



The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter & Magazine of The
Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front
Association**



ISSUE 71 - January 2022

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the
Great War'.

Issue 71 - list of contents + WFA Webinars

- 2 - 4 Contents Page + WFA Webinars**
- 5 -6 Secretary`s Scribbles**
- 7 Branded Goods**
- 8 Armistice Day at Clumber Park**
- 9 - 11 Haig - Hamilton - Cohen**
- 12 - 27 Re-writing the History of Gallipoli**

Dear all,

To help members get through what may be a tough January with possible restrictions being 'on the cards' (although hopefully some common sense will prevail) we have set out a bumper series of events which we hope members will appreciate. Here's what is in store over the next few weeks. (All times quoted are UK / GMT)

Monday 3 January at 8pm: Webinar 'From Gallipoli to the Caspian Sea, the Life of Eric Gascoigne 'Kipper' Robinson VC' In this presentation Clive Harris will describe the life of one of the most intriguing characters of the Great War: Eric 'Kipper' Robinson who served notably in the Gallipoli Campaign, Palestine and The Caspian Sea.

To register to attend this presentation click here [From Gallipoli to the Caspian Sea](#)

Thursday 6 January at 8pm: The Big Quiz. Following the success of the 'Big Quiz' nights several months ago, we are back by popular demand! This will take an hour or so. The Quiz is meant to be light hearted and we are inviting members to think up ten questions which will be asked of those taking part.

For more information and registration click here [The Big Quiz](#)

Monday 10 January at 8pm: Webinar 'Official History Gone Wrong: Failure on 2 September 1918 and the Flawed Canadian Official History

The Canadian attack on the Drocourt-Quéant line, and advance over Mont Dury is described in some detail in the Official History of the war, which is supposed to be the authoritative version of events. The purpose of this presentation by Dr Bill Stewart is to advance a different explanation to that which appears in the Canadian Official History of what happened to the 4th Division, and why the official history garbled this event.

To register to attend this presentation click here [Official History Gone Wrong](#)

Thursday 13 January at 7.30pm: Online virtual tour #3 'The Bitter End: The Highland Division at Beaumont Hamel, November 1916'

This tour will follow the 51st (Highland) Division during their operations in and around Beaumont Hamel during the November of 1916. It will consider the lessons learnt from the 1st July attack and how technology and tactics differed leading to the eventual capture of the village and the high ground towards the Munich and Frankfurt Trench.

Through modern, contemporary and personal accounts it will study the leadership, planning and operational effectiveness of the Division as the Somme offensive reached its wintery end after four months of hard fighting.

There is no pre-registration for this event, simply join us at 7.30pm in the 'members area' of the WFA website using your personal password. To watch these tours just go to this page (there will, a few days before the tour starts, be a 'countdown clock') [Virtual Tours](#)

Monday 17 January at 8pm: Webinar 'The Big Brain in the Army': The Rise of Sir William Robertson from Trooper to Chief of the Imperial General Staff

Sir William Robertson is an important but under-rated figure in the story of the British Army. In this presentation, Ross Beadle will look to explain more about 'Wully'.

Apart from being a larger than life figure Robertson has two major claims to have shifted the course of history. He remains to this day the only man to have risen from the lowest rank to the very highest – from Private to Field Marshal.

To register to attend this presentation click here [The Big Brain in the Army](#)

Thursday 20 January at 8 pm: The Big Quiz: The second quiz of the month is being run, with additional questions being invited from those taking part.

For more information and registration click here [The Big Quiz](#)

Monday 24 January at 8pm: Canadian Nurses on the Western Front: From Passchendaele to Peace

In Casualty Clearing Stations and hospitals, on ambulance trains and in operating theatres, Canadian nurses withstood shellfire and bombing raids, illness and emotional trauma to care for their patients across the Western front. Through the nurses' own writings and some of their photographs, this talk by Andrea McKenzie illustrates their unique experiences as Canadians, as military officers, and as nurses on the Western Front during the last eighteen months of the war and beyond – from Passchendaele to peace.

To register to attend this presentation click here [Canadian Nurses on the Western Front](#)

Thursday 27 January at 7.30 pm: Online virtual tour #4 'Street Fighting Sailors: The Royal Naval Division at Gavrelle, April 1917'

Following its experiences at Gallipoli and on the Somme the Royal Naval Division were tasked with the capture of Gavrelle on the 23 April 1917, this tour will follow the Division through this operation, an often overlooked if costly achievement for the RND, the Official History records 'Full justice has not been done to the 63rd Division, because the details of the street fighting, in which it showed great skill and determination, are too intricate for description' We will also study the attritional assaults on the windmill position a week later.

There is no pre-registration for this event, simply join us at 7.30pm in the 'members area' of the WFA website using your personal password. To watch these tours just go to this page (there will, a few days before the tour starts, be a 'countdown clock') [Virtual Tours](#)

Monday 31 January at 8pm: Webinar 'War widows and emigration'. Despite the explosion of interest in all things First World War during the centenary period the lives of Britain's war widows remain largely unexplored. This talk by Andrea Hetherington looks specifically at the issue of war widows' emigration to the Dominions of Australia and Canada.

To register to attend this presentation click here [War widows and emigration](#)

Some members and readers of this Newsletter / Magazine may be asking 'where is the forward programme of speakers for 2022.'

A good question.

I have avoided creating a programme for the simple reason that we are still in a period of uncertainty regarding what covid restrictions may be reintroduced by the government. If we are again thrust down that dystopian rabbit hole then all plans would be up in the air.

For the moment I will only be planning one month in advance - February meeting details will be advised shortly.

Thank you for your understanding.

Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter / Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general



Secretary's Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the January 2022 of the Branch newsletter and magazine. May I on behalf of your Branch chairman and Committee extend to one all our sincere Best Wishes for the New Year . Branch activities resume on Tuesday January 4th with our monthly meeting. The first meeting of the New Year is always our Branch AGM and Tuesday is no exception. We do try to get through the business part of the meeting - important as it is - as quickly as possible, before moving on to our talks of the evening.

With one exception, all of your Committee have agreed to offer themselves for re-election. That exception is old faithful (hope he doesn't mind me saying that), Mark Macartney. Mark lives in Retford nearly 30 miles from Chesterfield and not being a driver depends upon wife Jean fetching him to and from Worksop where I pick him up and drop him off. Mark will still be with us from time to time, particularly when the nights become lighter. He will also continue to run our Facebook page and makes sure that all our activities are updated on to the main WFA website. As you all know Mark is WFA Branded Goods Trustee and the last few months of the year are incredibly busy for him as he organises the sales and distribution of the WFA Calendars. This year - assisted as always by wife Jean - Mark has sold the whole print run of 1200 copies. A wonderful achievement!. Mark receives the orders, parcels them up for posting then makes daily visits to his local post office to mail them off.

A full time job. Folks sometimes ask what our Trustees do...Mark is just one shining example of the hard work that goes on behind the scenes - Thank you Mark and Jean.

As regulars will know, it has become something of a Branch tradition that once the business of the AGM is over it becomes a `Members Night` and this Tuesday is no exception with there being three short presentations.

Jon-Paul Harding will discuss briefly his volunteer work with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission - The `Eyes On - Hands On Project`<https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/projects/eyes-on-hands-on/>

Next up will be historian and prolific author Andy Rawson who ask the question why the lessons to be drawn from the American Civil War were not learnt by those leading the armies of 1914.

The presentations will be concluded by myself with a talk on the life of William Henry Johnson, Worksop`s only VC winner in the Great War.

I trust there will be something for everyone in these talks, so please come along and give those members your support, let`s try to continue with the continuing move to post covid normality. Many of us have lost almost two years of their lives...let`s make 2022 the year when all the restrictions on life are pushed firmly into the past. It will be interesting to see how future historians view the way the pandemic was handled - especially once official records are open for thorough examination.

In addition to our normal raffle at the end of the meeting, I will be having a book sale table. No fixed prices...take your pick...all we ask is a modest donation to Branch funds .

Look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Tuesday

Take care

Grant Cullen

Branch Secretary

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Just to recap, here`s the Covid conditions which we agreed with our hosts the Chesterfield Labour Club.

1. Hand sanitizer is provided at the entrance and must be used. It will also be provided in the meeting room.
2. Masks must be worn while at the bar, otherwise discretionary.
3. No leaning on, or touching the bar.
4. Windows of the meeting room to be open to provide ventilation.
5. As far as practicable, seating to be distanced.



The War Memorial at Hardwick Village, Clumber Park



BRANDED GOODS AVAILABILITY

New items are always being considered, so please check the Branded goods part of the shop for all items available.

Prices are inclusive of postage within UK (Branded Items Nos 1-11)

www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/?p=2
or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn or Maya Shapland) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 12- 18) note new prices (under) effective from 1st July.

Order direct from supplier (West Coast Workwear) www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/
or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)



1	Fridge Magnet	(£5)	59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover
2	Anniv' Coaster	(£8.50)	4" in diameter hand crafted slate. Individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize
3	Mousemats	(£6)	196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer
4	Bookmarks	(£2)	(dims 55 x 175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage
5	Baseball Caps	(£8)	Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all
6	Ties	(£11)	Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100% Polyester
7	Lapel Badges	(£2.50)	25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin
8	Mug	(£10)	11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides)
9	Messenger Bag	(£27)	37 x 29 x 11cm, 100% Cotton. Full cotton lining. Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres
10	Despatch Bag	(£30)	40 x 30 x 12 cm, (10) Washed Canvas, dual rear pouch pockets. Multiple zippered pockets. Capacity: 14 litres
11	Shoulder Bag	(£25)	40 x 28 x 18 cm, (10) (11) Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 14 litres
12	Oxford Shirt	(£27)	Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester
13	Breathable Jacket	(£71)	Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon with PU Coating
14	Rugby Shirt	(£25)	Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton
15	Fleece	(£24)	Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill
16	T-shirt	(£17)	Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton
17	Sweat Shirt	(£22.50)	Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan
18	Polo Shirt	(£20.50)	Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton

Armistice Day - November 11th 2021

For the second year running we held a service at 11am on Armistice Day at the lonely War Memorial at Hardwick Village in Clumber Park. Once again we were blessed with fine weather

Left to right - Tim Lewis (Royal British Legion - Worksop Branch - Deputy Standard Bearer), Robert Ilett, Catherine Ilett, Grant Cullen, (all WFA) Stephen Brown (Bassetlaw District Council). The event was supported by the local National Trust management



Also present at Hardwick was Worksop RBL member and Royal Engineers veteran, Shaun Kenny. Shaun hasn't been in the best of health recently and is now resident at Ashley Care Centre Worksop but was delighted to have a day out with Tim Lewis (RBL Worksop Branch Deputy Standard Bearer) to attend this event and have a welcome cuppa at the Park café after the service. Here we see Tim with Shaun before the service



This photograph is something of a rarity, as it depicts Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, former C-in-C of the BEF, and General Sir Ian Hamilton, former C-in-C of the MEF, together. The figure in the wheelchair beside them is Major [later Sir] Jack Cohen, Treasurer of the British Legion.



The photograph was taken at the Savoy in London on 22 March, 1922, on the occasion of a British Legion Regional Representatives luncheon.

Benn Jack Brunel Cohen was born in 1886 at Toxteth Park, Liverpool, into the family which owned Lewis's department stores. Cohen joined the Territorial Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment in 1906. After the outbreak of the Great War two of Cohen's elder brothers served in France, one being killed and the other badly gassed. In 1917 Cohen requested that he too be posted to the Western Front. Promoted to Major he was badly wounded by machine gun fire at Third Ypres, resulting in both legs being amputated above the knee. He was fitted with prosthetic limbs which allowed him to stand with the aid of sticks and drive a car, but he was largely confined to a wheelchair. Cohen was one of those who became involved in the discussions and negotiations between the competing ex-Servicemen's organisations which led to the founding of the British Legion, with Haig as its first President. Cohen was appointed Treasurer, a position he held from the Legion's founding in 1921 through to 1930, when he became Vice Chairman for two years, resuming the position of Treasurer until 1946.

In addition, he was, inter alia, on the Board of the Richmond Poppy Factory, where disabled ex-servicemen manufactured the poppies for the Haig Fund. During this period, Cohen also served as MP for Liverpool Fairfield between 1918 and 1931, and was prominent in championing the cause of ex-servicemen in Parliament, particularly on behalf of the disabled, of whom he spoke from first-hand experience.

When Field Marshal Haig, the British Legion's President, died in January 1928, Cohen wrote the following appreciation of Haig and his role. Cohen's eyewitness description of Haig during the war, standing patiently at the side of his car at a level crossing whilst soldiers on a slow-moving leave train cheered him, is worth bearing in mind when reading the oft-repeated nonsense by some 'historians' that the troops did not know who the C-in-C was - or that it was only from his post-war work with the British Legion that he established any degree of popularity with them. Cohen does underline, however, that it was Haig's work on behalf of ex-Servicemen which made him more than a respected and trusted Commander-in-Chief, and established him as a beloved national figure who would be genuinely mourned by hundreds of thousands at his death. Cohen also highlights how Haig, used to operating as C-in-C of the autocracy which was the British Army, in which when he issued an order he expected it to be obeyed, had the management skills as President to take a democratic organisation such as the British Legion with him - an autocratic democrat, to coin a phrase:

"News of the death of Earl Haig seemed incredible. Only last Saturday, at the enrolment of a troop of Boy Scouts at Richmond, he appeared in the very best of health."

In 1914, when the war broke out, Sir Douglas Haig was in command at Aldershot. He went to France in command of the First Army [sic - Corps]. It is not for me to tell here of the events which led up to his being given, in 1915, entire command of the Expeditionary Forces in France and Flanders; let it suffice that from the day that he took over the command, his popularity and prestige increased daily.

An austere man, with a stern sense of duty and of great dignity, a man who never learnt to suffer fools gladly, but nevertheless had great sympathy and understanding; a man who, by the encouragement he gave to his subordinates, inspired every one of them to follow him blindly; a man who stuck to his decisions.

His famous order in March, 1918, when he exhorted every man to "stand with his back to the wall", is perhaps one of the most inspiring orders ever written.

It was typical of the man. So he stood himself, without the slightest intention of ever giving in.

Stern leader as he was, and with all the tremendous responsibility which rests upon a commander-in-chief, he nevertheless always considered the men serving under him. I remember an occasion in Flanders, when the troops with whom I was serving were making a journey to some rest camp. We came to a level crossing, and noticed as we passed that the gates which were down to prevent people crossing the line were holding up the Field Marshal. Trains went so slowly over there, and halted so frequently, that it would have been very natural to hold one a few seconds longer in order that the Field Marshal might cross.

But no, rather than cause his men to lose one minute of their rest,, he waited while the train passed by, and I can well imagine that the cheers which rang out from the windows of the train when the men saw their leader standing by amply repaid him.

But while there are many, and will be more, books and biographies dealing with every aspect of the war and of the tremendous part Earl Haig played in it, yet I sometimes think that what he has done since the war has made him even more beloved.

When the Earl Haig came home he decided to devote himself to looking after his men and their dependents. There were three or four ex-Servicemen's organisations in existence, and he would not rest until he had made them all sink their differences and join together into one huge organisation - the British Legion, which embraces everyone. This was eventually done. Earl Haig became the President and the Prince of Wales their Patron.

Many Presidents - perhaps the majority - are content to see their name at the head of the notepaper, and feel that if the organisation in which they are interested achieves any kudos from the fact of its being there, so much the better. Earl Haig was a very different President; he not only appeared everywhere as President, and represented it in that capacity on all official occasions, but made a point of travelling all over the country expounding to everyone its objects. He never went to a town or village without visiting the local branch or branches of the Legion, and, further, he attended its annual conferences every year, and many meetings besides.

The British Legion is a democratic organisation. Earl Haig was decidedly an autocrat. Yet his infinite tact and wisdom and his great personality persuaded that democracy to carry out in a democratic way nearly every one of his wishes.

Nothing connected with ex-Servicemen was too small for him to take part in, and only last Saturday, when I had the great privilege of sitting next to him, he went down to the British Legion Poppy Factory at Richmond on a most miserable day to assist at the enrolment of a few Boy Scouts. The particular point about this troop of scouts is that all its members are sons of ex-Servicemen who are employed in making poppies for the Haig Fund.

When the Field Marshal was announced these small boys looked extremely nervous, and, to put them at their ease, he went round and shook each one by the hand - the left hand - the recognised scout greeting.

Earl Haig was modest to a degree, and it was perhaps that particular quality which endeared him to all ex-Servicemen. Every one of them must feel he has lost his best friend, and not in our lifetime will his place be filled."

Major Sir Jack Cohen died in 1965.

‘Rewriting the history of Gallipoli: a Turkish perspective’, *Honest History*, 25 July 2017

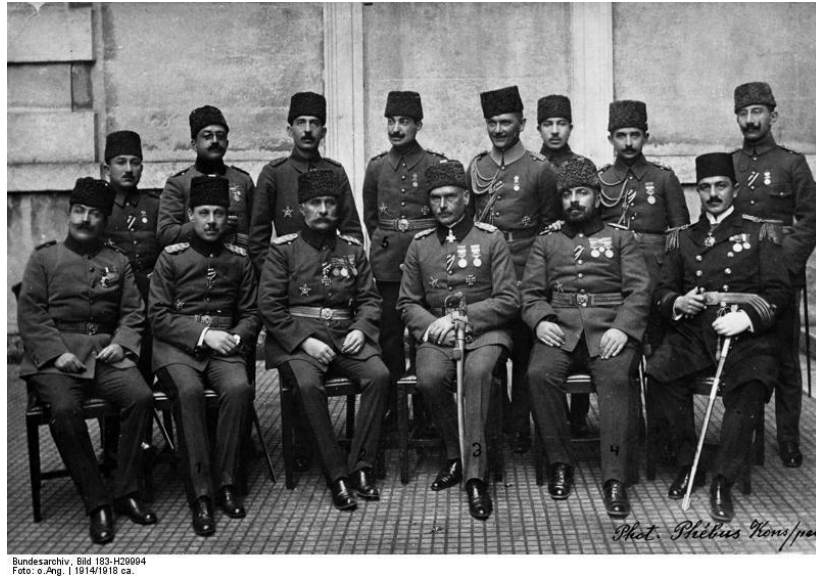
This piece draws upon an article originally published in the Turkish daily newspaper *Taraf* (Istanbul), 18 March 2014. An earlier English translation by Hikmet Pala was uploaded to the *Academia* page. Secondly, the article adapts material later published in English as chapter 9 of *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory and Mythology* (2016), edited by Michael JK Walsh and Andrekos Varnava. The chapter was called ‘Mustafa Kemal at Gallipoli: The making of a saga, 1921-1932’. Thirdly, the article takes account of recent developments in Turkey, as noted in a joint piece with Brad West, in *The Conversation* in April 2017, and on the *Honest History* site.

The history of the Gallipoli campaign has been contested in Turkey for many decades. The commemorations of the Ottoman naval victory of 18 March point to Staff Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) as ‘the only man, the only commanding officer’. Yet, this official narrative contradicts Atatürk’s own almost contemporary version, where his role was minimal on that day.

On the other hand, Mustafa Kemal later tried, for political and career reasons, to highlight his role in the land operations commencing 25 April. While he was fairly unsuccessful in his efforts to appoint himself to a decision-making position within the Young Turk regime, historians on the Allied side (Bean, Churchill and General Aspinall-Oglander), turned him into ‘the Man of Destiny’. The myth grew in the turbulent international relations of the early 1930s and has been consolidated since.

Parallel, however, to the glorification of Mustafa Kemal have been shifting narratives of the Gallipoli campaign as the army of Muslims defending the House of Islam against the Crusaders, the men wearing crosses. There is evidence that this Islamist narrative is growing in importance in today’s Turkey. Finally, in the background of Gallipoli commemorations there has always been the elephant in the room, that is, the Armenian Genocide.

This event commenced on 24 April 1915 and its place in Turkish history is still debated.



Senior Turkish and German officers, January 1916, after the Gallipoli campaign. Mustafa Kemal is not present. (Bundesarchiv)

From right to left standing: Abdi Bey (?); Lt. Colonel İsmet (Ministry of War, Operations Section, later adopted surname İnönü, second president of Turkey after Atatürk); Aide First Lt. Asım (Gündüz); Aide of Liman von Sanders, Major Erich Prigge; Chief of Staff to 5th Army, Lt. Colonel Kazım (İnanç); Chief of Staff to 1st Army, Lt. Colonel Şükrü Naili (Gökberk); 2nd Army Chief Medical Officer, Colonel Dr. Refik Münir (Keskindil) Bey; 1st Army Chief Medical Officer, Lt. Colonel Dr. İbrahim Talî (Öngören).

From right to left sitting: Ministry of Navy, Chief Staff Officer, Navy Commander Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay); CO of the Southern Sector at Gallipoli, Brigadier Gen. Mehmet Vehip (Kaçi); Commander of the 5th Army, Field Marshal Liman von Sanders; CO of the Northern Sector at Gallipoli, Major General Esat (Bülkat); Ministry of War, Chief Medical Officer, Brigadier General Dr. Süleyman Numan; CO of Istanbul Military Garrison, Colonel Cevat.

Commemorating the naval victory of 18 March 1915

I vividly recall a night in 2014, the 99th anniversary of the naval victory of 18 March at the Dardanelles. We anticipated that we would be subjected, through the mouths of statesmen, to the bombast of heroism on various TV channels. As the top politicians spoke in their stately manner, black and white pictures would be displayed, culminating with Kemal Atatürk emerging like a sun in the background. The official line about Atatürk's military genius and bravado would be repeated, presenting him as the saviour of the country, winning us the battles of Gallipoli ...

On 18 March 1915, the allied British and French fleets launched an attack to pass through the straits of the Dardanelles. Ottoman artillery units and navy attempted to prevent this through batteries of heavy artillery and howitzers strategically located on both sides of the straits and with the aid of eleven lines of sea mines. These dispositions achieved their goal and the naval defence of Gallipoli was one of the most significant victories of the Ottoman side throughout World War I.

At that time, the 19th Infantry Regiment under the command of then Staff Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) was based in Maydos (later renamed as Eceabad). In 1916, when then General Mustafa Kemal was appointed to the Eastern Front, the History of War Commission in Istanbul commissioned him to write a report on the Arburnu battles. He told the story of 18 March in the introduction of his report:

On that day, Cevat Pasha, the commander of the Fortified Zone [at the Dardanelles], requested my presence and asked to see me at Kilitbahir [Fortress on the European side]. Following my arrival and meeting him, again he asked me to accompany him - along with the Inspector-General of the Shores and Straits Admiral [Guido von] Usedom - to visit coastal artilleries and fortifications on the European shore [of the Dardanelles] and to choose convenient locations to position additional mobile batteries. We obliged. We accompanied Cevat Pasha, the commander of the Fortified Zone, and proceeded to Kirte, [Krithia, an evacuated Greek village on the southern side of the Gallipoli peninsula]. Upon reaching our destination ... we observed that the enemy navy approached to the entrance of the straits, targeting their bombardment to Kirte and Alcitepe [Achi Baba], where we were caught under fire. To enable Cevat Pasha to return back to his GHQ [on the Asian side of the Dardanelles], we reverted to Maydos. The battle of that day took place solely on the sea, ending up with the defeat of the enemy forces. Other than some enemy battleships bombarding the shores, no notable engagement on land happened.¹



Tour buses, Gallipoli, April 2017 (author). The sign says, 'Martyr! We are following your example.'

The forgotten heroes of 18 March

So, Mustafa Kemal's narrative of 18 March shows that he was merely watching the enemy attack and the artillery defence through his binoculars. If we need to look for 'heroes' for 18 March, we are better off looking at Cevat (later Çobanlı) Pasha, the commander of the Fortified Zone at Dardanelles, and German Admiral Guido von Usedom, who was entrusted by Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, with the special mission of defending the Straits, that is, the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus (Istanbul). In fact, these two men prepared the plans, laid the mines, commanded the forces, and defended the Dardanelles on 18 March 1915.

The narrative of Mustafa Kemal simply indicates that Cevat Pasha was on the European side of the straits on that day and reached his headquarters on the Anatolian side in the afternoon. In the absence of Cevat Pasha all coastal artillery units were commanded by Staff Lieutenant Colonel Selahattin Adil. He was the Chief of Staff of the Fortified Zone Command. He handed over the command to Cevat Pasha at 14:00 hours. Yet, do we ever mention the name of Selahattin Adil during our 18 March commemorations?

We also hear a lot on these occasions about the legendary minelayer *Nusret*. Yes, the *Nusret* did lay mines parallel to the shore at the Bay of Erenköy in the morning of 8 March, causing catastrophic damage to the enemy fleet ten days later. Thanks to these mines, the enemy battleships *Irresistible* and *Ocean* were sunk and three more battleships were put out of action. Recently, it was established also that the *Bouvet* sank due to artillery fire coming from Ottoman coastal artillery.² Rightly, we hear about Captain Hakki of Tophane, the captain of the *Nusret*, and Major Hafiz Nazmi, the commanding officer of the Mine Group Command in the navy. But no one mentions the critical roles played by German military personnel on the *Nusret* that day, such as the mine specialist Lieutenant Colonel Geehl, the torpedo specialist Senior NCO Rudolf Bettaque, and the navy engineer Captain Reeder, who managed to run the *Nusret's* engines without releasing dark smoke through her funnel. This made it less visible to enemy reconnaissance.



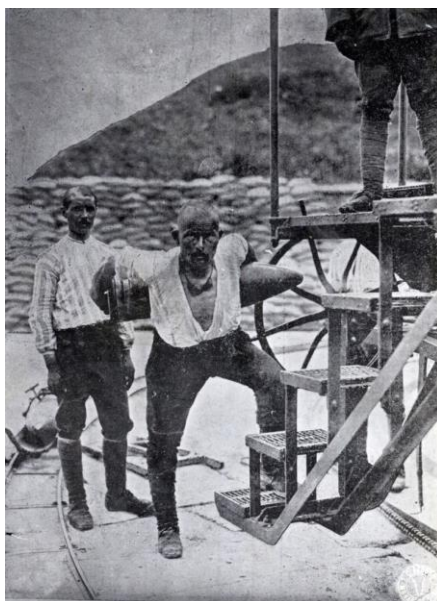
Tombstone of Lieutenant Hans Woermann, German Military Cemetery, Tarabya, Istanbul (author)

Leaving aside the Ottoman officers who contributed to the victory but who are not mentioned, our Turkish 'national history' deems the German officers non-existent. On 18 March, while there were 79 dead and wounded among Ottoman forces, the loss in the German camp was 18 soldiers. So, for every four Ottoman losses, there was one German loss. In the same fashion, the loss of German artillery Lieutenant Hans Woermann is glossed over. In his memoirs, Colonel Hans Kannengiesser, the commander of the 16th Army Corps at the Suvla battles in August 1915, describes the funeral of Lieutenant Hans Woermann, as follows: 'As befitting an officer of the Turco-German Alliance, the *Salâ*³ was recited from the mosque's minaret [in Çanakkale] and, his body wrapped under the Turkish flag, his face was turned by a Hodja towards Mecca as he was buried'.⁴

Ottoman officers did not hesitate to show their respect to the comrades-in-arms who died in defence of the Ottoman fatherland.

Dismissing the dead of their allies and 'crying only after their own dead' is a skill unfortunately developed by the historians of the Turkish Republic!

Turkish myths are highlighted, however. Whenever the naval battle of Gallipoli is told, the story of Corporal Seyit is recounted. There are outrageous claims made, almost as if the entire Allied navy was stopped by this Corporal Seyit, who is said to have carried a heavy shell on his back and rammed it into the muzzle. In this way, the history of a modern battle is being reduced to a legend, in fact, turning the whole victory into a laughing stock.



*Corporal Seyit carrying a wooden replica of the famous shell
(Wikipedia)*

It is unfortunate that the stories have not also been recorded of the German soldiers who fought within the Ottoman army during the Gallipoli campaign. Near the beginning of World War I the number of German staff and military personnel was around 1100, but towards the end of 1918 this figure reached 18 000 to 20 000.

Although initially the memoirs of a few officers were published, including those of Field Marshal Liman von Sanders, the commanding officer of the 5th Army, the notorious bombardment of Potsdam in 1945 destroyed the German military archives and prevented comprehensive academic research being done on this topic. The archives of the Turkish Chief of Staff in Ankara have a large collection of German documents on World War I, but they are not available to readers.

Perhaps, when the military control on history writing is lifted in the year 2065 (!), researchers will gain access to these documents.

‘Turkification’

Since the 1930s, there have been a few turning points in rewriting the history of the Gallipoli campaign. At first, the victory of the good old Ottoman Imperial Army was ‘Turkified’, and Arab, Armenian, Greek, Jewish and Kurdish soldiers and officers were cleansed from the Official History.

There was a conscious effort to impose the idea that all the participating soldiers and officers of the Gallipoli campaign were ‘pure ethnic Turks’.

So, the cosmopolitan character of the Ottoman army - essentially a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Imperial army - was intentionally ignored. As ‘Turks’ were said to have comprised the entire army, German officers were also treated as a type of undesirable persons. They had no place in our glorious Turkish history! Also, the narratives of the 1930s were reconstructed in such a way as to make the Gallipoli campaign a precursor of - almost a period of preparation for - the Turkish War of Independence: the presence of Mustafa Kemal on the Gallipoli Peninsula was used to connect the Gallipoli campaign of 1915 to the War of Independence that started in May 1919.



Pilgrims, Gallipoli, April 2017 (author)

The glorification of Mustafa Kemal 1915-32⁵

Although Mustafa Kemal did not become Atatürk ('father Turk') until late 1934, his glorification began well before that. The saga of Mustafa Kemal at Gallipoli was first shaped abroad and then imported into Turkey. Contrary to the general understanding that exists today, Mustafa Kemal was not known to the Ottoman public during the war and his name was mentioned only once in the Ottoman press at that time. After the Gallipoli campaign, Mustafa Kemal tried, fairly unsuccessfully, to use his career at Gallipoli to advance his political ambitions. He had begun to develop an image of himself as the saviour of the nation, particularly compared with men whom he thought of as his domestic rivals, such as Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, as well as the German military command in Istanbul.

Mustafa Kemal was not mentioned at all in two important post-Gallipoli ceremonies in Istanbul and his further self-promotion efforts were mostly blocked by Enver Pasha. Mustafa Kemal wrote two short accounts of the Gallipoli campaign, a prosaic treatment in 1916 of April-July 1915 (referred to previously in this article), then, in 1918, a more boastful write-up of the events of August 1915, although the latter remained unpublished during his lifetime.

Paradoxically, it is on the Allied side where Mustafa Kemal features more noticeably and, even then, this does not occur straight away. Mustafa Kemal first appeared in Anzac military intelligence reports on 26 or 27 April 1915, when an Ottoman Armenian POW captured in the first days of the war named him as the commander of the 19th Division. Apart from this entry, he does not feature much in British or Anzac intelligence reports.



Pilgrims, Gallipoli, 2017 (author)

Andrew Ryan, a senior political officer at the British High Commission in Istanbul immediately after the war, recalled in his memoirs (published in 1951) that in April 1919 Mustafa Kemal's name had conveyed nothing to him. In 1919 also, a group of British officers (the Mitchell Committee) visiting Istanbul and Gallipoli interviewed many high level Ottoman officers about the wartime operations on the Ottoman side of the trenches. Mustafa Kemal's name only came up twice in the Mitchell report, both times misspelt.

By this time, around May 1919, Mustafa Kemal had moved to Anatolia to organise the Turkish national resistance against the invading Greek army. After the victory against the Greek forces and the fall of Izmir in September 1922, he no longer needed a reputation from the Dardanelles. He had become a national hero, indeed saviour of his country and the founding father of the Turkish republic in 1923.

The losing side at Gallipoli was not finished with Mustafa Kemal, however. The Australian and British histories of the Gallipoli campaign began to shape his legend. Charles Bean, war correspondent at Gallipoli and now the Australian official historian, played a special role. He argued that Mustafa Kemal's actions had been vital to Ottoman success. This respect for the enemy and its commander probably made the Anzac defeat more honourable. As British historian Jenny Macleod puts it, Bean could justify the loss only by dignifying the enemy: 'perhaps to fail against an admirable leader and admirable race is palatable'.⁶

Bean had visited Gallipoli even before the Mitchell Committee, spoken to Ottoman Major Zeki from the legendary 57th Regiment, and heard from him of Mustafa Kemal's role on 25- 27 April. The Australian boosting of Mustafa Kemal proceeded from that point, commencing with the publication in 1921 of the first volume of the *Official History*, where Bean referred to Kemal's 'swift determination' and 'a formidable force under a formidable leader'.

Then came Winston Churchill. He had been bruised by Gallipoli as First Lord of the Admiralty and investigated by his peers in the Dardanelles Commission. He was anxious to refashion history in his own favour. He coined the term 'Man of Destiny' for Mustafa Kemal and - in volume 2 of *The World Crisis 1911-1918* - gave him a central role in the events of April and August 1915. In order to explain the defeat at these critical moments, Churchill tried to rationalise the defeat by glorifying the enemy. And in 1923, the very year Churchill's account was published, Mustafa Kemal became President of the new Turkish republic, destined to be a key player in Balkans and Near East politics, in which Britain had a close interest. Churchill may have been looking forward as well as back.

Churchill was not an official historian, though he was intent on justifying his actions in government. The British *official* history was slow to get under way but began to make progress under General CF Aspinall-Oglander early in 1925, when Bean and Churchill's accounts had already been published. Aspinall-Oglander's account of Mustafa Kemal at Gallipoli looked very much like Churchill's. It was to be included in the second volume of the official history, due for publication in 1932, but there was to be some diplomatic messaging first.

Relations between Britain and Turkey at this time were not good. Official British records show that the Foreign Office in the autumn months of 1931 put polite pressure on Aspinall-Oglander to make his treatment of Mustafa Kemal even more laudatory. The 'doctored' words were duly included in the final version of the volume and a specially bound copy was presented to Mustafa Kemal in May 1932. With British support, Turkey entered the League of Nations a little later.



Sir George Clerk, British Ambassador in Ankara, who in May 1932 presented President Mustafa Kemal with his specially bound volume of the 'doctored' official history (Wikipedia/Albert Smith)

Mustafa Kemal would have particularly liked this (post-Foreign Office intervention) paragraph in the epilogue of the volume:

“Seldom in history can the exertions of a single divisional commander have exercised, on three separate occasions, so profound an influence not only on the course of a battle, but perhaps on the fate of a campaign and even the destiny of a nation.”

So, the legend of Mustafa Kemal at Gallipoli was shaped in Sydney and London first and imported into Turkey later. It found a wide market there and continued to shape Turkish official historiography until at least 2014. But has this begun to change?

‘Islamisation’

In the years immediately after 1915, pro-Islamists such as Mehmet Akif Ersoy - the lyrics of the Turkish National Anthem came from him - wrote poems and articles presenting the Gallipoli campaign as a kind of ‘resistance of Islam against the Infidel’. However, in the official narrative of national history, the Gallipoli campaign was never treated as an ‘invasion of Crusaders into the House of Islam’.

In recent years, though, perhaps since the mid-1990s, the municipal mayors elected from Islamist political parties, hiring coaches and taking residents and school children to tours to Gallipoli, have brought a new twist to the writing and presentation of history, and started disseminating for these groups a concept of ‘the Islamic army resisting the Infidel’, as opposed to the former narrative of ‘the Glorious Turkish Army’ (which is the version that secular-nationalist groups still receive).

Now, for these Islamist people, tours to the Gallipoli peninsula, the war memorials and graves are being treated as a kind of ‘pilgrimage’. As Brad West and I noted recently, approximately one million Turks every year visit Gallipoli, and around ten per cent of the Turkish population has been on some kind of ‘martyr tourism’ trip to Gallipoli.⁷

The Gallipoli campaign [we said] has, in recent years, become part of the culture wars in Turkey associated with the rise of political Islam. This has seen Gallipoli increasingly referred to in relation to an Islamic jihad, and as an invasion of crusaders into the house of Islam.⁸

During the spiritually oriented tours, we see a newly invented epic war saga befitting the stories of ‘The Battles of His Grace Ali’.⁹ For example, the 38 centimetre diameter projectiles fired from HMS *Queen Elizabeth* to the Turkish trenches were said to have been seized in their by the Islamic saints who were supposed to be patrolling constantly over the peninsula. Or a white cloud comes down from the blue sky and a British regiment vanishes mysteriously.¹⁰ Islamic mythology has no limits.

Since 2012, the ruling AKP’s Istanbul party headquarters has organised an annual ‘Breaking the Fast Day’ program comprising ‘the Menu of the Martyrs’ at the Gallipoli Martyrs’ Memorial in the Holy Month of Ramadan. By launching this program, a deliberate attempt is being made to increase ‘Islamic sensitivity’ in relation to the Gallipoli campaign. The program consists of thousands of attendees breaking the Ramadan daytime fasting period with rye bread, cracked wheat soup and water, followed by reciting the Qur’an, and poems of a nationalistic and inflated heroic nature.



End of Fasting Day, Martyrs Memorial, 2015

One of the indispensable parts of Turkish nationalistic and conservative politics is the attempt to portray Turks as the ‘downtrodden’, victimised masses, suffering from ‘poverty and deprivation’. The average Turkish nationalist would always belittle himself and his people in order to increase the dose of victimisation. In fact, the logic of it is very simple: if the soldiers of 1915 had not been fed properly, they would have lost the war! Lieutenant Colonel Cemil Conk, the commander of the 4th Infantry Division on the Gallipoli Front, wrote this in his memoirs on the feeding and provisions regime for soldiers:

Each private was issued with 900 grams of bread daily. The hot meals consisted of chicken soup, meat and bean stew, meat and chickpea stew, cracked wheat pilaf, drybroad beans and dried fruit compote. For snacks, they were issued dried sultanas and roasted hazelnuts. There was a regular distribution of tobacco as well.

This is the historical truth from contemporary evidence; it is unfortunate that it does not comply with the ideological blueprints of the nationalists of all types.

In recent years, the number of people regarding the Ottoman Gallipoli campaign as a 'Jihad' - a resistance to the Crusaders, the Crescent versus the Cross - has been on the increase.

For instance, then Prime Minister Erdoğan said in 2013:

No one should try to say that "the Crusades were this and that!" ever again. The Crusades were not [finished] nine centuries in the past! Do not forget, the Gallipoli [campaign by the Allies] was a Crusade. Who was [fighting] alongside us [against the Crusaders] is obvious. At that time, individuals from Syria were with us. There were [soldiers] coming from Egypt, who fought with us. There were those from Bosnia, Kosovo, from all of the Balkans!¹¹

At this point one should recall some facts. If World War I was a war among so-called imperialist powers to reshape their zones of influence, the allies of the Ottomans were the 'Imperialist' Germans, Austrians-Hungarians and the Bulgarians. (By the way, all of them were Christians!) The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the then Ottoman government, had gambled the future of the Empire on signing a secret deal with Germany on 2 August 1914. The following day, Enver Pasha, Minister of War, declared a general mobilisation. On 29 October 1914, the Ottoman navy began the shooting war by opening fire on the Russian fleet, bombarding Russian ports in the Black Sea. Here, the Ottoman state was not the aggrieved and downtrodden party, but clearly the belligerent force, the party which actually started the war.

The famous 5th Army that defended the Gallipoli Front was commanded by a German, Field Marshal Liman von Sanders. The Chief of Staff of the Ottoman Imperial Army was the German General Fritz Bronsart von Schellendorf. In 1914, moreover, the present independent Arab states of Syria and Iraq were merely Ottoman provinces. Those men conscripted to the Ottoman army were born as Ottoman citizens anyway. They were not in a position to come onto the Ottoman side voluntarily; they were merely complying with their compulsory military service. It is a fallacy to liken this war to an Islamist Jihad, when it was fought with German money, German military aid, and the active participation of the German military command, in combination with the devious and finely tuned plans of the CUP leadership.

One could argue that the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet V and the CUP government did actually declare Jihad on 14 November 1914 after the declaration of war on the Entente powers. Yes, this is true! But what distinguished the 1914 Jihad from the

previous ones in the 18th century was not the terms of its declaration, but the selective focus of its targets - that is, including Entente civilians, along with armies - and the pointed exemptions for German and Austro- Hungarian nationals. This was a parody of the idea of Jihad, and one for which there was no known precedent in the Islamic world. In essence, this was a declaration of Jihad to satisfy the German Foreign Ministry.¹²

Oddly enough, the Germans believed in the declaration more than the Ottomans did. This is not surprising, when we recall that the impetus behind the declaration did not come from Ottoman religious dignitaries but rather from German diplomats. The best comment on the 1914 Jihad came from the overthrown Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was still alive and confined in one of the palaces on the Bosphorus. As he said to his daughter, Ayşe Osmanoğlu,

“not Jihad itself but its name was a weapon in our hands. [In my time] whenever I wanted to intimidate one of the Ambassadors [in Istanbul], I would say “a Muslim Caliph has a word in his mouth [to be used in the last instance], I pray to Allah not to [be forced to] pronounce it. For us, Jihad was just a name. Because of not having a substance, it did not have any [executive] power either. How could [the CUP] get over it? Will the British be deceived by this [declaration of Jihad]?”¹³”

No doubt, the old fox knew the possibilities far better than did the ‘arriviste’ Young Turks.

Still, it is the status of Atatürk that is of particular interest. As noted above, his profile in and around Gallipoli has been toned down relative to the Islamist narrative. On the ground, there has been the recent uncertainty over the Turkish memorials, which are being renovated. It is understandable that the Australian interest has centred on the future of the 1985 Atatürk memorial at Anzac Cove, which carries words attributed to Atatürk himself. The Gallipoli Battlefields Historical Park Authority (*Çanakkale Savaşları Gelibolu Tarihi Alan Başkanlığı*) has officially declared that the inscription will be restored to this memorial just as it was before. However, the renovation has still raised some questions in secularist nationalist circles in Turkey, as well as abroad.¹⁴



Pilgrims, Gallipoli, April 2017 (author). The t-shirts say, ‘Grandpa, I came’.

The unresolved problem: dealing with the Armenian Genocide

In 2014, when I was writing the earlier version of this article, it was easy to figure out that the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide would be burdensome for the Turkish political elite. I anticipated that a policy of ‘alleviation of mutual suffering’ would be adopted in 2015 to resist the international pressure regarding the Armenian issue. As early as 25 April 2011, then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu spelled out the state policy:

On his arrival at Gallipoli, Minister Davutoğlu said: “Any Turk [in this place] whose heartbeat does not jump a notch, his heart tremble, the flow of blood in his veins quicken, cannot be a Turk ... We will present the year 2015 to the entire world, not as the anniversary of an alleged genocide slander, but as the anniversary of the glorious resistance of a nation, the anniversary of Gallipoli defence.”¹⁵

So, the intention was obvious: to respond to the victimisation of the Ottoman Armenians, something that aroused pity, by balancing the sympathy: ‘Yeah, but we Turks died at Gallipoli, too’. Thus, attempts would be made to neutralise the pressure abroad and justify the causes of the Armenian massacres within the country.

Designed by the statesmen in Ankara, this narrative was readily adopted by nationalist Turkish historians. For instance, Professor Metin Hülagü, then President of the Turkish Historical Society, instantly adopted the state line and argued the following:

*When mentioning 2015, people should keep Gallipoli in their minds and not the Armenian problem. If the Gallipoli Campaign did not take place, if the French and the British did not land at Gallipoli, the Armenian question would not have happened!
France and Britain coming here from thousands of kilometres away, attempting to invade Anatolia, reaching the Dardanelles, then taking the Russians and Armenians on their side, then turning around and asking: “Why did you forcibly relocate them?” If they had not come, neither a war in Anatolia nor the relocation [of Armenians to the Syrian deserts] would have occurred. If the Armenians want to hold someone accountable, they should put their questions to the French, the British, and the Russians. Why are they questioning us?¹⁶*

Unfortunately, this was exactly how the centenary of Gallipoli commemorations turned out in April 2015.¹⁷ The main Turkish commemoration of 25 April, with international dignitaries present, was held a day before on 24 April, the centenary of the beginning of the Armenian deportations, overshadowing that event. In the two years and more since then, adopting Erich Maria Remarque’s title, it has been ‘All Quiet on the Turkish Front’.



Pilgrims (in commemorative t-shirts) at prayer, Gallipoli, April 2017 (author)

Conclusion

I have shown how Islamisation is taking over from Turkification in the remembrance of Gallipoli. Time will tell how this trend develops. Against this background, we can also speculate about the future of the Atatürk myth and legacy. Atatürk has been the central figure in Turkish history for almost a century. Yet his role in the Gallipoli campaign was glorified after the event, largely through the efforts of the historians of his former enemies; his fame was boosted in the 1930s for diplomatic reasons - as it has been reaffirmed since the 1980s, as David Stephens and Burçin Çakır have shown recently.¹⁸

Now, Atatürk seems to be on the wane again, as Islamist narratives become more important in Turkish politics. Meanwhile, regardless of which narratives - secular nationalist or Islamist - prevail, the much bigger 1915 story, the sad fate of the Ottoman Armenians, remains as an unreconciled piece of Turkish - and world - history.

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NOTES

¹ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Report on the Arıburnu Battles (Arıburnu Muharebeleri Raporu)*, ed. Uluğİdemir, Turkish History Association Publications, Ankara, 1968.

² See: Ayhan Aktar, 'Who sank the battleship *Bouvet* on 18 March 1915? Problems of imported historiography in Turkey', *War and Society*, forthcoming, August 2017.

³ *Salâ'*, *Salât*: call for the funeral prayer.

⁴ Lieutenant Hans Woermann was later re-buried in the German Military Cemetery in Tarabya, Istanbul.

⁵ The following paragraphs are based on my chapter in the Walsh and Varnava collection, *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory and Mythology*, with the permission of the editors, who hold copyright; full references are there.

⁶ Jenny Macleod, *Reconsidering Gallipoli*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004, p. 78.

⁷ Brad West & Ayhan Aktar, 'How a more divided Turkey could change the way we think

about Gallipoli', *The Conversation*, 21 April 2017, <https://theconversation.com/how-a-more-divided-turkey-could-change-the-way-we-think-about-gallipoli-74252>, viewed 11 July 2017.

⁸ West & Aktar. For an early Australian report of this phenomenon: Ruth Pollard, 'Islamic rewrite of Gallipoli legend', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 2013, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/islamic-rewrite-of-gallipoli-legend-20130424-2if2m.html>, viewed 11 July 2017.

⁹ Hazret-i Ali, His Grace/Saint Ali: son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, known for his prowess as a warrior.

¹⁰ For an excellent treatment of this myth, see Ian McGibbon, 'A day to remember: the missing regiment', *NZ Sceptics*, no. 52, 1 August 1999, <http://skeptics.nz/journal/issues/52/a-day-to-remember-the-missing-regiment>, viewed 16 July 2017.

¹¹ *Yeni Şafak* (Istanbul), 9 September 2013.

¹² Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2010, especially Chapter 6.

¹³ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, *Sultan Abdülhamid II: My Father (Babam Sultan Abdülhamid)*, Selis, Istanbul, 2008, p. 233.

¹⁴ For background: David Stephens, 'Now that the Atatürk Memorial at Gallipoli is being restored ...some options for President Erdoğan to consider', *Honest History*, 18 June 2017, <http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/stephens-david-now-that-the-aturk-memorial-at-gallipoli-is-being-restored-some-options-for-president-erdogan-to-consider/>, viewed 11 July 2017.

¹⁵ *Yeni Şafak*, 25 April 2011.

¹⁶ *Bugün* (Istanbul), 28 September 2013.

¹⁷ See Robert Fisk, 'The Gallipoli Centenary is a shameful attempt to hide the Armenian Holocaust', *The Independent* (London), 19 January 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/the-gallipoli-centenary-is-a-shameful-attempt-to-hide-the-armenian-holocaust-9988227.html>, viewed 16 July 2017.

¹⁸ David Stephens & Burçin Çakır, 'Myth and history: The persistent "Atatürk words"', David Stephens & Alison Broinowski, ed., *The Honest History Book*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2017, pp. 92-105.