanks to the steep slope we were not seriously exposed to it. Near the summit of this cuff-like declivity (which was soon to be the site of the headquarters dugouts) we halted and had time to take stock of the situation. It was sufficiently grim. Steady streams of reinforcements were still arriving in boats and barges of every size and description, but those pushing off again were equally loaded with wounded. Even the most badly injured had to be tipped into the boats without their stretchers, which were indispensable ashore and anyhow would have taken the room of six men apiece in the crowded boats. Rows of other wounded were lined along the beach, dumped on a blanket or just on the bare earth or shingle. Those who could move were for the most part cheerfully giving way to more desperate cases, but inevitably there were some who rushed out into the shallows and insisted on clambering aboard the overloaded boats. They were accepted with contemptuous pity.

Practically no artillery was got ashore that day. (Throughout the campaign we relied heavily on the guns of the Navy.) But one or two Indian mountain batteries had already landed and their mules, and drivers and bystanders, were heaving and hauling to get them up the steep slopes to hastily chosen positions. The first (I think for some days the only) heavier artillery ashore was a solitary New Zealand howitzer battery, which was manhandled into the biggest of the gullies debouching on the beach—Howitzer Gully—and came into action at six next morning.

Dumps of all sorts of stores were rising all along the beach, and space was already at a premium. There was a strip of rocks and coarse gravel up to high-water mark, then ten to fifteen yards of loose, gravelly clay, and then the steep, scrub-covered slope, without grass. The mouths of the gullies gave a little more open space, and more was gained later by levelling out the slope and dumping the spoil into the shallows.

Over from the promontory of Gaba Tepe there was desultory shelling, both high explosive and shrapnel, but neither that day nor later was it a very great menace. The Turks' ammunition was clearly limited and rationed.

After about an hour, as dusk was falling and we had no definite orders, we began preparing for a night in reserve, but suddenly the major received the order to 'reinforce the left flank immediately', and we were rushed down to the beach again and round the corner of Ari Burnu to the left. Some of the scouts were in front, with no instructions beyond the notion that we were to follow our noses and see where they

led us. Unfortunately the two companies (12th and 13th) who were supposed to be following failed to keep connection with us, and remained bogged down on the beach for the night, while the half dozen of us toiled on up the slope and spent the next twenty-four hours with a mixed lot of Australians. By the time we reached the top of the ridge on the left flank (Walker's Ridge) not only had we lost our mates and ourselves, but we had perforce thrown away our carefully packed valises, which we never saw again. We could get no information from the scattered parties whom we passed. A state of muddle and utter exhaustion existed everywhere and the defence (it was already defence, not attack) was terribly weak. Finally we were seized upon by a harassed Australian lieutenant who begged us to strengthen his handful at the top of the hill. And so, expecting our companies to arrive and reinforce the position, we stayed there and dug in. The whole night was spent improving our trench, while a cold, misty rain reduced us to cowering misery. Such was our inglorious share in the landing.

26 APRIL

We got through the night without interference, though the Turks could have rushed in and overwhelmed us with the utmost ease. Probably their plight was as bad as our own. At dawn we could see no enemy on our immediate front, which was very rough and with limited visibility, but away over a gully, a little to the left, there were groups of Turks here and there on a scrub-covered slope about three hundred yards away. Though they kept themselves cleverly concealed behind bushes, and with uprooted bushes which they used as a screen when moving, we kept up an exchange of shots with them all the morning, and had the satisfaction of seeing several fall, while our casualties were nil. I hit one, and saw him tumbling and sliding down through the scrub. I was quite depressed by this and tried to put it out of my mind. I never mentioned it to anyone for weeks.

The *Queen Elizabeth* was firing directly over our heads and the impact on the air of her mighty shells was terrific. Her shrapnel swept whole acres of scrub. ['The Queen' spent the first few days acting essentially as a taxi for Sir Ian Hamilton, but wherever she went she lent a mighty helping hand. Her shrapnel shells contained ten or twelve thousand bullets.]

We located a Turkish battery and sent word by telephone to our howitzers, which were now ashore and opening fire. We were on a knob which at that time was the highest point of our left flank line. Immediately on our right, for several hundred yards, was a break in the line naturally protected by a deep precipice, though possession of it would have enabled the Turks to overlook all our supply routes and inner defences in that area. Out beyond this cliff was our main line. Our left flank ran down a long spur, christened Walker's Ridge, from the top to the sea, and overlooked several gullies full of snipers. The ground outside it was mostly very steep, so it was a strong position and the lower part of it was never seriously attacked.

A quiet afternoon followed in our sector, though the rattle of rifle fire was incessant on the right. We also became familiar with the characteristic rattle of machine-gun fire, which generally seemed to follow a pattern of fours:

b-r-r-r———b-r-r-r. One lively interlude was caused by the arrival of a party of beaten, panic-stricken Australians, who had spent the night in isolation in the scrub, after having advanced a long way the day before, and then retired when most of their mates were killed or wounded. Now they had suddenly lost their nerve, though not immediately threatened, and working their way along the cliff top came dashing in

without warning over the top of our trench. We instinctively recognised them as friends and as fugitives and did not fire. They were in a bad state with exhaustion and thirst and were allowed to pass on down and try to find other members of their unit. This was our first definite proof that there was no immediate enemy on our right front, so we plucked up courage to prowl some distance along through the scrub, bringing in several Australian wounded and one Turk. Strangely there were no dead.

Towards evening strong reinforcements arrived and took over, and our temporary commander thanked us nicely and advised us to rejoin our company, which we found still in reserve at the foot of the hill. The elation of our comparatively exciting adventures threw a glamour over the business which lasted through the following weeks and probably stood me in good stead. In spite of awful sights and every indication of tragic failure, I spent the time in a state of almost joyous excitement.

27-29 APRIL

I woke next morning to find my face enormously swollen and one eye blocked right out. Apparently I had been bitten by a venomous insect and I had to wear a heroic looking bandage for a couple of days.

Everything was still in a state of confusion, but great work was being done in the way of digging trenches and tracks. Our company was still stationed towards the foot of the hill, holding a section of the line and doing fatigues. By the 29th the position was well established, but heavy fighting continued up the hill, and a stream of wounded came past us down the track. The break in our line was closed by advancing from the cliff at Walker's Top, and a complete system of trenches was formed, which remained from then on without much alteration. Supplies were sent ashore and wells dug. We had no trouble in making up fresh kits from the litter of gear lying about everywhere.

The Otago and Wellington Battalions suffered heavy losses, being engaged in several battles hand to hand. Our 1st and 2nd Canterbury Companies also had had some grievous losses at the landing, including our battalion commander, Lt.-Col. Macbean Stewart, who was shot dead as he stood sword in hand at the furthest point of their advance, and the 2nd Company commander, Major Grant, from Timaru. After a day or two the Battalion was reunited under the command of Major Loach, and from the other companies and from Australian neighbours or stragglers we gained a confused account of the events of the landing, which were so dispersed and improvised and chaotic that they can never be fully known.

The initial landing was not unduly difficult, apart from some bad moments here and there. Anzac Cove, as the landing beach was now called, was not strongly held by the Turks, though all of it was under rifle and machine-gun fire. The chief Turkish post on the spot was a single trench on a projecting knoll of Ari Burnu, commanding both Anzac Cove and the beach to the north, later called Ocean Beach. This and the few other prepared positions were quickly overrun, and other Turks who came running along the beach from the direction of Gaba Tepe were also put to flight or bayoneted. But after that there was apparently no plan or ordered movement, or rather the attempts at organisation failed to take shape. The fact that the landing had been made a mile too far north, and on very much rougher country, nullified all plans and instructions. All the groups landed had become utterly confused and intermingled, and there was no possibility of sorting them out. Groups of Australians simply set out

in pursuit of whatever enemy they could sight and, finding the going incredibly rough and difficult, the units soon lost whatever unity had remained. The wonder is that on the whole they vigorously, instinctively, followed the right course and quickly penetrated a long way inland, not in co-ordination but with amazing courage and dash. Here and there by degrees, as the first impetus was spent, some sort of line was formed by men, often leaderless, from many different units. On the whole it was the immensely difficult terrain, rather than the enemy, that brought them to a halt. ('Bloody rough country for infantry,' Billy Williams complained. I didn't dare to ask him if we should send for the cavalry.)

Then at the furthest point of their advance on Battleship Hill it so happened that a party of Australians under Captain Tulloch came almost face to face with the man who of all the Turkish forces was most to be feared, Mustapha Kemal, Ataturk, at that time a divisional commander. He had come forward almost alone to a point on Baby 700 where he hoped to overlook the scene of the landing, and they came upon him suddenly. If they had rushed forward and killed or captured him the result of the whole campaign might have been different, for time and again in the course of that year it was he above all who turned the scales against us. But seeing a party of unknown strength they halted and took cover, and he promptly sent back an orderly and brought up a fresh battalion which drove them back. So for the first but not the last time Kemal's swift determination turned the scale.

By nightfall the outlying parties of Anzacs were killed or forced back, and the check was complete and final. Not until August was there any considerable advance from the positions held that night, and then it was not a direct advance from the Anzac lines but over new ground from the beach on the left flank.

Now back to our personal fortunes. We had been warned to conserve our water, and on the second day I had been reprimanded by an officer for taking a drink from my water bottle, for the first time since landing. As it turned out, water was plentiful in those first days, that is, for us who were near it, as rain fell every night and there was a stream in every gully.

All our battalion was together for a couple of days at the foot of Walker's Ridge, mainly engaged on fatigues. Our most notable work was a zig-zag road up the hillside, by which the mountain guns and later even field guns were dragged up to the summit, emulating the slave labour of the ancient Egyptians.

One day came a wild report that masses of Turks were sweeping round (which was manifestly impossible in those tangled gullies) to attack our flank, and we had to rush out along an outlying spur and beat all records in the construction of a fire-trench overlooking the country by which they were expected to advance.

Nothing happened. Probably this was on the 27th, when a Turkish attempt at a counterattack on the top of the hill was smashed by the guns of the Navy. Orders were often passed along right down the line, far beyond the zone to which they applied, and they were liable to become garbled in the process.

On the Wednesday (28th) there occurred an incident which even eyewitnesses could scarcely believe and which has been discounted as a tall yarn. The sniper was of course at all times our deadliest foe, but there was one in particular who claimed many victims daily and still baffled detection. At the far end of the cliff-top already mentioned, at a spot named 'The Sphinx', there was a deep cleft behind a mass of clay which looked as if it were toppling for a fall. On the impulse of the moment, following some vague intuition, one of our men fired into this cleft and had the

satisfaction of seeing a Turkish sniper fall from it and go crashing down to the gully below. I was not an actual witness but arrived on the scene just when everyone was discussing the incident with amazement. 'The Sphinx' was far within our lines. Investigation showed, we were told later, that the Turk had been planted there with plenty of food and ammunition—some said also with carrier-pigeons. This would seem to show either that outposts were plentiful at every point on the Peninsula or that the enemy had some inkling of our intention to land near that spot, which overlooked the stretch of beach running north to Nibrunesi Point and the Salt Lake.

Another notable incident was a courageous but ill advised attempt to recover for burial some Australian dead who were lying on the beach out to our left, an unfortunate boatload who had been massacred in the first landing. They could have been buried easily enough under cover of night, but the attempt was made in the afternoon and only resulted in further casualties. One of our battalion stretcher bearers, Tommy Stockdill, won a Distinguished Conduct Medal, and another, Alec Thomson, equally deserved one. Soon afterwards awards for such deeds were discontinued, as the High Command did not wish to encourage them.

30 APRIL

Possibly as a result of the scare I mentioned about an attack on our flank, our company was ordered to take up an outpost on the seaward end of several ridges well out to the left, past the Fisherman's Hut on the beach. It was not known whether these were still held by the enemy, though on the 26th there had been an enemy post straight behind Fisherman's Hut and there was every reason to think that they were still there, with a machine-gun. The scouts went out in the afternoon.

We had hardly the foggiest notion what other perils might await us or to what extent the country out north was occupied by the enemy. Just the day before (before dawn on 29 April) a platoon of our 13th Company had been landed by a torpedo boat in Suvla Bay, just round the corner of Nibrunesi Point, with orders to attack a Turkish outpost there which was known to be observing by telescope the effects and ranging of their gunfire on Anzac Cove. At dawn they crept up to the summit of Lala Baba, which seemed to be deserted, but they could see a trench near the crest. Some of them had actually jumped over this trench when they found it was full of sleeping Turks. These woke to find themselves facing a double row of naked bayonets and promptly threw out all their weapons and surrendered, with many salaams and insh'Allahs. Not a shot was fired, the outpost and several huts were destroyed with gun-cotton charges, and the party cheerfully re-embarked and returned to Anzac with their cheerful prisoners.

Unfortunately the complete success, without mishap, of our cobbers from the West Coast was no guarantee that we would be equally fortunate. So it was with some trepidation that the six of us now crept out over the open flats, in broad daylight, to chance our fate.

The distance to the furthest ridge we were to occupy was about three-quarters of a mile. If there were any Turks on these ridges they could hardly fail to see us long before we reached them. We knew, too, that we were certainly visible, though at a lengthening range, to the Turkish snipers on the high ground facing Walker's Ridge. However, we crept along slowly, widely spaced, with our hearts in our mouths, until we safely reached the second spur and had the third in near view. I am not sure that we were sighted at all. A number of bullets pinged past us, but they were from long range and were perhaps only strays from the hilltop fighting. We located an enemy

trench on this second spur and were mightily relieved when we crawled up and into it without mishap. It was empty except for hundreds of cartridge shells. The Turks in this trench must have accounted for most of the Australians mentioned above. Probably they had had the machine-gun we were expected to encounter.

Presently we signalled all clear, and had to wait till some hours after dark for the Company to come out and join us. It was a ticklish job and during those hours of waiting our imagination played some weird tricks. We were near enough to blazing away at nothing. The Turkish outpost had apparently been withdrawn, but the enemy could not have failed to see us from their main positions, and the question was whether they would think us worth bothering with. The Company, on arrival, hastily took up a defensive position under our guidance, three separate posts being established on the three successive spurs.

While sentry groups were being posted, two parties mistook each other in the darkness, and at the same instant two of our scouts, McEvoy and Frank Bird, fired at each other, and McEvoy was shot. The bullet passed clean through his body from near the navel, and we thought he was done for. He lay there most of the night in a bad way, while Frank went right back to Brigade headquarters for stretcher-bearers. Frank told me he had the presence of mind to pinch a bottle of rum from our captain's kit in passing, and it was only thanks to his having this rum as a bargaining point that he was able to get the exhausted stretcher-bearers out to our post, after Brigadier Johnston had declined to order them to duty. A year later, in France, we learnt that Mac was there as a sergeant in the Australian infantry. He had been rejected in New Zealand for further service, and had gone to Sydney to enlist. But by that time Frank was back in sunny Nelson, and he and McEvoy never met again. Mac was killed in France near the end of the war.

1 MAY

We worked all night on our new trenches, which were finished by midday. I have never been able to account for the absence of the scout corporal, Fougère, who, as I have mentioned, was working with me on the *Itonus* just before the landing. Perhaps he was among the casualties who never reached the shore. At any rate, I found myself in charge of the scouts, and that afternoon I took a patrol about a mile up Chailak Dere and across to the next ridge (later named Cheshire Ridge). This was the country won in the August advance, but Chailak Dere, afterwards a dusty thoroughfare, was then a running stream. Mostly the going was rough and covered with arbutus and ilex and myrtle scrub, but there were several stretches of green meadow. There was enough risk to make us exceedingly careful, and we proceeded step by step, holding our breath, but we saw no signs of the enemy. Ahead of us the ravine rose steeply, with razor-edged ridges on either side, cut here and there into pinnacles by time and winter rain. These were so precipitous that the sides and even the bottom of the gully were nothing but naked clay. Our business was to report on the suitability of this ravine for a breakout from the flank. Naturally my report to the Major was just as unfavourable as I could make it ('Good rabbit country, but most of it standing on edge'), and we little thought that later in the year the trip up and down this gully would be wearily familiar.

On the way home, in a little, deep, tangled valley within 150 yards of our trench, when we just beginning to relax, we stumbled into a Turkish encampment! The shock was nearly fatal, but a little investigation showed that the place was deserted, except for a mongrel dog, which began to howl and was hastily put to death.

The howling of a little dog was among the many things we thought we had heard the night before. This camp must have served for an outpost party, probably the one that had accounted for the boatload of Australians on the beach, though they were nearer our main position. The camp consisted of half a dozen bivouacs and one bell tent, obviously reserved for an officer, for in it we found several dozen eggs, and useful quantities of tea, tobacco, coffee-beans, tinned meat, stale bread, olives, tinned gherkins, etc., with which we returned home laden and rejoicing.

2 - 4 MAY

The outpost picnic continued and proved almost wholly enjoyable. There were a few casualties from snipers, but as far as I can recall only one was fatal. Arthur Fellows of our platoon was shot through the head and killed instantly. He had lingered a moment too long on a steep patch of clay or gravel on the side of the ridge, where he was clearly outlined. At first our trenches were small and dangerously crowded with men, but they were soon enlarged. From these outposts, especially No. 1, we looked across behind the Turks' right flank on the high ground facing Walker's Ridge (Baby 700). We could generally see great numbers of the enemy moving busily to and fro in the hollows among the hilltops, but the range was too great for effective fire. On the other hand, a number of Turkish snipers moved down the ridges to within effective range of us and kept us well bottled up, as far as our right flank and front were concerned.

We made another uneventful reconnaissance out towards the Salt Lake, beyond the Aghyl and Asmak Deres, wandering over several miles of country without seeing a soul. Mostly we crept through tangled branches and creepers in the narrow creek beds, climbing out here and there to take a look, but often we had to flit across wide open spaces. Droning bees and flies were almost the only living creatures. If there were foxes out there, as I have seen alleged, it is hard to know how they made a living. Birds were remarkably few, just one or two sparrows and a lark singing in the sky. A few patches of ground had been cultivated and there was a deserted farmhouse or hut beyond the Asmak. Other areas were evidently swampy in winter but had dried out pretty well. The furthest point we reached, I think, would be the southern slope of Green Hill.

Ted Baigent and Pat D'Arcy-Irvine were with me on the first of these patrols, Porky Littlejohn and Bob Rawlings on the second. We kept in single file about twenty yards apart. Strangely enough, I can not recall feeling any anxiety on the second occasion, though we might have expected to be shot up at any moment. Apparently the Turks had been kept too busy to occupy, or reoccupy, any of this country, and that was our good fortune.

The setting up of these outposts on the left flank was the first step towards the development of the August attack, the main feature of which was to be an advance up the gullies which we now stood at the mouth of. It seems that General Birdwood foresaw right after the landing that head-on assaults against the Turks at Anzac would be doomed to failure, and began looking round for a way out. It may even have been at his insistence that we were sent out on patrol, but if so, the idea largely miscarried. We were given little instruction as to what we were to look out for and I am pretty sure that Major Brereton did not forward our reports. He asked for nothing in writing and he makes bare mention of us in his book. Probably his own instructions had been extremely vague. Later in the course of May, some notably daring and valuable reconnaissances were made by Major Overton of the Canterbury Mounteds.

Apart from being asked to lead the advance a few days later on the Daisy Patch, the scouts never functioned again as a unit. But it was always remembered against me that I had been in charge of the scouts, and I was often called on for listening posts and patrols, both on Gallipoli and again in France.

The remainder of our time was spent on sentry duties and in exchanging shots with the Turkish snipers. Several of our men claimed hits, though the range was generally long. But in general, as the Turks, hard pressed elsewhere, made no attempt to molest us, we had a jolly time enough. Nevertheless we made a mistake in exposing ourselves, for the Turk was only biding his time and meanwhile took full stock of the position and strength of these outposts. Soon after we were relieved he moved in to close quarters and came to grips with our Mounteds.

Meanwhile there was bitter fighting over at the main position, where most of the Brigade were engaged in a desperate but fruitless attempt to buy themselves more elbow room in their advanced positions at Walker's Top and beyond, on Dead Man's Ridge. On 2 May, in front of Pope's Hill, they suffered heavy loss in a disastrous bayonet charge.

This is as I wrote it in my diary and I let it stand as a typical rumour. After all, Churchill once spoke of an Australian cavalry charge with sabres in World War II. The truth, however, was less picturesque than the rumour, as it often was. There were 800 casualties in the Brigade that day, but there was apparently no bayonet charge. Our losses, as on many other occasions, were mainly due to enfilading machine-gun fire and heavy bombing.

'Bombing', of course, in that war is to be interpreted as manual bombing. The Turks were well supplied with German hand grenades, but we had none at all at this stage. The few sketchy aeroplanes or seaplanes available confined themselves strictly to reconnaissance, though I believe they carried a machine-gun as a token defence.

On the evening of the 4th we were relieved by our 13th Company and returned to reserves in what was now called Mule Gully, behind Walker's Ridge. A squad of Indian mule-drivers were camped alongside us. Here we heard that Major Loach had been so interested in our progress the afternoon we went out that he followed us part of the way, and was sniped from the main ridge. He suffered a broken leg, which had to be amputated. Our third battalion commander within a week was Major Ben Jordan, who also had a short reign.

5 MAY

This day also was a virtual holiday and was largely devoted to a much-needed washing and bathing. Mule Gully was still quite fresh and pretty, and at the head of it, up under the cliffs, one almost felt far away from danger. The creeks were already drying fast but we got some sort of fresh-water wash, the last for many weeks. All day a big gun away on the Asiatic side of the Strait was shelling our warships and transports at the extreme limit of its range, so that its shells came hurtling and tumbling, sometimes actually visible, and landed with a mighty splash.

This may well have been the same gun, called 'Asiatic Annie', which was a particular scourge at Cape Helles. At deliberate intervals it sent over a big shell from what we understood to be 'the ringing plains of windy Troy'. But Anzac was really a bit beyond its scope, and its shells were greeted with derision.

Several battalions of the Royal Marine Light Infantry arrived at Anzac that morning and brought very gloomy accounts of our losses at Cape Helles. Luckily we

did not realise at the moment that they had come to change places with us, and we regarded them with the slightly patronising pity that we generally felt for the young and inexperienced troops of the New Army. These seemed to us a fair cross-section, ignorant and bewildered, with nothing wrong that experience would not cure, but strangely immature compared with the hard-bitten, cursing Australians; brave enough normally but liable to panic, and in such wild surroundings quite out of their element. Patronising? Yes. But being New Zealanders we were all quite accustomed to really rough country, to outdoor life and 'getting around' far more than these poor boys had done; and these factors were a great psychological advantage.

Personally we had not taken a gloomy view of the situation so far, though of course it was obvious that our venture was, to put it mildly, a partial failure. At least it was no triumphal procession from village to village, as it had been so sanguinely painted for us. I thought ironically of our *Itonus* plans for taking Maidos the first day (where was Maidos?) and then pressing on . . . On the contrary, we were obviously settling down to stalemate and the conditions of siege warfare, and we were the besieged.

Serious misgivings, therefore, were caused by the news that we were to re-embark that evening. Was it possible that a complete withdrawal was in contemplation? We were completely reassured on marching round to Anzac Cove, now a busy port with thousands of twinkling lights and a constant hurry and bustle of traffic on both sea and shore. There was no suggestion of demoralisation here. Everything stood for solid permanency and progress. With incredible difficulty we were crammed aboard lighters—the man in full marching order, once he is sitting or lying, is hopelessly helpless—and delivered aboard the destroyer *Mosquito*, which smartly steamed away southward. A fresh rumour was cheerfully circulated that we were off to a rest camp, and though the night was bitterly cold on that wind-and-water-swept deck, we were in the best of spirits and cheered every broadside that our gallant destroyer loosed at uncertain targets ashore. The famous hospitality of the Navy was well in evidence, in the shape of boiling hot coffee and rum, and it was with the best of mutual good wishes that we parted from the destroyer's crew and landed at Cape Helles on a wintry dawn.

[Transcribers note: Cecil's unit returned to ANZAC on the 20th May, serving until the withdraw from the Dardenelles in December 1915. His unit went onto France, where Cecil served four months in the trenches of Armentieres, later he was wounded at the Somme on September 25th 1916 and returned to New Zealand where he was discharged from hospital August 1917. His war over after three years.

More information on New Zealanders in WWI available at:

<http://www.nzmr.org>]