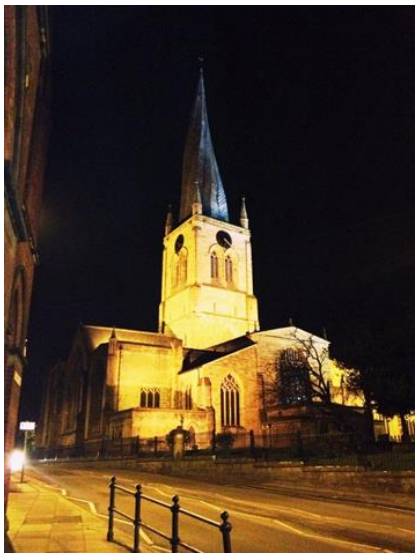
# The Spire Sentinel



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


***ISSUE 74 - April 2022***

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

# Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2022

**Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| January | 4th | .***Branch AGM and Members Evening*** – 3 short presentations by Jon-Paul Harding, Andy Rawson and Grant Cullen |
| February | 1st | ***`Steaming to The Front`- Britain`s Railways in The Great War*** by Grant Cullen |
| March | 1st | ***`They Think It`s all Over`….*** By Andy Rawson . Plenty has been said about the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. This presentation looks at the pursuit of the Germans which occurred during the final weeks of the war. |
| April | 5th | ***Soldiers and Their Horses - Horses and Their Soldiers*** by Dr Jane Flynn - a sympathetic consideration of the soldier - horse relationship 1914-18 |
| May | 3rd | ***`Finding Deborah`*** by Mike Tipping. How the team that discovered tank Deborah D-51 went on to find me, and my journey to Deborah. |
| June | 7th | TBA |
| July | 5th | ***The Italian Front 1915-1918*** by John Chester. Covers the fighting in Italy from beginning to end. Includes the contribution of the British and their part in ending the war. |
| August | 2nd | TBA |
| September | 6th | ***The Inventions Department*** by Richard Godber. A little known part of the Ministry of Munitions. Based upon Richard`s dissertation for his Wolverhampton MA, previously a very under researched area about which little was known. |
| October | 4th | ***`British League of Help`*** by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France. Some of these adoptions lasted only a few years, some (like Sheffield's adoption of Bapaume, Serre and Puisieux) survived until after WW2 |
| November | 1st | ***`Shell Shock and the History of Psychiatry`*** by Jill Brunt. Based upon sessions on this subject presented to students at Northern College, Barnsley |
| December | 1st | TBA |

# *Issue 74 – list of contents + WFA Webinars*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**8 – 38 March 2022 Meeting**
**38 – 60 Gallipoli by Roger Marchant**
**60 -62 The Death Penny**


## April 2022 WFA Webinar (Planned Presentations)

WFA ZOOM MEETINGS for April , but please keep an eye on the Website and Facebook pages as sometimes there are amendments during the month Follow these links for registering (please note dates and times)

18 APR 2022 Kitchener's influence on the war in Africa - Anne Samson http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-kitchener-s-influence-on-the-war-in-africa/

21 APR 2022 The Big Quiz returns for the month of April http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/the-big-quiz-night/

25 APR 2022 The Gallipoli landings: Holding the initiative by Clive Harris http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-the-gallipoli-landings-holding-the-initiative/

For our meeting on Tuesday 5th we have a first time visitor to the Branch, Dr Jane Flynn. She is a teacher, historian, and writer with research interests in myth, memory, national identity, and the visual representation of work and war. She is the author of, Soldiers and their Horses: Sense, Sentimentality and the Soldier-Horse Relationship in The Great War (Routledge:2020). She brings a lifelong passion for horses to her work. All talks are drawn from material included in her book Soldiers and their Horses, including Tuesday`s talk…….

"*Soldiers and their Horses – Horses and their Soldiers*" Sympathetic Consideration and the Soldier-Horse Relationship, 1914-1918. The War Office may only have seen a homogenous mass of men and horses, of numbers killed and the cost of their replacement, but to their 'owners' the horses were as much a part of the life of their units as their fellow men. Many soldiers fervently believed it was their horses to whom they owed their mental and physical survival.

*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,

Seems ages since I produced the last newsletter…indeed it seems a long time since we had our last meeting…but that will be rectified next Tuesday , April 5th when we welcome Dr. Jane Flynn as our guest speaker with her talk "*Soldiers and their Horses - Horses and their Soldiers*" Sympathetic Consideration and the Soldier-Horse Relationship, 1914-1918.

The War Office may only have seen a homogenous mass of men and horses, of numbers killed and the cost of their replacement, but to their 'owners' the horses were as much a part of the life of their units as their fellow men. Many soldiers fervently believed it was their horses to whom they owed their mental and physical survival.

Please look at the list of proposed activities, outings etc that your committee has put together for your consideration . Let me know if you are interested in participating, once we know the numbers we can put things in motion to organise…but we need to know who is interested.

**In addition to our normal raffle at the end of the meeting, I will be having a book sale table again. No fixed prices…take your pick…all we ask is a modest donation to Branch funds …..and don't forget the list of VHS tapes……last chance to acquire or they will have to be disposed of. If you want any of them please let me know and I will get the tape(s) to you**

If you look at the Calendar at the start of this Newsletter you will see that there are still three months to be filled – watch this space. There has been a suggestion from one or two members that we have a members evening in December - maybe more of a social evening with (possibly) a buffet with light refreshments. Members would be invited to talk briefly on their projects, researches, battlefield trips and such like. What`s your thoughts ? It`s YOUR Branch your Committee want what YOU want. Please let me or any of the Committee know your feelings on this.

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

Enjoy this another bumper newsletter

Anyway, that`s all for now,

Grant Cullen Branch Secretary 07824628638

## Committee Meeting - Proposals for 2022

Your Committee met after February`s Branch Meeting and decided to canvas members to gauge support for organising the undernoted branch activities , outings etc.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in any of the undernoted. Funds are available to support these if there is sufficient interest from members.

grantcullen@hotmail.com or 078824628638

- Book Club. Committee decided we should seek to restart this..
- Great Nottinghamshire History Fair – Mansfield 15th May. Branch to attend, sharing stand with WFA East Midlands branch
- 10th WFA President`s Conference, Birmingham, 21st May - members asked to register interest in organising subsidised transport or utilising car sharing.
- Cannock Chase visit. This was postponed from 2020. Look to be rearranged for this year
- November 11th 2022 – trip to London Cenotaph. Detailed planning required. Members asked to register interest in either Branch running a bus or a group train booking.
- WFA AGM & Spring Conference in Leeds. April 9th. Members asked to register interest in organising subsidised transport or car sharing
- Andy Rawson to plan walk / visit around remains of Redmires Camp , Sheffield where the Sheffield City Battalion trained prior to going on active service in WW1. Again, members asked to register interest.

Please let me know A.S.A.P. if you are interested in any of these events and we will plan accordingly….I am aware that some members have already expressed interest - thanks

# 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 |

As mentioned previously the widow of a deceased member of the WFA has kindly donated her late husband`s collection of VHS video tapes – all boxed , all in good condition. Below is the catalogue of tapes – these are available for any member if they would like them…and still have a workable VHS player. All we as a branch seek is a modest donation to branch funds and any postage if applicable

BBC Series `The Great War`. This is  a boxed set of 10 videos of this iconic series.

BBC Series 1914-1918 `The Crucible` - 2 videos

BBC Series 1914-1918 `Total War` - 2 videos

WH Smith Video – The Story of the Great War

WH Smith Video – The Battle of the Somme

WH Smith Video – Life in The Trenches

DD Video – Voices From the Western Front

DD Video – Forgotten Men – Human Experience of WW1

DD Video – Battles of  Vimy Ridge

DD Video – The Tunnellers War

DD Video – Dying at Verdun

DD Video – Pozieres

BBC Video – Haig – The Unknown Soldier

The following tapes are of general military interest – not WW1

DD Video  - Warriors of Naval Aviation

DD Video – Vickers Wellington

DD Video – Warriors of the Night – Fighters and Bombers

Story of the Spitfire

Story of the Lancaster

Story of the Hurricane

Dunkirk

Battle of Britain – 50th anniversary Tribute

Battle of Monte Cassino

Battle of Waterloo

Flying Legends – Duxford

RAF – Camel to Spitfire

RAF – Lancaster to Tornado

So far we have had no interest in these….if no one wants them they will, sadly, have to be disposed of.

# March Meeting

Andy Rawson presented …..*'**They Think It's All Over**'……Plenty has been said about the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. This time Andy s looked at the pursuit of the Germans which occurred during the final weeks of the war."*

There are three phases to the First World War

1) The mobile warfare of the first days of the war

2) The prolonged trench warfare that dominates memory of the conflict

3) The final mobile warfare of what is referred to as the 100 Days

Memory of the final stage revolves around two days: 8 August, the German Army's black day

And 29 September, the crossing of the St Quentin Canal

But I am going to take you on a whistle stop ride of the final 45 days of the war

The Generals

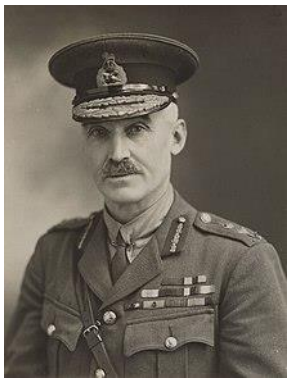
So, here the magnificent seven of the BEF

Field Marshal Douglas Haig at GHQ

General Herbert Lawrence, his chief of staff

Herbert Plumer at 2nd Army,

William Birdwood at Fifth Army,

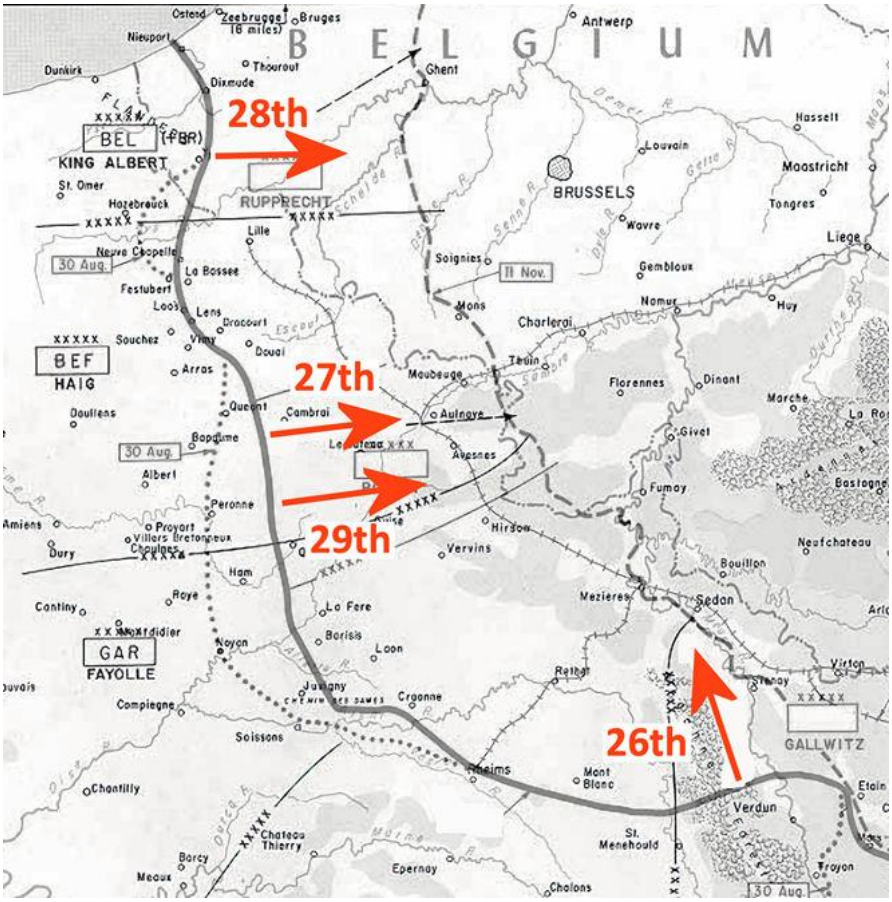


Henry Horne at First Army

Julian Byng at Third Army

Henry Rawlinson at Fourth Army

And that is the order of armies from north to south; 2, 5, 1, 3, 4



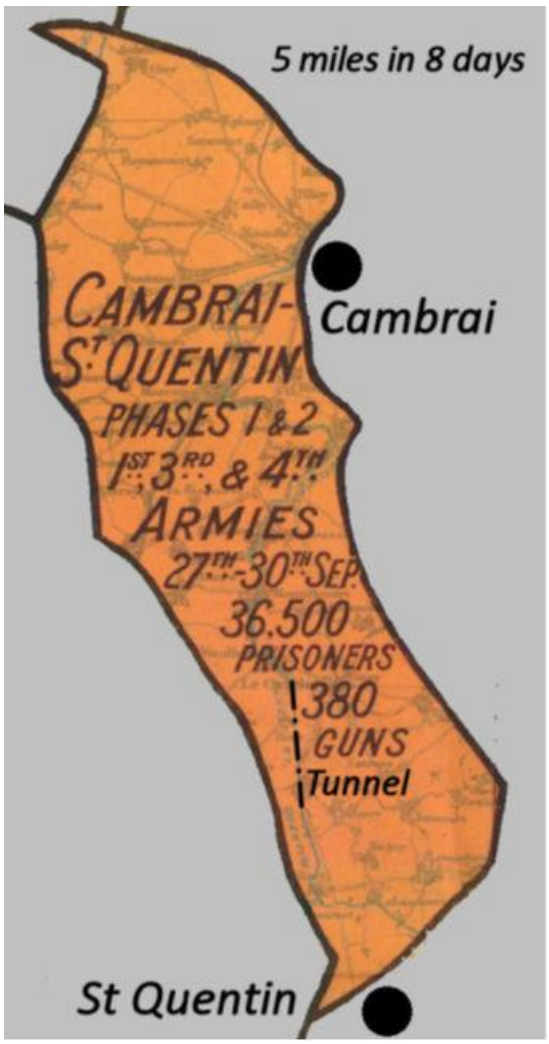

The Allies were planned four great attacks in quick succession towards the end of September

The first began way to the south with the French and Americans starting around the Argonne Forest and the Meuse River on 26 September

First, Third Army began on the BEF's right on 27 September, while Fourth Army carried out a preliminary operation to straighten its line.

Second Army followed up on 28 September.

And Fourth Army made its big push on 29 September




So, we are going to start with First, Third and Fourth Armies push

Through the Hindenburg Line between Cambrai and St Quentin

Canal du Nord

Troops advanced astride the Canal du Nord, so the engineers could bridge it, while others crossed at Sains-lez-Marquion, to secure a flank for the Canadians

But General Julian Byng's main concern was the Marquion Line, northwest of Cambrai. The creeping barrage had layers of shrapnel, high-explosive and smoke. As the Canadians crossed a dry section of the incomplete Canal du Nord, Skirmishers pointed out enemy positions and obstacles to the tank crews and the first wave turned around to take the wet part of the canal from the rear, while the support wave advanced east

Mobile Smoke Screens

Germans withdrew to the Sensée Canal on the left flank the following day, But they clung onto the Douai railway and Schelde Canal on the right flank

While the main struggle continued for the Marcoing Line, north of Cambrai, Where there were problems, a smoke screen failed on one occasion, so tank operated smoke screens were tried

Troops twice had to abandon ground due to poorly place barrage lines and then retake it. While a poorly chosen objective line left troops exposed when it was light on another occasion, but the Canadians persevered, sparking a withdrawal on First Army's left flank on 2 October.

## Hindenburg Line

Third Army faced the masses of wire and tank traps covering the Hindenburg Line
Again, tanks and troops crossed dry sections of the Canal du Nord
The Germans used the lie of the land to slow the advance down which included Highland, Trescault, Welsh and Bonvais Ridges
They even made two counter-attacks which captured large numbers of prisoners
The land and the weather made it difficult to coordinate at times
Sometimes the troops did not see the flares they used to control the advance and the supporting barrage sometimes stopped the advance

Artillery crashes were relied on instead suppress strong points
That is where a number of guns were on standby with a list of likely targets
The target code was given and the guns hit it hard
A far more efficient and easier way to use artillery

After three days Third Army reached the Escaut Canal

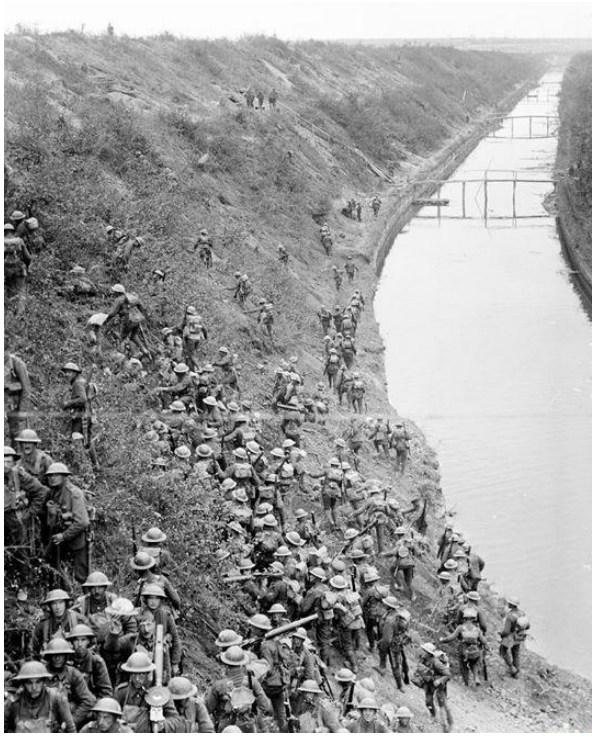
**Escaut Canal**

A rushed attempt to cross the canal around Marcoing was shot to pieces
So, the troops crossed when it was dark or foggy instead
An aqueduct was used to establish a bridgehead
But either artillery fire or the weight of traffic collapsed all the temporary bridges
This delayed the attack against the Marcoing Line until 30 September,giving the Germans time to dig in south of Cambrai. German resolve was broken when New Zealand troops crossed around Crèvecoeur,where the canal ran through a deep

cutting. The Germans then abandoned the canal line And fell back to the Hindenburg Support Line on the night of 4 October.

## Bellicourt Tunnel

Now Fourth Army's turn and General Henry Rawlinson had to make a preliminary attack to straighten his line and get his left flank closer to the Hindenburg Line
American troops took over the line facing the Bellicourt tunnel
Now we must remember that the Americans were inexperienced troops but each division was double the size of a British division
The barrage hit the St Quentin Canal area on 27 September and the guns were firing
British made mustard gas shells for the first time. They had been using captured German shells up until now
The Americans became disorientated in the mist and the tanks were knocked out when it cleared
Aerial observers spotted the Americans had not advanced far enough
But it was too late to change the barrage for 29 September
Zero hour had to be brought forward as the shells exploded far ahead of the Americans who again struggled through the mist and lost more tanks
But they still cleared the Hindenburg Line, taking many prisoners inside the Bellicourt tunnel. The Australians advanced, unaware of the delay, but they soon reached the tunnel embankment



Then there is the well-known story of 46th Division crossing the St Quentin Canal cutting.They took captured many prisoners in the tunnel before tunnellers disarmed the explosives inside

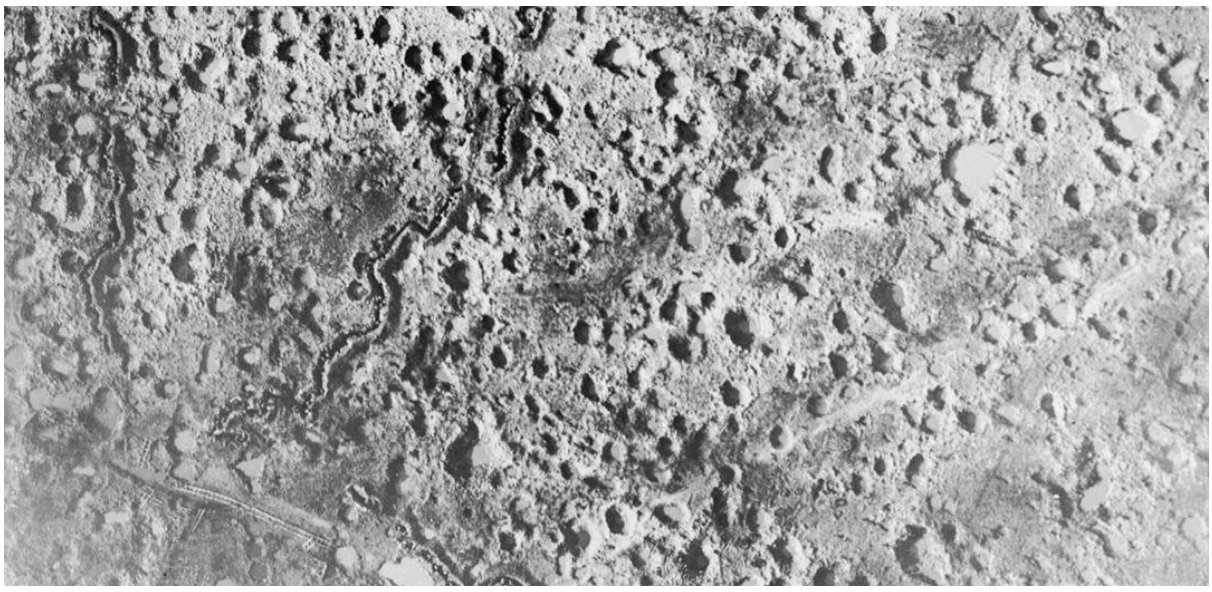
British troops also crossed the canal around Bellenglise and cleared the Hindenburg Support Line

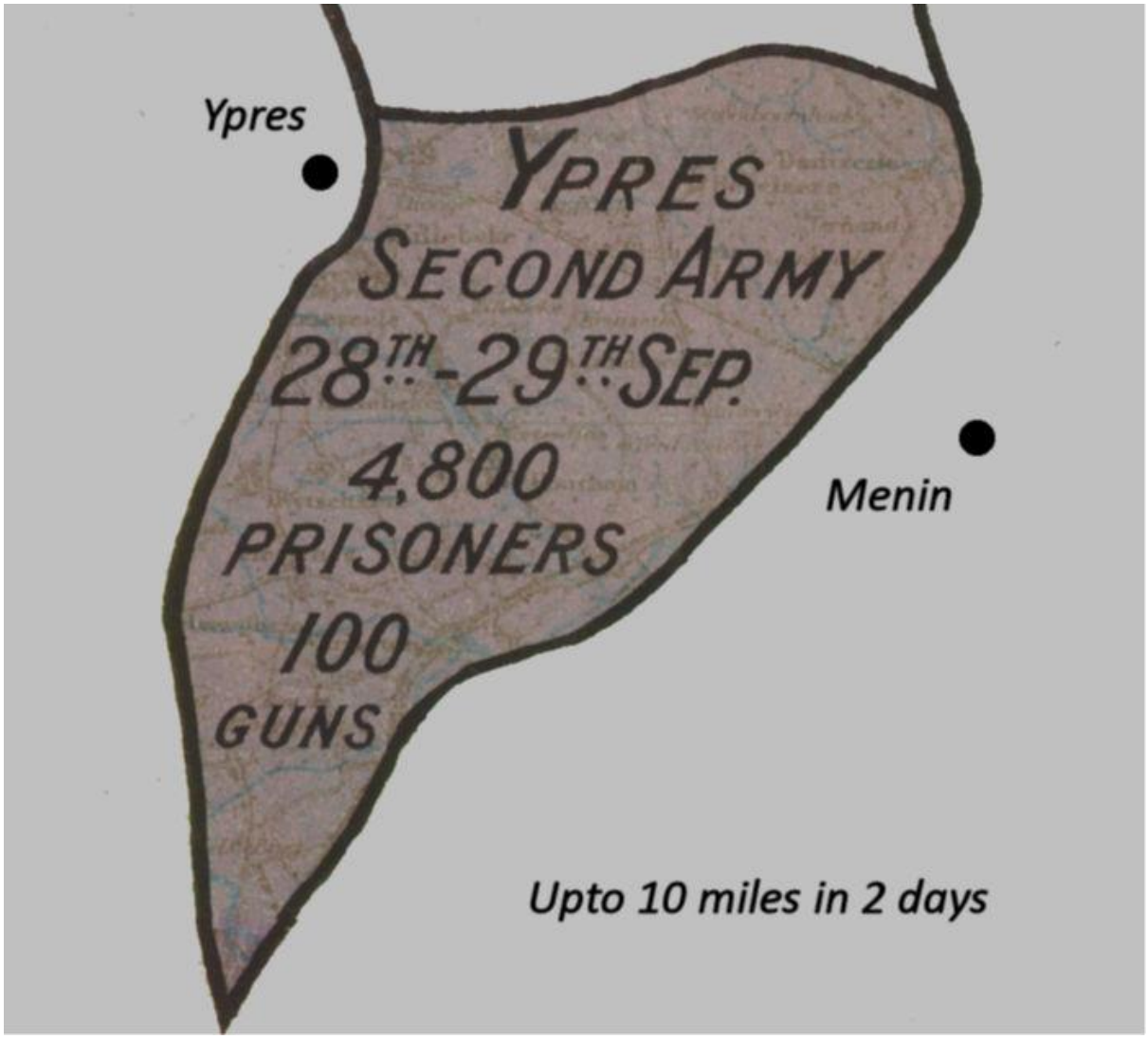
The Australians bombed their way into the Hindenburg Support Line on 30 September While British troops encountered little resistance

There was rather more in the Hindenburg Reserve Line or Beaurevoir Line on 1 and 2 October But they found that many German trenches did not exist. By 4 October Fourth Army was beyond the Hindenburg Line

Second Army Beginning 28 September to 1 October: Ypres to the Lys
Dawn Attacks
Now let us look to the north, where Second Army faced the Ypres Salient and Messines Ridge
The guns opened fire just a few minutes before zero hour, warning the infantry to deploy, and the barrage crept forward at dawn, when it was light enough for the infantry to keep order but too dark for the German machine gun teams to aim. Different flares reported progress to contact planes and controlled the speed of the barrage.The field batteries leapfrogged forward providing a covering barrage for the infantry. Switched to pre-determined targets after 2-miles

The Crater Field - The Germans struggled to defend the Ypres Salient because it was such a mess




Ypres
YPRES
SECOND ARMY
28TH-29TH SEP.
4,800
PRISONERS
100
GUNS
Menin
Upto 10 miles in 2 days

2nd Army

There was more tough resistance in the Gheluwe Line and the Flanders II Line

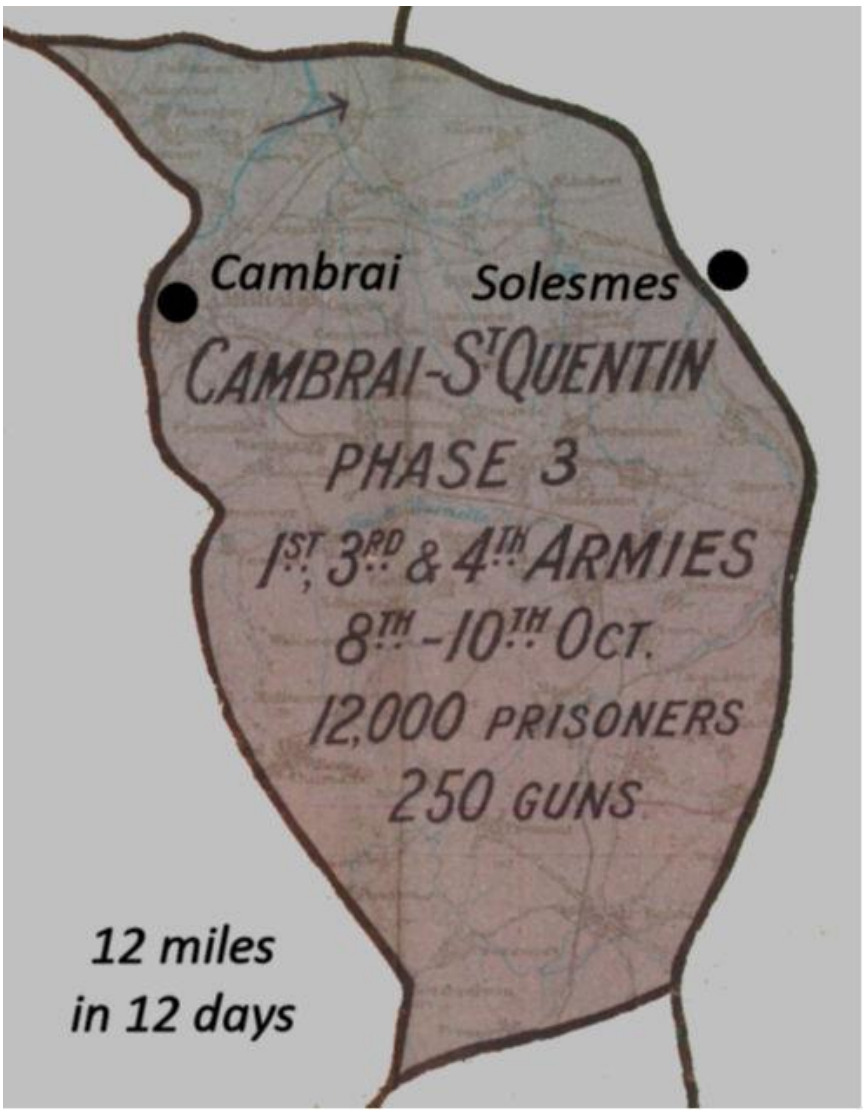
And the Germans insisted on holding Hill 41 until everyone had withdrawn across the Lys

They also had rearguards holding the suburbs of Menin, Wervicq and Comines, on the west bank

One-by-one they withdrew, blowing the bridges, after the last troops had crossed

Second Army would regroup, rest and bring up its supply lines

While waiting for events to the south to unfold




**Fifth Army**

Fifth Army had a much easier time of it

The Germans simply withdrew across the Haute Deule Canal on 2 October

In response to the successes to the north and south

So, by 4 October the BEF was beyond the Hindenburg Line

And Haig could at last tell his army commanders to prepare for open warfare

Hindenburg and Ludendorff called for immediate armistice during a Council of War

**First Army: 8 to 15 October: Schelde to the Selle**

Now let us turn back to First Army's advance

The Rouvroy-Fresnes Line and part of the Drocourt-Quéant Line were taken on 8 October

And the Haute Deule Canal was reached

But General Horne had to stop his left flank, while his right flank led the way

**Cambrai**

We shall see how Third Army attacked south of Cambrai on 8 October, in a few minutes

But the Canadians attacked north of the town the following day

Sparking a German withdrawal, which stopped them burning the town down

Plans to make an assault crossing of the Sensée Canal were called off

Because prisoners said the Germans about to withdraw

While there was a rapid advance to the Selle east of Cambrai

In fact, too rapid because an attempt to cross the stream on 12 October ended in disaster

Because the artillery had not had time to register its targets

While the infantry had not had time to locate the German machine gun posts

So, it was time to regroup

**Third Army: South of Cambrai: 8 and 9 October**

As stated, Third Army cleared the Beaurevoir Line on 8 October

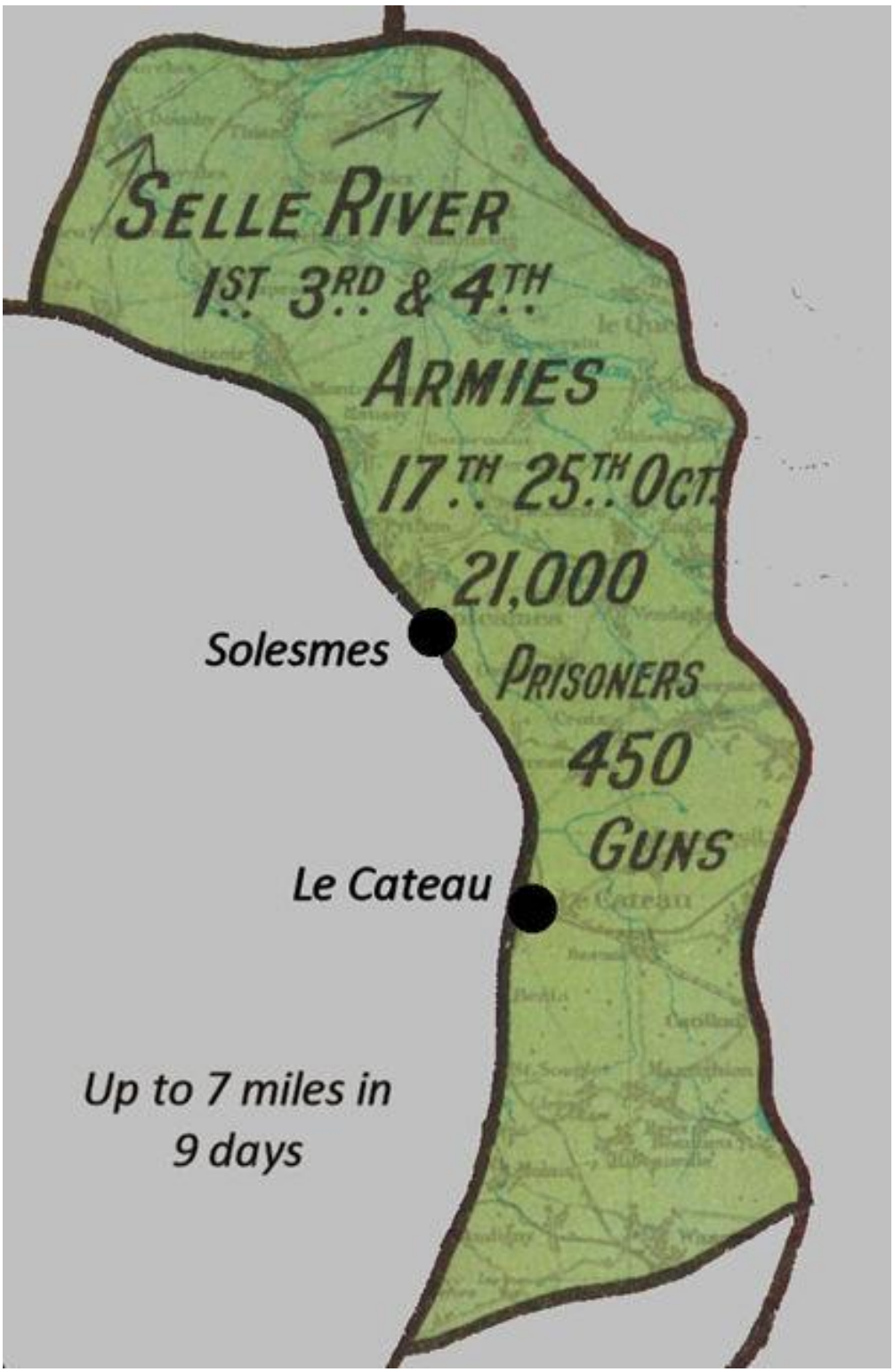
As smoke hid a burning Cambrai

The advance then entered open country, in what General Julian Byng called ‘a full-dress attack’

Caudry, on the Le Cateau road, had to be bypassed because it was full of civilians

While Tricolours hanging from window in other village was a sign the Germans had left

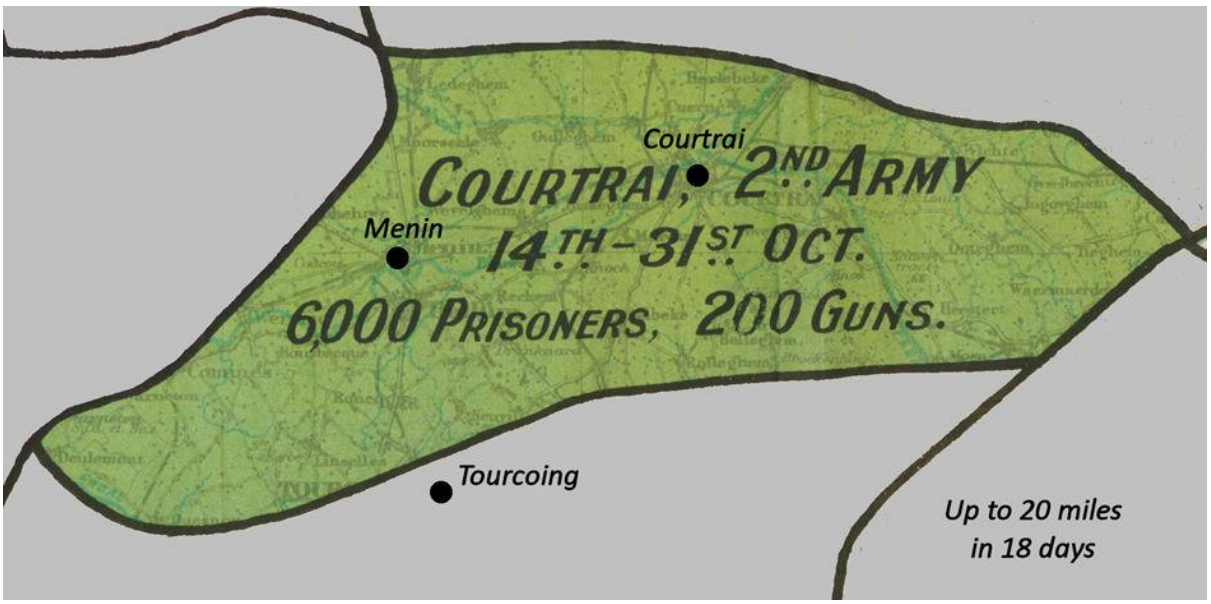
The French were also happy to remove roadblocks and fill in craters for their liberators




## First, Third and Fourth Armies Second and Fifth Armies Continue

## 14 to 16 October: Across the Lys


Selle Stream




Second Army eventually crossed in force on 14 October
The infantry paddled across on small boats
Boards were nailed planks to make rafts to carry the artillery and supplies across
And then bridges were made from duckboards tied to barges
Men even formed a human chain across the ruins of a bridge, to hand ball ammunition across
Second Army was across the Lys in force by 16 October
But the town of Courtrai was a concern
So, an officer who had lived there before the war swam crossed the river
Returned with news that the Belgians said the Germans had withdrawn
So, the artillery fired smoke to cover the river
While pontoons delivered infantry to nearby open country
The crossing was delayed because artillery fire destroyed the first bridge

Courtrai was finally entered on 19 October to the sound of cheers

The La Basse Deule and Roubaix Canals were crossed

And there were more cheers as Tourcoing was liberated

General Plumer then ordered a general pursuit to the River Schelde

After a German messenger carrying orders to retire had been captured

The first troops reached the Schelde at dawn on 21 October

A German rearguard again held onto a low ridge, this time between Anseghem and Ingoyghem

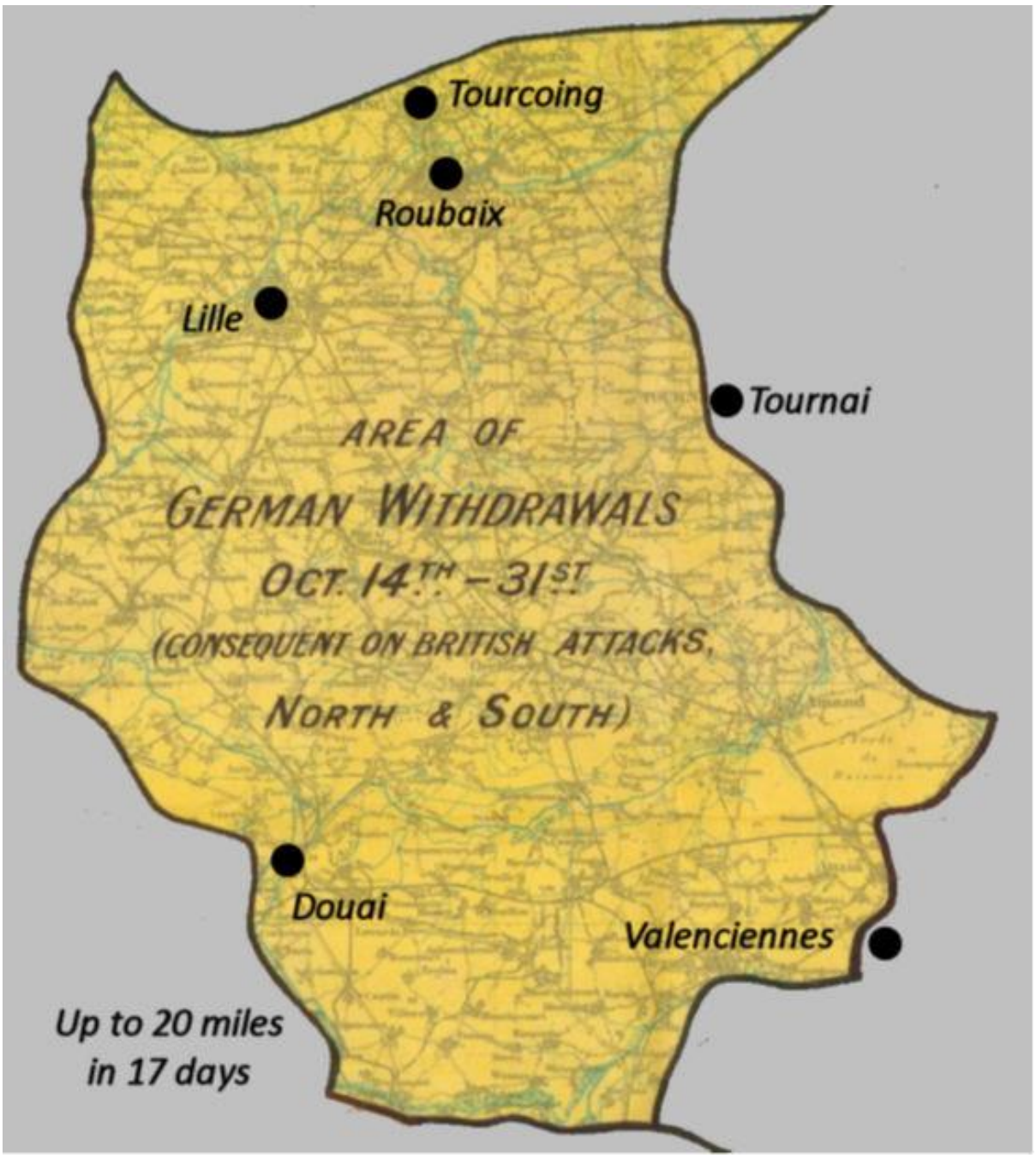
Until everyone was across on 25 October

Second Army could then close with the canal with the help of twenty French tanks

Because the few British ones still running, were to the south

Plumer once again faced a watercourse running at an angle to its front

Even so, a bridgehead had been established around Warcoing on 27 October



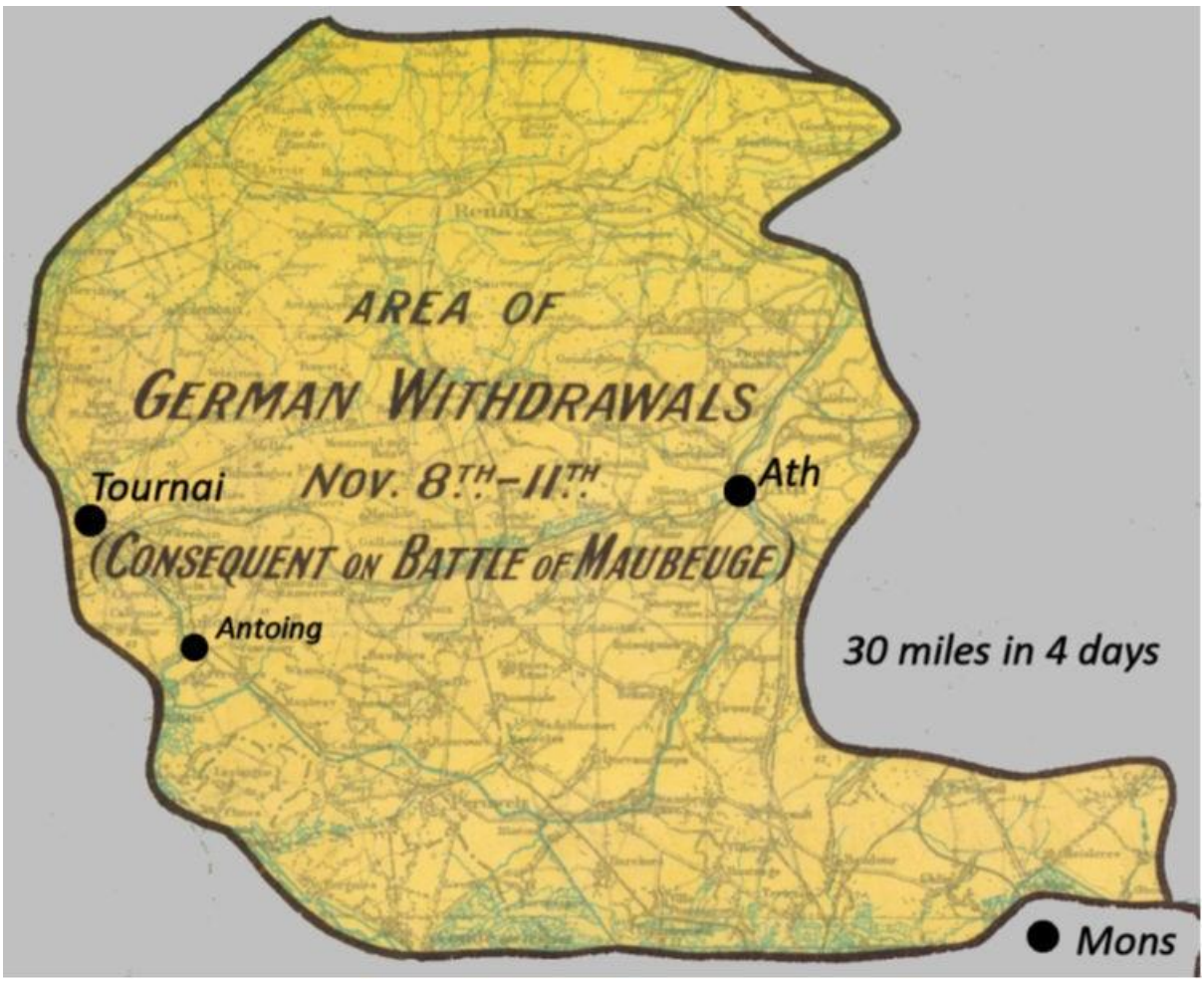

**Fifth Army and First Army's Left: Haute Deule Canal to Schelde Canal: 15 to 16 October**

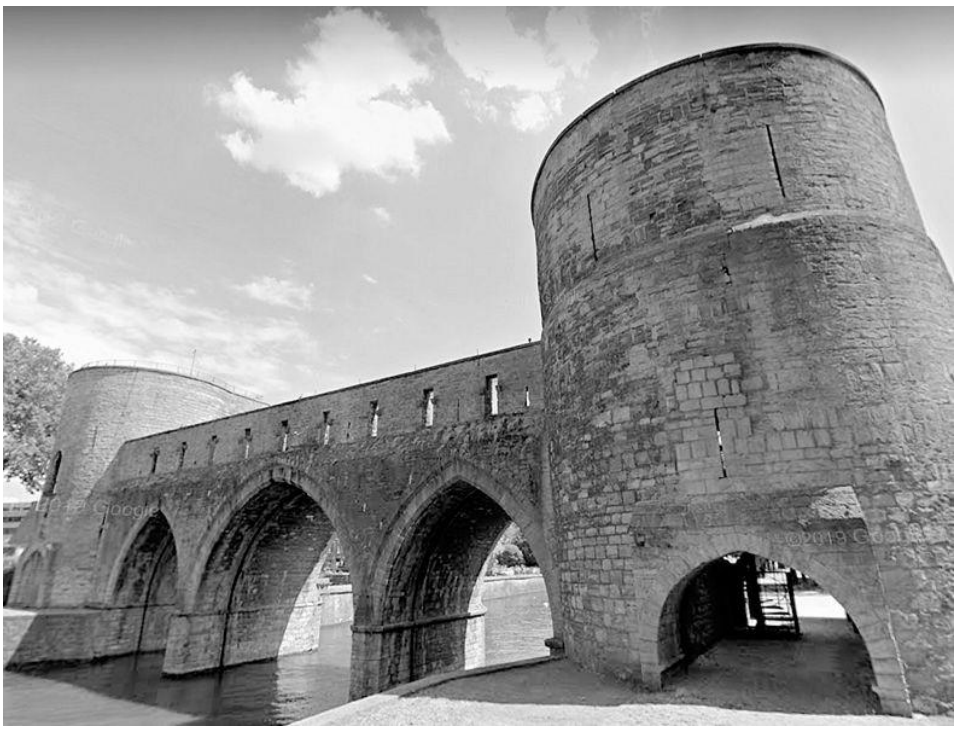
**Lille liberated**

It was the same story for First Army when it entered Douai

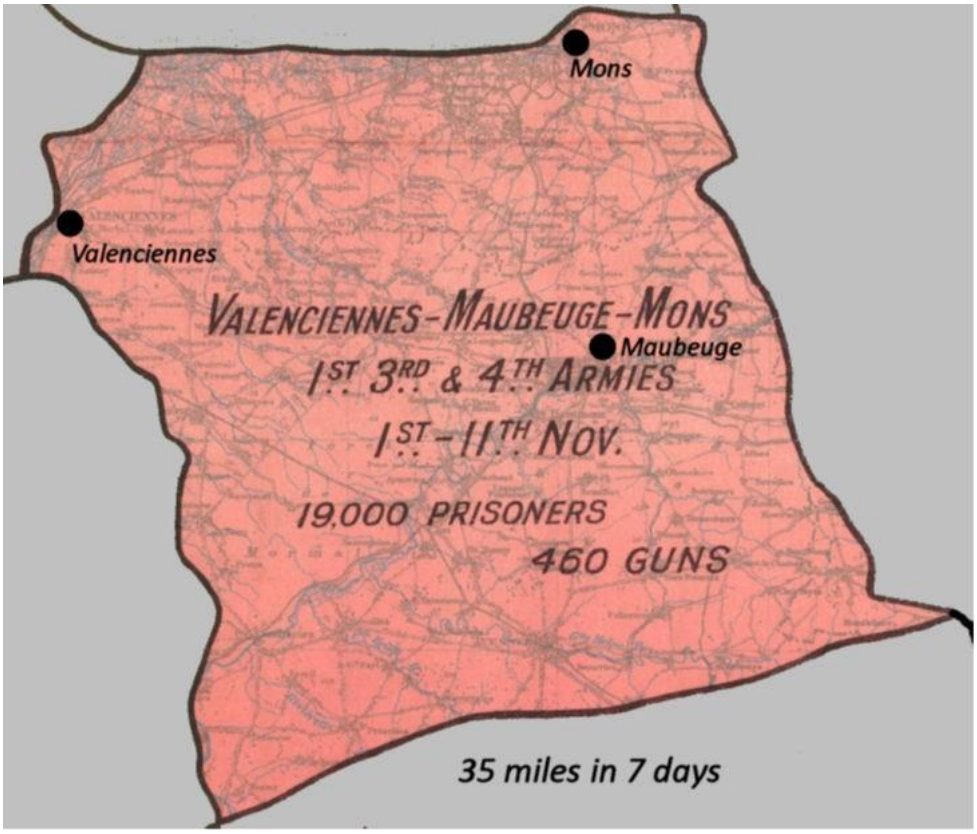
The advancing troops were met by French civilians, waving Tricolours and shouting ‘Vive la France’

But many were sick and they were all hungry Because the Germans had left them short of food or medicine Presumably, so they would be a burden on the BEF’s supplies


AREA OF
GERMAN WITHDRAWALS
NOV. 8TH–11TH
(CONSEQUENT ON BATTLE OF MAUBEUGE)
Tournai
Ath
Antoing
30 miles in 4 days
Mons



The early 18th century fortress called Maubeuge was the next problem.And it was taking time to clear the outlying forts



**Wanton Destruction**

Gathering thousands of civilians in Valenciennes while they blew up military targets

So, General Horne attacked south of the town on 1 November, behind a heavy artillery barrage

Canadian troops crossed the Schelde while British troops crossed the Rhonelle stream

There was fierce fighting around Marly steelworks, south of the town

But the Germans surrendered elsewhere

And while Valenciennes was liberated without a fight, there had been widespread destruction

**Le Quesnoy to Maubeuge, 4-11 November**

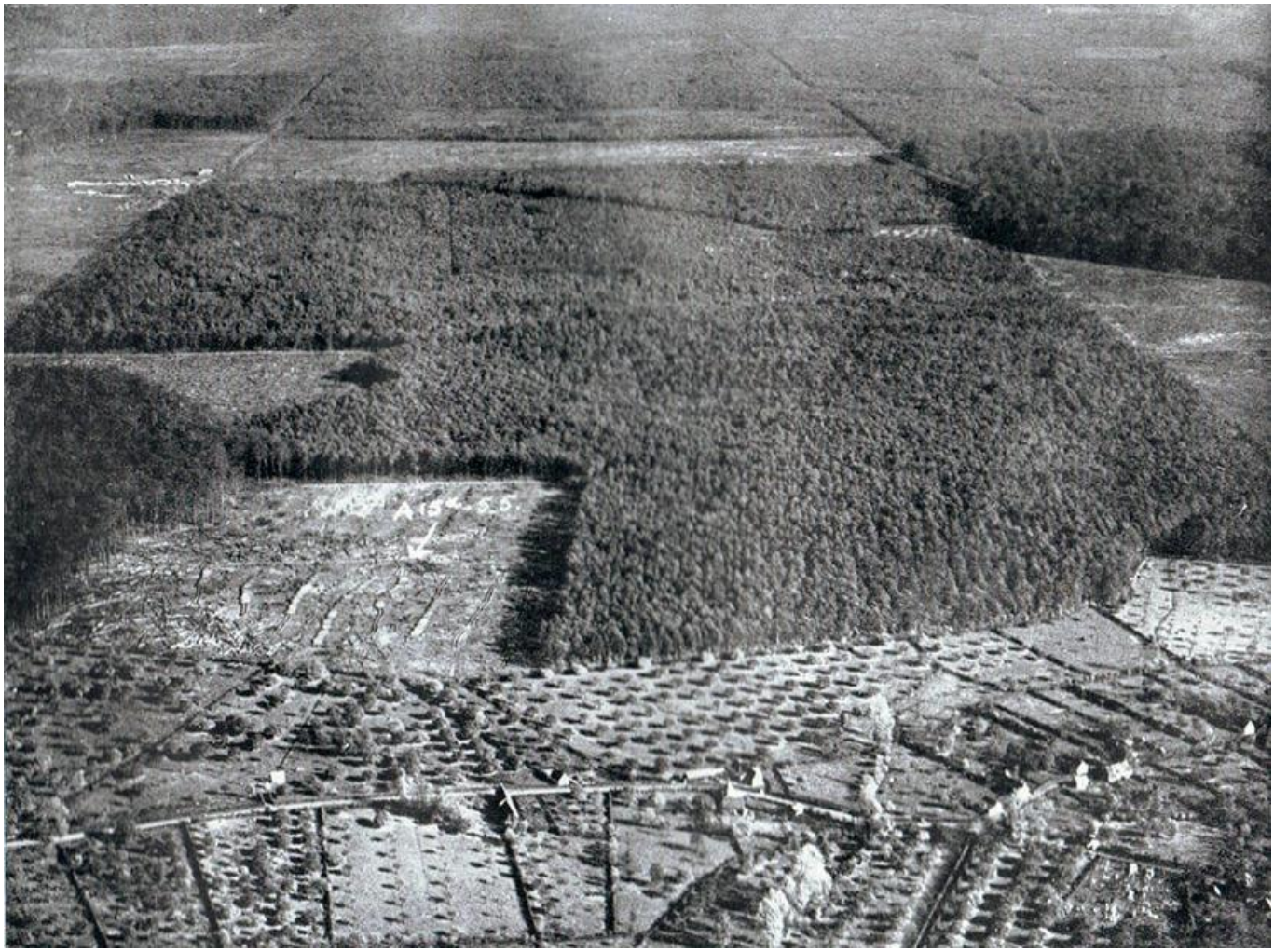
**Le Quesnoy**

Third Army faced the ancient fortress of Le Quesnoy was civilians from the outlying villages

So, burning oil and smoke smothered the town ramparts early on 4 November

And then the New Zealanders scaled the walls, while trench mortars sent the Germans underground

The prisoners were then put to work stopping the fires and disarming booby-traps

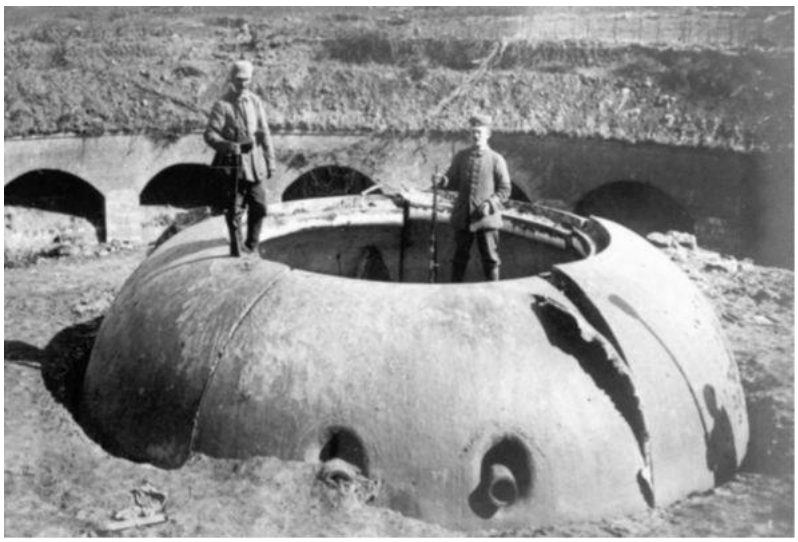


The Mormal Forest came next

Burning oil and smoke blinded the Germans holding Louvignies and Englefontaine

While tanks tore holes through the hedges laced with barbed wire

So, the infantry followed the tanks down the fire breaks



**Maubeuge**

The early 18th century fortress called Maubeuge was the next problem

And it was taking time to clear the outlying forts

Until a captured order made it clear the town was being abandoned

So, the troops bypassed the forts

The advance continued until the Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918

**The Sambre Super Seven** It had been a fierce battle and while you knew of Owen, did you know of these brave men? No less than seven Victoria Crosses were awarded for crossing the Sambre.With the canal line lost, the Germans withdrew as fast as they could.Blowing bridges over streams as soon as the last man was over.The British soldiers scrambled, waded or paddled across.But it still took time to get the tanks, artillery and cavalry across.Germans stopped briefly on the high ground around Avesnes on 8 November.And then withdrew across the Belgian border.

**The Final Hours** So, how did the men feel during the final hours of the war? Some had no desire put their lives in danger, knowing that the fighting was about to end.Others wanted to kill as many Germans before the guns fell silent.Canadian troops reached St Symphorien village, to the south-east on Mons

Where the BEF had fought its first battle on 23 August 1914

**George Price**

And at two minutes before the Armistice Private George Price breathed his last He had been shot by a sniper in Ville-sur-Haine

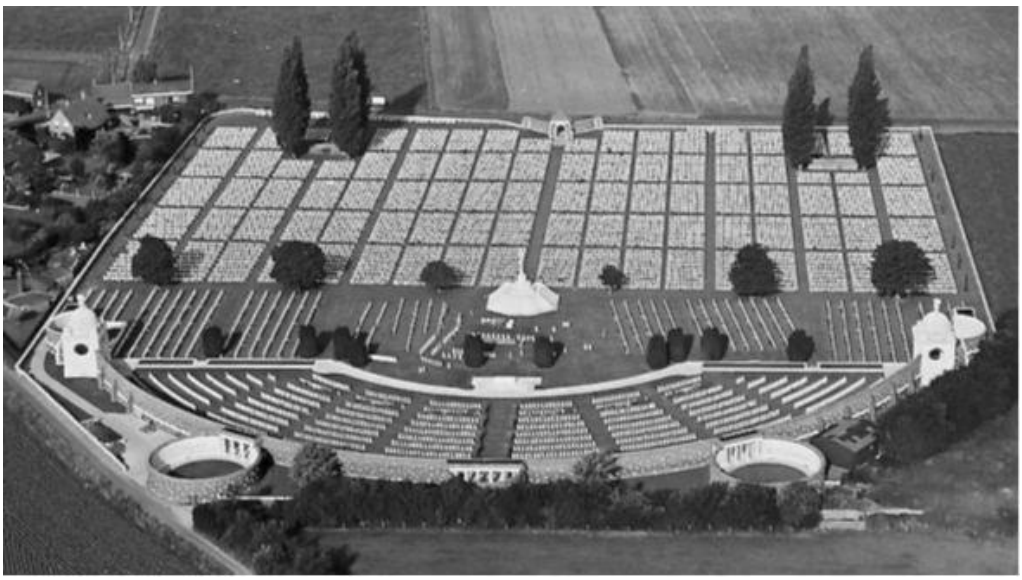
He was the last fatal casualty

Generally, the news of the Armistice was greeted calmly on the morning of 11 November.Some men were apathetic and others were disappointed.They had wanted pursue the Germans into Germany.Some cheered and some were excited; a few even burst into tears.Everyone was too tired to take the news in.They all believed it was just too good to be true.My favourite Armistice story was told by South Africans.A German fired his machine gun right up to 11 o'clock.Then stood up, doffed his helmet, took a bow and walked away

**The Spoils of War**

The numbers of prisoners and guns taken in the 100 Days speaks for itself

385,500 men and 6615 guns



**The Casualties**

The casualty rate during the final 45 days was horrendous at 70 percent higher than The Somme 1916 daily rate. Why so? Well, there was only one British army fighting on the Somme on a front As narrow as 5 miles, for most of the time

There were up to five armies fighting on a front up to 80 miles wide in the autumn of 1918

**They Think It's All Over**

And finally, there was one final battle to face; that was the one against Spanish flu

It had become a factor during the final weeks of the war

Because the soldiers were living outside, in cold, wet clothing

Leaving all units on both sides short of men due to sickness

Why did the Spanish get the blame?

Because it was neutral and the countries at war were on a bad news blackout

If the war had killed 20 million in four years

The pandemic would kill twice as many in half that time

They think it’s all over? It is now.

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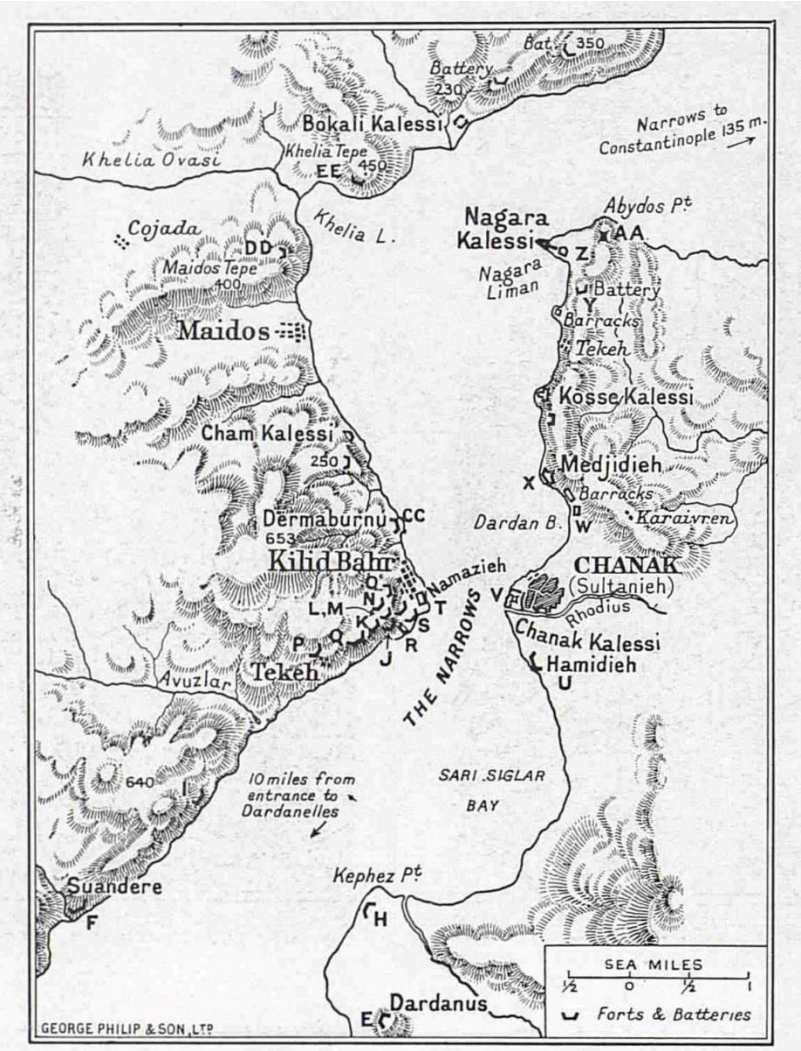
GALLIPOLI




THE STRAIT GATE TO CONSTANTINOPLE: THE NARROWS IN THE DARDANELLES—SHOWING FORTS NEAR KILID BAHR BOMBARDED BY THE "QUEEN ELIZABETH" AFTER SHE ENTERED THE STRAITS.

# Gallipoli

*Generally, the commander must thoroughly acquaint himself beforehand with the maps so that he knows the dangerous places, the passes in famous mountains, the location of highlands and hills, road distances and the size of cities and towns. All this must be known, as well as the way boundaries run in and out. All these facts the generals must store in his mind only then will he not lose advantage of the ground* - VII.11 Tu Mu, in Sun Tzu's 'The Art of Modern Warfare', c.400 BCE.

*The Dardanelles and Bosporus might be on the moon for all the military information I have got to go upon* - General Sir Ian Hamilton, diary entry, 1915[i].

In November 1914[ii] the polyglot and declining Turkish Ottoman Empire, once the world's greatest Islamic power, abandoned its stance of ambivalent neutrality towards the warring parties and became a reluctant belligerent in the conflict, joining Germany and Austro-Hungary to form the Central Powers. Not that Turkey could do much in support of those countries; her parlous economic state had made her a mendicant nation and it had been to Germany that she turned. Encouraged by a large German loan (reinforced by the threat of direct attack on Turkish ships by the German battle cruiser SMS Goeben[iii]), the Sultan was persuaded to declare a military Jihad, holy war, against infidels, excluding German Protestants of course.

Part Europe, part Asia, Turkey is divided by the Dardanelles, a strip of water running from the Aegean Sea northeast into the Sea of Marmora, which via the Bosporus provides the entrance to the Black Sea. The most constricted point along the Dardanelles is 'The Narrows', *Hellespont* of ancient days, something less than two kilometres wide (in 1810 Lord Byron, a strong swimmer, crossed in seventy minutes)[iv]. The old Greek legend has Leander swimming across it every night - well, many times - to meet his lover, Hero. That story ended in tears, too.[v]

The sea lanes along the Dardanelles are the only shipping routes into the Black Sea and its Russian ports. They have always been amongst the busiest in the world, a fact that at the beginning of the 20th century was emphasised by two things the Suez Canal[vi] and the ever-increasing need for oil. So by 1915 the Treaty of Berlin, which in 1878 decreed that no foreign man-of-war enter the straits without the permission of Turkey, had assumed even greater relevance.

In the years running up to WWI, a prime concern for Britain was that all the Great Powers were in the slow process of upgrading their warships from coal to diesel power. Even in the ultra conservative armies of the period the internal combustion engine was slowly becoming accepted as a replacement for the dray horse.[vii] Thus, in addition to protecting the Suez Canal's short cut from the east, Britain's Grand Strategy demanded the security of Persia (Iran), where she had been granted a 70-year monopoly for the exploitation of vast reserves of crude oil. And Turkey, 'sick man of Europe' though she might have been called, was as an arrow aimed at each of these vital assets.

Other factors that at the beginning of 1915 compelled Britain to consider armed intervention in the area included the need to assist Russia;[viii] a bloody-nosed but still restless and powerful Austro-Hungary; and the presence in Turkey of a host of German military advisors, headed by the German Field Marshal Liman von Sanders.[ix] All this was exacerbated by worries about the development of a powerful German Grand Fleet, accompanied by the widening of the Kiel Canal to allow German warships quick access from the Baltic to the North Sea. This continuing increase in German naval strength, which began during the Boer War and became the object of the Kaiser's deep desire, was a defensive strategy following the launch by Britain in 1906 of HMS *Dreadnought*, the battleship that made all other capital ships obsolete.

On the Western Front there were many thousands of casualties but not much in the way of movement. The first battle of Ypres (October - November 1914) then the Allied failure to penetrate the German lines in the great battles of Neuve Chapelle[x] and in the French Champagne district[xi] had signalled the end of military mobility in that theatre of operations. The optimistic German military philosophy 'the actions of the infantry must be dominated by this one thought forward on the enemy, cost what it may…uninterrupted forward movement and the desire to get ahead of its neighbours should animate all units in attack'[xii] foundered in mud and shell craters. For the remainder of the war opposing armies on the Western Front were paralysed by the total ascendancy of defence over offence, expressed by barbed wire, entrenchments, minefields and machine gun emplacements. Deadlock over every battle sector in Western Europe made it obvious that the conflict there would be long drawn out. From the Swiss frontier northwards, fortified lines extended via the Vosges, the hills of the Meuse, the Argonne and the Chemin des Dames to the Aisne, up to Armentieres and around the Ypres salient to reach the sand dunes of the North Sea. Virtually the whole of Belgium and a tenth of metropolitan France, including the main French coal-fields, were behind the German trenches and would remain so for the duration of the war.

During all this, First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Spencer Churchill was engaged in extended dithering between two possible new theatres of operation for his navy.

Uppermost in his mind had been the Baltic where, costly though it might be, naval action could relieve pressure upon the Entente stuck in the trenches of France and Belgium. Churchill tried hard to persuade Admiral Fisher[xiii] that aggression could be decisive, although not by the First Sea Lord's plan of 'sowing the North Sea with mines on such a scale that naval operations in it would be impossible'.[xiv] (Admiral Jellicoe[xv] had admitted that Britain had not one hundredth part of the mines necessary for such a scheme).[xvi] Churchill's tactics were different

> *You must take an island [e.g. Borkum] and block them in…or you must break the Kiel locks or you must cripple their fleet in general action. No scattering of mines will be any substitute for these alternatives. The Baltic is the only theatre on which naval action can appreciably shorten the war.*[xvii]

Then he changed his mind, having come to believe that the alternative - the eastern Mediterranean - offered an opportunity for show of maritime force which in a *coup de main* might persuade the peasant nation Turkey to

give up any allegiance to the Central Powers, thus opening up the Dardanelles and offering the Army a back door through which to attack Germany. Churchill was always somewhat of a chancer so he sought through Fisher the opinion of Admiral Slade on the 'possibility & advisability' of bombarding the Turkish sea face forts of the Dardanelles. The response was pessimistic:

> *A bombardment of the sea face of the Dardanelles offers very little prospect of obtaining any effect commensurate with the risk to the ships. The forts are difficult to locate from the sea at anything like the range at which they will have to be engaged. The guns in the forts at the entrance are old Krupp and would be probably outranged by the fleet, but it is not known where the new Krupp 16.5" guns, said to have been mounted by the Germans, are situated. It may be possible to make a demonstration to draw the fire of these guns and make them disclose themselves, trusting to lack of training of the gunners - but it would not be advisable to risk serious damage to any of the battle cruisers as long as the Goeben is effective. A little target practice from 15 to 12 thousand yards might be useful.*[xviii]

Armed with this lukewarm naval advice Churchill went ahead. On 3rd November 1914 he launched a premature and fatuous naval bombardment of the Turkish coast as a petulant reprisal against that country for allowing *Goeben* and its attendant cruiser *Breslau* to escape into their waters. The First Lord had in effect commenced his own private hostilities against Turkey *before* the official declaration of war.[xix]

Then, on the 7th January 1915, he received momentous news that told him a window of opportunity might just have opened. A telegram from the French Navy Attaché in Paris reported that the *Goeben* had run into Russian mines near the Bosporus, sustaining damage serious enough to put her out of commission for more than two months. The information was correct the enemy's naval defence of the Dardanelles sea lanes had been reduced to a motley collection of largely obsolete vessels.[xx]

As far back as March 1911 Churchill himself had written in a Cabinet memorandum that any action in the theatre should be naval only, but had added this caveat 'It should be remembered that it is no longer possible to force the Dardanelles and nobody would expose a modern fleet to such a peril'.[xxi]

Even as late as June 1914 the shadowy Admiral Mark Kerr, RN, seconded as titular head of the Greek navy, had reported to his Minister of Marine that 'the British fleet, backed by all the navies of the world, cannot force the passage of the Dardanelles. This must be a military operation, assisted by the Navy'.[xxii]

This opinion, later repeated to Churchill, was justified the emphasis of the Turco-German defences of the Dardanelles had been altered; mines were adopted as the primary weapon, with the guns on both coastlines defending the minefields. It was this decision which would eventually seal the fate of the whole Dardanelles Expedition.[xxiii]

There was plenty of evidence that the Dardanelles was something rather more than just a hard nut to crack.

But by 1915 Turkey was fighting as part of the Central Powers, who had stormed through Belgium in a *blitzkrieg* that had been facilitated by the massive Skoda howitzers of the German siege train smashing the forts at Liège and Namur. This achievement led the First Lord of the Admiralty to think that the Royal Navy, unopposed by the *Goeben*, might be capable of the same sort of thing against Turkey. Safe in the knowledge that neither Lord Kitchener[xxiv] nor the *Goeben* could interfere, Churchill realised that any time from early January to late March he could have an Allied naval force proceed from the Aegean to the Turkish capital Constantinople (Istanbul) and by threat of or actual bombardment blackmail the Ottoman government into submission. What he did *not* know was that, according to Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador at Constantinople, 85% of the German sailors including, presumably, their gunnery officers, had been seconded to the coastal forts.[xxv]

Churchill has been widely reviled as the moving force behind the 1915 Gallipoli debacle that resulted in a comprehensive Allied defeat at the hands of the Turkish army. Well, he was and he wasn't. A romantic, he had become fatally seduced by the allure of an ancient battlefield but in essence it was not his own plan he had hijacked the naval operation from Fisher[xxvi] at a rather confused meeting of the War Council on 13th January. There, a degree of preoccupation on the part of Prime Minister Asquith (he was paying more attention to a letter to Venetia Stanley)[xxvii] might have resulted in him acceding to the plan for the fleet to reduce piecemeal the Turkish forts along the Dardanelles.[xxviii] But at that meeting Asquith was deliberately vague in his conclusions relating to the Admiralty. From first directing the Navy, without supporting troops, to 'prepare to bombard and take the Gallipoli peninsula' he ended by merely suggesting that 'if the Western Front descended further into stalemate British troops should be despatched to another theatre and objective, and that adequate investigation and preparation should be undertaken ['for a Gallipoli adventure', although that was never enunciated]'.[xxix]

The First Sea Lord enjoyed what might be described as a love-hate relationship with his First Lord. Thus, Fisher left the field open to Churchill, perhaps feeling that failure against Turkey was inevitable and that it would bring about the downfall of his political master and rival, leaving the naval war to be directed by him alone.[xxx] After all, as he argued a few days later,

> *"our [Navy's] proper plan is to blockade Germany and adjoining neutral countries. That is the way to end the war. That is what Nelson would have done. This war requires [but] one man to manage it…*[xxxi] "

while also believing that

> *The first function of the British Army is to assist the fleet in obtaining command of the sea…[B]eing in possession of all that a powerful fleet can give a country, we should quietly* continue to enjoy the advantage *without dissipating our strength in operations that cannot improve the situation [i.e. secondary theatres of war].*[xxxii]

Swayed by the tides of opportunity, circumstance and personality, both Churchill and Fisher were casting about for a starring role, supported somewhat unconstitutionally by Colonel Maurice Hankey (he was merely Secretary to the War Council). As Geoffrey Miller delightfully puts it in *Straits*,

`If Fisher put his key in the ignition, while Hankey had his hands on the wheel it was Churchill's foot on the accelerator; but the vehicle they were now all travelling in was unusual in one respect. It had no brake'. The case for intervention in the eastern Mediterranean, with or without soldiers, was taking on an inexorable momentum. [xxxiii]

Taking all this into account, the hubris that ruined the desperate invasion of Gallipoli was not fuelled by Churchill's perfervid imagination alone nor by the fact that, having not really done very well to date,[xxxiv] he desperately needed a victory to compete with Fisher, who in the person of Admiral Sturdee, had triumphed at the Falkland Islands on 8th December 1914.[xxxv]

And there was nothing new about the idea of forcing the Dardanelles and menacing the capital of Turkey. The British Army's General Staff had met in conference in on several occasions pre-1914 specifically to discuss matters that might impinge upon Britain's interests in the region.[xxxvi] Dominant on the agenda for the 1906 meeting was the failing Ottoman Empire and the resulting fault lines that were rapidly developing in national relationships. Even then, eight years before WWI, it was recognised that the territories ranging from the Black Sea to Persia, for centuries the cause of much heart-searching on the part of various powers, were assuming even greater importance.

Many senior Army officers were classicists by education and, apart from being plucky and adventury, could undoubtedly quote the fights historical from Marathon to Waterloo (in order categorical) even if their military knowledge had only been brought down to the beginning of the century. They were therefore well aware that from antiquity any martial gain in the Dardanelles region had been achieved at great expense and many had been the defeats suffered by importunate intruders. Thus the 1906 *Memorandum by the General Staff on the Possibility of a Joint Naval and Military Attack upon the Dardanelles*[xxxvii] called for by Prime Minister of the day Campbell-Bannerman was notable for its tone of caution and it brought an equally guarded response from the Navy.[xxxviii] Both appreciations were uncannily prescient. Perhaps 'uncanny' is not the correct term the Army applied experienced Staff College eyes to the problem and came up with Staff College conclusions[xxxix] upon which DNI shaped his reply.

But because the then British government deemed it 'inexpedient' to have extant any document indicating that coercion of Turkey was a matter of almost insuperable difficulty, the memorandum was quietly filed away and forgotten.[xl] In 1915 it was retrieved but too late France and Britain, faced with food shortages at home and horrendous loss of life on the static Western Front, were consumed with the need to free up supplies of wheat and soldiers from Russia, who had since 1907 become an ally, or at least an enemy of England's enemy. And Turkish-held Dardanelles were beyond Russia's ability to force from the north. [xli]

In the light of all this, it is instructive consider salient recommendations from the 1906 memorandum and what happened in 1915, then compare these with the conclusions of a 1917 investigation[xlii]

| 1906 Memorandum | 1915 events |
|---|---|
| Action by the Fleet without Army support, bearing in mind the risks involved was much to be deprecated and anyway naval action was no guarantee that the Turkish Government would be brought to reason. It would withdraw from the capital, placing the Navy in an extremely awkward position. | In an unaided action, France and Britain lost three (pre-Dreadnought) capital ships, sustained damage to three others and never got within 200 km of Constantinople. The Turks had indeed made plans to withdraw government to a remote country railway junction called Ankara but the need never arose. |
| Should the Navy fail in its attempt the news would at once spread through the whole Mohamedan world that the British Empire had experienced a serious humiliation at the hands of Turkey. | It did and it did 'it was anticipated that an abandonment of the expedition would have a very bad effect upon British prestige in the East'.[xliii]This important and, one would think, obvious point appears to have been missed by Fisher, Asquith *and* Churchill. |
| If ever an attempt to force the Dardanelles was to be made, the work would have to be undertaken by a Joint Naval and Military expedition having for its object the capture of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the destruction of the forts which were denying entrance to and exit from these waters. | The unilateral naval attempt to force the Dardanelles failed and the subsequent military attacks were models of ineptitude. |
| The governing factor in the consideration of any scheme of coercion in relation to Turkey is that success must be certain. | ! |
| No landing should be made in the presence of an enemy unless the Navy could guarantee with its guns that the men, horses, and vehicles of the landing force reach the shore unmolested then cover the advance until troops could gain a firm foothold…upon high ground in rear of the coast defences. | Demonstrably not achieved. Hamilton was overly dependent on support from the guns of de Robeck's[xliv] naval force. However, the battleships were old vessels and lacked modern fire control or high explosive shells. The naval artillery was not able to give the Army the required assistance barrages were fired on a flat trajectory that was unsuitable for reducing Turkish entrenchments and thus of little help against the machine guns in them. That the Army never took the high ground was in part due to these factors.[xlv] |

There was doubt as to whether the co-operating fleet would be able to give this absolute guarantee.

The doubt was justified (*see* above).

Secrecy necessary for an invasion of the Turkish mainland would be impossible. A powerful [defending] force, possibly even 100,000, would be found ready to receive the joint expedition should it appear off the coast.

Having received generous notice, notably the Navy's intemperate attack on Turkish forts in late 1914, its failure to force the Dardanelles and the Entente's blatant preparations for the 1915 invasion, Turkey, with German assistance, had made widespread defensive preparations. This was not appreciated by the Allied High Command.[xlvi]

Choice of a landing place is usually open to those who hold command of the sea. At Gallipoli this would not be the case.

Because the Navy could not force the Narrows and allow the Army to land on the preferred east coast of the Gallipoli peninsula, Allied troops were obliged to take second best and wade ashore on the western coast. The 1906 General Staff was prescient there, too.

The General Staff was not prepared to recommend [that] such an operation, however brilliant, however fruitful in its consequences, be attempted. *Even if* the actual landing were to be completely successful, and *even if* the appearance of the force in the rear of the Abydos forts was to produce such a paralysis of the defence that the door was opened to the passage to Constantinople of some of His Majesty's ships, the ability of the force either to extricate itself or to hold its own until further reinforced was more than open to question.

Neither '*even if*' was achieved. The only success was a cut and run retreat from west coast beachheads on the Gallipoli peninsula.

To these observations, the Director of Naval Intelligence answered in this vein 'Generally agree with the General Staff Memorandum concerning the great risks involved in a joint naval and military enterprise against the Gallipoli Peninsula' but

| DNI | 1915 events |
|---|---|
| An attack on the Peninsula could be carried to a successful conclusion, provided that the Government of the day was prepared to utilize a sufficient force for the purpose, and to incur heavy losses. | 'Sufficient' being the critical qualifier. At Gallipoli General Hamilton never had enough men, artillery or matériel on the ground to advance beyond a kilometre from the beachhead. There was an almost total lack of howitzers, trench mortars, grenades and high explosive ammunition.[xlvii] These serious firepower deficiencies meant that he was fatally dependent |

on support from the guns of de Robeck's naval force (*see* above).

The General Staff appears to regard the enterprise as too hazardous to be attempted; DNI, while recognising the great risks involved, is of the opinion that should an operation of this nature be forced upon us there is no reason to despair of success, though at the expense, in all likelihood, of heavy sacrifice.

Predictably, the RN was of the 'maritime' school of thought who, as Liddell-Hart later noted, believed Britain's natural strategy was encirclement and blockade (*cf.* Fisher above). It is thus surprising that DNI offered even this heavily-qualified support to the concept of invasion by the Army. In the event, he was right in one aspect only – the sacrifice.

Practically, the 1906 General Staff conclusions were

*That* any policy of hostility to the Turkish Empire would add greatly to Britain's military responsibilities in the East.

*That* active military coercion of the Sultan [Turkey], with the forces at our disposal, involves risks which no Government should lightly incur.

*That* if pressure is to be exerted on the Sublime Porte[xlviii] that pressure should be political, except as far as the Navy is able to co-operate by blockade and by the seizure of islands.

Winston Churchill was a member of the War Council and should have been aware of military thinking, particularly as on 19th February 1915[xlix] Prime Minister Asquith read out in Council pertinent extracts from the 1906 memorandum.[l] But, impatient, needing his naval triumph, the First Lord used all his considerable powers of persuasion to sway his fellow politicians. It was not for nothing that the First Sea Lord described his political master's plan as 'damnable', having earlier expressed the view (channeling Nelson) that any naval officer engaging a fort worthy of the name 'deserved to be shot'.

During subsequent and desultory War Council discussion as to how far the 1906 paper (which had been ratified at a subsequent General Staff meeting) might be applicable to current conditions, Maurice Hankey reminded Churchill of his 1911 warning. This apparently caused the First Lord to retreat into black despair and for some time take no further part in the Council's deliberations.[li] After the event, Churchill roused himself sufficiently to declare at the Council on 14th May that if he

> *had known three months before that an army of from 80,000 to 100,000 men would be [made] available for an attack on the Dardanelles, the attack by the Navy alone would never have been undertaken.*[lii]

The interpretation of Churchill's avid 1915 support for a purely naval action in the Dardanelles has been analysed in terms of political opportunism in the light of the 1911 statement (*and see* n.2).

As noted earlier, the unaided naval attempt on 18th March 1915 to force the Narrows and destroy the coastal forts was made and failed. The allied

naval force lost three capital ships sunk by mines and three damaged. The fleet minesweepers, merely small fishing trawlers manned by civilians recruited from the north-east ports of England, were badly managed by the navy and virtually useless. Although their crews clearly recognised the risks involved and accepted the possibility that they might be struck by mines, they were not willing to be subjected to gunfire whilst sweeping. Moreover, their morale was certainly not improved when they realized that in any case the draught of their vessels was greater than the depth of the mines from the surface.

This abortive assault not only once again forfeited surprise, it ignored another important point made by the 1906 Committee any naval operation against the Dardanelles would require methodical bombardment and even if the sweepers were efficient extensive minesweeping was unlikely to succeed without simultaneous use of ground forces [to engage the forts and protect the trawlers].

One interesting appreciation of this naval disaster was that

> *the sweepers could not get to the mines because of the shore gunfire and the battleships could not deal with the gunfire because of the mines. If the commanders had decided to commit the sweepers and the battleships together, with the sweepers leading the ships instead of insisting on minesweeping as a separate and complete operation in itself, the chances are high that they could have transited the whole field without much trouble.*[liii]

But despite Churchill's Anglo-French naval disaster in the Dardanelles, preparations for a second front continued.[liv] Thousands of Entente troops, including the Anzacs, were already en-route to or encamped upon the Greek islands that lay adjacent to Turkey and on 25th April 1915 a full-blown military invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula's west coast commenced. Its amateurish build-up had included these almost unbelievable points

- The British War Council underestimated the need for detailed advanced planning for an amphibious campaign against the Turks. Indeed, the planning was so poor that Hankey was moved to observe, 'it is conceivable that a serious disaster may occur'. [lv]

- Lord Kitchener and the Imperial General Staff had formed no plan of operations despite the fact that Kitchener regarded the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) as representing only about half the number of troops required to take the peninsula.

- As noted above, Hamilton found that he was critically short of artillery and ammunition because of the competing demands of the Western Front. There was an almost total lack of howitzers, trench mortars, grenades and high explosive ammunition. And manpower Ian Hamilton was a personal friend of Kitchener, a fact that didn't prevent him from remarking that 'it was as hard to get troops out of him as to get butter out of a dog's mouth'.[lvi]

- Hamilton's claim that intelligence on both the Turkish order of battle and on the topography of Gallipoli was all but non-existent in 1915 is patently untrue, as is the urban myth that the available knowledge about Turkey in the War Office Intelligence Branch amounted to one 1912 manual on the Turkish army and two tourist guidebooks. For many years the British had been gathering information on these aspects, covertly and by diplomatic channels.

- Hamilton was denied the one really great advantage of amphibious power, the element of strategic surprise (prescribed by the 1906 Memorandum). He had to assemble his forces from the Greek island of Lemnos and then from Alexandria in Egypt - nearly 600 miles away from the Dardanelles.

- As Charles Bean observed, expeditionary security was so poor that the Egyptian press began to publish details of the British forces and their destination. As a result of this and the abortive naval attacks, Turkey initiated a crash program of defensive fortifications on the peninsula and appointed the tough Liman von Sanders to command the six divisions of the Turkish Fifth Army at Gallipoli while doubling its strength to over 80,000 troops. In fact, because of the Entente's bungled preparation, just about the only element of surprise for the now alert and alarmed Turks was the location of the secondary, or diversionary, landing (*but see* n.69 and context below). An elementary navigation error by the Royal Navy - the use of out-of-date charts - resulted in Australian and New Zealand troops wading ashore in the face of terrain so hostile as to have been chosen by the defenders themselves. This last is subject of fierce argument even now.

After nine months the campaign ended in dismal failure for the invader around 48,000 Allied troops were killed and 400,000 wounded in three separate landings of which not one ever broke out of its extended beachhead. Turkey lost about 87,000 from a reported total of some 365,000 casualties.

There were many reasons for the fiasco. The whole Dardanelles operation suffered slapdash planning and a severely under-briefed Commander. For example, General Hamilton was never shown the 1906 Memorandum[lvii] (*cf.* 1939 below). Woefully inadequate, sometimes in training, always in artillery, Allied troops were pitched against a fanatical (and one could add 'stoic') defender armed with modern, fast-action field guns and good German grenades. Throughout the campaign, Allied HQ *chutzpah* resulted in bone-headed commanders repeating fundamental tactical errors. Officers on the ground, many poorly briefed second-raters enjoying little or no support staff, employed methods of fighting that were too often merely ad-hoc.

Most of all, defeat at the hands of the peasant nation Turkey came about because the more influential Allied strategists in 1915 were of the continental school - *Westerners* - who considered Gallipoli to be essentially irrelevant, a sideshow. They believed the Western Front was the true 'centre of gravity' where the war would be won, ideally in great artillery barrages followed by a comprehensive infantry breakthrough that would open up a dispirited enemy to magnificent and relentless cavalry charges (*contrast* with opinions of Neillands and Clark below).

The carriage[lviii] of the campaign in the Dardanelles originated in a fundamental conflict between various schools of strategic thought within the British High Command during the years leading up to WWI. This schism centred on the controversy as to whether in the case of war against Germany the best strategic results could be achieved by concentrating the bulk of men and materials against the German army in France and Belgium (the Western Front of the Westerners) or alternatively by committing significant forces to secure strategic advantages elsewhere - in particular the Eastern Mediterranean and the Dardanelles. The 'Westerner' stance was disliked by the 'Easterner' viewpoint, due largely to the latter's association with

combined operations - a concept that had become markedly unfashionable in military-naval circles as a result of increasing separatism between the Army and Royal Navy in the decades preceding WWI. Although the Easterner approach enjoyed the ascendancy in 1915, the military-naval schism, so antagonistic to combined operations, remained a powerful and pervasive consideration in the deliberations of the strategic planners (this was not necessarily reflected, as the Dardanelles Commission reported, by Gallipoli's *tactical* commanders despite dismal reports).

But Army-Navy hostility was expensive and inevitably involved the two services in attempts to secure a larger share of the public defence purse, inducing competition for financial support and forcing them to lean heavily on the traditions and arguments that emphasised separate functions rather than co-operative ones. Both in theory and practice, the forces making for co-operation in general - and combined operations in particular - were pushed aside. As a result, the normal state of relations between the two services between 1905 and 1914 (even, perhaps, between 1856 and 1914) was a compound of mistrust, tension, competition and suspicion. This pervasive climate naturally militated against the Easterners' strategic concept of great dependence upon combined operations. By 1914 the two services of the Crown were ready to fight separate wars, and they only co-operated when overwhelming circumstances forced them to do so.[lix]

One dire result of all this was that at Gallipoli the Government jibbed at diverting from the Western Front sufficient men and matériel to assure success for Hamilton, who was an imaginative and daring officer even if his courteous technique of hands-off control (Hunter-Weston, the all-out attack man, comes to mind) should have been a heads-up to his bosses in London that he might have been well beyond his use-by date. He might not have been the only senior officer at Gallipoli who underperformed but tragically for thousands of British, French, Australian, New Zealand, Indian and, as it turned out, Turkish troops, he was the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

As an aside, there's a whole book waiting to be written about the psychology of the 'attack at all costs' merchants. 'Hooky' Walker at Anzac, Rawlinson, Plumer, Smith-Dorrien, Monash and Currie on the Western Front were honourable exceptions on our side. Lieutenant Bernard Montgomery, so severely wounded in 1914 that in the words of one of his biographers 'it was only his characteristic lack of cooperation that caused him to decline to die', applied lessons learned from such commanders in his management of the 8th Army in WWII.

Neillands cautions us, though, that 'it is no good acquitting one or two generals of incompetence, since popular belief has always done this anyway. The charge of incompetence stands against them *as a group* and it is as a group that they need reassessment'.[lx] Further, on page 9 of his book, possibly alluding to Wavell's famous dictum, he makes us aware that any judgement must be taken in context

> *There can be no greater fallacy than to suppose that battles can be won painlessly. However brilliant the plan, in the end the soldier must advance, cost what it may, and destroy the enemy. When the enemy is prepared to fight, as the Germans always were, this means bloody battle and heavy casualties.*[lxi]

But possibly the most disappointing aspect of this benighted campaign, not addressed here, is that but for British bungling Turkey might never have made common cause with the Central Powers in the first place. Indeed, it might be said that until *Goeben* and her attendant cruiser *Breslau* suddenly appeared at Constantinople's gates the Porte showed a marked and determined reluctance to enter the lists. Certainly she had many German military advisors but she had also retained a British admiral in charge of her navy.[lxii] Turkey's leaders were well aware of their country's weaknesses and endeavoured to remain, or appear to remain, disinterested concerning the war that was raging around them. And they were aware too that Whitehall were finalising plans[lxiii] to bribe Turkey to the tune of up to £UK4M (at 1914 rates) to give up the Dardanelles *and* the German ships, damaged though one was. Right up to the last minute Enver Pasha, Turkey's Minister of War, might have thought twice before committing his country to a conflict where victory for the Central Powers was no longer guaranteed. And, having gone to war, Allied politicians and (very) senior military officers must shoulder the blame for offering such a travesty of an attack at Gallipoli

> *There was never any possibility of winning the war on the Western Front*[lxiv] *although there was a likelihood three times of losing it there. It was in the East, where the German General Staff had all along apprehended mortal danger, that the Allies generated, and discarded, their greatest opportunities in 1914, when victories in Galicia were annulled by the defeat at Tannenberg; in 1915, when hesitation blighted the attack on the Dardanelles; and finally in 1916 with the failure of [Russian general] Brusilov.*[lxv]

As always after a major catastrophe, a scapegoat had to be found. So it was with Gallipoli. The military closed ranks and it was politician Churchill who was forced to resign. He then went off to the Somme for a short while to fight in the front lines as an infantry major/half colonel (Interesting contrast with current ideas of ministerial responsibility.) But the failure of the Dardanelles strategy taught him a sharp lesson concerning secondary theatres of war and as Prime Minister in WWII frightening memories of 1915 arose. The Far East campaign, which he knew would undoubtedly be won by America, he always considered to be a British sideshow, or at best secondary to the defeat of Germany.[lxvi] In truth, notwithstanding his blatant emotion at the fall of Singapore he felt that India was the necessary limit of the Empire and retained in private a calm acceptance that Australia might have to be sacrificed to achieve that end.[lxvii]

In 1915 only one good recommendation was ever made at Gallipoli and that was immediately after the first Anzacs, in disorder and under fire, had hit the wrong beach. Birdwood[lxviii] suggested to Hamilton, safe on his battleship miles out to sea, that the landings had failed and there should be an immediate evacuation. On flimsy grounds[lxix] Hamilton quashed this eminently sensible advice, offering this rather less than inspiring encouragement instead 'there is nothing for it but to dig yourselves right in and stick it out' (more famously remembered is the postscript 'you have got through the difficult business, now you have only to dig, dig, dig until you are safe')[lxx] - just one of many Allied errors of judgment that were to bedevil the whole disastrous campaign.

And for what? For the Anzacs, their baptism of fire[lxxi] was made up of nearly nine months constant confrontation by a dedicated enemy who always held the high ground; of minimal artillery support; of home-made hand grenades; of intelligence and communications that reached a nadir; of orders for suicidal attacks; and of confusion, dire food and dreadful weather. All these and medical standards scarce advanced from the Crimean War saw big, bronzed Aussies decline into emaciated trench-dwellers cowering in scraped-out possies; dirty, lice-ridden, consumed with Barcoo rot and racked with amoebic dysentery. Then came defeat and the bitterness of the Diggers hoping their dead mates couldn't hear them as they trudged back to the boats that had brought them ashore.

What, in hindsight, did the experts think of Gallipoli? Well, this is what the Official Historian (British) wrote

> *There can be still less doubt that in the spring of 1915 the operation was not beyond the capacity of the Entente, and that a combined naval and military attack, carefully planned in every detail before troops embarked, and carried out with the essential advantages of surprise, would have succeeded.*

This opinion, given that 'succeed' is not adequately defined, was pretty much as the 1906 Memorandum had suggested. In 1915 not one of those *desiderata* was met.

In 1917 the investigating Commission brought down conclusions that were as inevitable as they were damning. Here are some extracts

…When it was decided to undertake an important military expedition a joint naval/military operation was not [at the time] considered because the War Council had been informed by Lord Kitchener that for some months there would be no troops available for an invasion to the Gallipoli Peninsula. Despite this, sufficient consideration was not given to the measures necessary to carry out such an expedition.

…We have already pointed out that it had been apparent in February 1915 that serious military operations might be necessary. Under these circumstances we think that the conditions of a military attack on the peninsula should have been studied and a general plan prepared by [General] Sir James Wolfe Murray [CIGS Oct 1914-Sep 1915], special attention being paid to the probable effect of naval gun-fire in support of the troops…It was the responsibility of the Secretary of State for War to ensure that this was done.

…We think that the difficulties of the operations were much underestimated. At the outset all decisions were taken and all provisions based on the assumption that, if a landing were effected, the resistance would be slight and advance rapid. We can see no sufficient ground for this assumption. Churchill's short bombardment in November 1914 had given the Turks warning of a possible attack and his naval operations in February and March of 1915 [the attempt to force the Dardanelles] led naturally to a great strengthening of the Turkish defences. The Turks were known to be led by German officers and there was no reason to think that they would not fight well, especially in defensive positions. These facts had been reported by Admiral de Robeck and Sir Ian Hamilton [26th and 27th March 1915].[lxxii]

…We are of the opinion that, with the limited resources then available, success in the Dardanelles, if possible, was only possible upon the condition that the Government concentrated their efforts upon the enterprise and limited their expenditure of men and material in the Western theatre of war. This condition was never fulfilled.

…We think the plan of attack from Anzac and Suvla in the beginning of August was open to criticism. The country over which the attack had to be made was very difficult, especially at Anzac [never mind that Suvla itself smacks of reinforcing failure - the High Command, rather like Haig early on the Western Front, seemed unaware of the law of diminishing returns].

…We think that after the advice [31st August] of Sir Charles Monro had been confirmed by Lord Kitchener the decision to evacuate should have been taken at once. We recognise, however, that the question of evacuation was connected to other questions of high policy which do not appear to come within the scope of our inquiry [the decision to evacuate was made on 22nd November].

…We think the decision to evacuate, when taken, was right.

…We think the operations were hampered throughout by the failure to supply sufficient artillery and munitions and to keep the original formations up to strength by the provision of adequate drafts as well as reinforcements. In our opinion this was not owing to any neglect on the part of the Heads of Departments charged with such provision [trans: of us it wasn't the civil servants' fault] but to the demands proving much larger than was expected when the operations were undertaken and to demands which had to be met in other theatres of war. On the other hand, considerable amount of artillery was available in Egypt and at Mudros for the Suvla operation but it was not utilised.

…As regards Sir Ian Hamilton [relieved of his command on 15th October], it is inevitable that the capabilities of a commander in war should be judged by the results he achieves, even though, if these results are disappointing, his failure may be due to causes for which he is only partially responsible. In April 1915, Sir Ian succeeded in landing his troops in places which he had chosen but the operations…were abruptly checked owing to a miscalculation of the strength of the Turkish defences and the fighting qualities of the Turkish troops. During May, June and July, severe fighting took place but its results were not commensurate with the efforts made and the losses incurred.

…Sir Ian Hamilton…was baffled by the obstinacy of the Turkish resistance.

…There was full co-operation between the Navy and Army and the two services worked well and harmoniously together.[lxxiii]

…The Dardanelles Expedition could not be considered by itself; though great results were expected of it if successful, it was subsidiary, in the view of the military authorities in England, to the main operations in France [trans: in any event, it was only a sideshow].

These observations are encapsulated in the Commission's conclusion, which itself is something of a triumph of hope over experience

> *The Dardanelles Campaign with all its distressing circumstances is now past history and, without doubt under the vigorous direction*

*of Sir William Robertson*[lxxiv]*, the haphazard, uncertain methods have largely disappeared and a good deal of the inefficiency which formerly prevailed has been swept away. If, however, our investigations should assist in the bringing about of such an impression in organization and management as will render impossible a recurrence of events as sad as those which we have had to deal, the work of the Commission will not have been in vain.*[lxxv]

Criticism of the botched operation was far-reaching and varied widely in line with the writer's degree of path dependence, cultural cringe, impersonal assessment or even just patriotism. From the many, here is one from each end of the scale

*Neither among the troops nor among the [Australian] people was there a moment's doubt as to their attitude towards the British Government and people. It was one of loyal partnership in an enterprise, and of complete trust. If Australian troops had been sacrificed at Gallipoli, so - and equally - had British and French. If the expedition had been undertaken in error, and the British Government had found it advisable to withdraw the troops, no-one in Australia would question the wisdom of the action. The sense of the people was strongly averse from any idle bickering while the great struggle was proceeding. Criticism of the British Government was sharply resented in Australia. The subsequent inquiry by a Royal Commission [Dardanelles Commission, 1917] into the conduct of the campaign was not approved by general opinion; in some quarters objections were urged to Australia's being represented. The same qualities that invariably led the Australian soldier to stand by his mate caused the Australian people to give unswerving loyalty to its partners in the struggle.*[lxxvi]

and

*The ultimate burden of failure…lies on authorities at home. The Allies were presented with the most brilliant and promising strategical conception of war up to the present time (spring 1918). Success would have given them the[se] advantages a passage would have been opened for the supply of grain from Russia and a supply of munitions to that country; the enemy's hope of advancing…towards the Persian Gulf would have been frustrated; the Balkan States would, at worst, have remained neutral or, calculating on future favours, would have joined out Alliance in hurried gratitude…the Central powers would then indeed have been surrounded by an 'iron ring' and peace secured by 1916…Mr. Winston Churchill was justified in [his] protest that 'if there were any operation in the history of the world which, having been begun, it was worthwhile to carry through with the utmost vigour and fury, it was the Dardanelles Campaign'. Far from displaying vigour, let alone fury, the government appears to have regarded the Expedition rather as an overburdened father regards an illegitimate child put out to nurse at a distant village. It was a 'by-blow', a 'sideshow', something apart from the normal and recognised order of things. A certain allowance had, unfortunately, to be apportioned for it, but if the person who superintended its*

*welfare clamoured for more, that person must be kept in his proper place or palmed off with gifts that were not gifts. Every breath of suspicion or detraction must be listened to; every chance of abandonment welcomed; and the news of a peaceful ending accepted with a sigh of relief.*[lxxvii]

Curiously, transposing the dates of these two pieces tends, for me at least, to render the writers' opinions more apposite.

In its inimitable fashion, The *Thunderer* (not literally; wrong era) did a bit of plonking, too

*Mr Asquith, in the House of Commons on January 10, 1916, said the retirement from Gallipoli was one of the finest operations in naval or military history and it would take an imperishable place in our national history. The mistakes of the British Government at Gallipoli, as well as those responsible for the unsupported naval attack and for the various cardinal blunders of strategy and organization, will probably find almost equally imperishable place in the annals of war.*[lxxviii]

Of the 800,000 or so casualties on both sides (maybe many more, suggest some contemporary Turkish revisionist military historians) not the least are the lives of 11,430 Anzacs. But they were only colonials fighting in a sideshow. Nor did the High Command really care too much about British losses – 'Tommy' was working class and there were millions more where he came from.

And, sadly, Gallipoli was but a reflection of what had already happened on the Western Front in 1914

*There was no plan, no objective, no arrangements for co-operation, and the divisions blundered into battle.*[lxxix]

Here is an Australian overview

*At Lemnos here the watchwords for everything and everybody are 'inefficiency' and 'muddle' and red-tape run mad. I only wish I dared to write without reserve about this and many other things. Just one brief summarized précis of the whole Dardanelles situation. In March last we give the Turks ample notice of our intentions to land a military force. We almost tell them in detail the date and place. Then we land a force which is adequate only to secure a bare landing and hold it defensively. That was on the 25th April. It took the empire's whole resources until 15th August, i.e. over three months, to land about three or four new divisions for the purpose of making another push; and in this interval the enemy had time to gather up and send to the Peninsula some three or four army corps to oppose us and the 'push' succeeded only to the extent of the pushing force available, which means only to the extent of the Dominion troops available. And so now it is 'as you were' and we are faced with the wet season and stormy seas and increasing difficulties of supply and maintenance, and no sign and apparently no hope of further reinforcements. And the latest English papers talk of the whole undertaking as a strategical blunder and say the whole future effort should be concentrated on Flanders, which means the sacrifice of nearly 15,000 magnificent Dominion troops*

*has been useless and to no purpose! Can you wonder we don't feel very cheerful about it at all.*[lxxx]

Lest one think government learns and applies the lessons of history, consider 1939. The then British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, in what might be called an about-face from his previous *laissez faire* attitude towards Hitler's expansionist plans, made a unilateral, high-handed and arguably illegal gesture in sending an unqualified guarantee to Poland that Britain would support her 'against any action that threatened Polish independence'.[lxxxi] When he went to Cabinet to obtain approval for this action, whether or not in the prevailing mood it would have made any difference, members were *not even shown* the current report from the Chiefs of Staff Committee that made clear how impossible it was to give any effective protection to Poland.[lxxxii] And, just as their predecessors in 1906, the Chiefs were right.[lxxxiii]

Recent military action seems to indicate that troops of countries under attack will do one of two things in defence of their home turf - each man will fight to the death or he will run away, soon to reappear as some form of insurgent. The shambles of Vietnam (America) and Afghanistan (Russia and now us), the open-ended nature of the Iraq imbroglio and the increasingly serious conflict in neighbouring countries all seem to point up the 1906 Committee's philosophy concerning invasions, particularly the governing factor *success must be certain*.

In short, it appears that the authors of the Memorandum were well aware of how vital in matters of war is the need to identify outcomes and make good and sure that the strategy or, if you prefer, Grand Strategy, is sorted out.[lxxxiv] And, I suggest, they would agree that such a policy entails sending sufficient troops plus a few more for luck, properly trained, equipped and led to do the job and in receipt of constant military, political and moral support until victory is complete. Repeat, *constant* and *complete*.

But, above all, it seems to me that the opinion of those old generals contains a fairly straightforward sub-text for military planners and politicians alike: unless there is a solid guarantee that the aim is defined, justified and will be maintained, it's probably better not to engage in foreign jaunts in the first place.



Acknowledgements

Opinion from the *1906 General Staff Memorandum* is quoted by kind permission of the UK Public Archives Office (previously UK Public Records Office), PRO Cab 38/12/60. Remarks extracted from the 1917 report by a British Parliamentary Commission investigating the failed Dardanelles campaign may be found in *The Defeat at Gallipoli the Dardanelles Part II – 1915*, The Stationery Office Ltd, 2000. Other observations are taken from the writings of Dr. Charles Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*; the distinguished British historians, Geoffrey Miller, *Superior Force*, 1996, *Straits,* 1997 and *The Millstone*, 1999, all University of

Hull Press; Basil Liddell Hart, *WWI* and *WWII*; and Martin Gilbert, *First World War*, Harper Collins, 1995. I have also used information found in *War Diaries of Field Marshal Alanbrooke*, ed. Danchev, A and Todman, D, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2001; Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, Macmillan, 2001; *History of the First World War* **Vol.11, BPC Publishing Ltd. n.d.;** James, R R, *Gallipoli*, Pan, London, 1974; Robin Neillands, *The Great War Generals on the Western Front*, Magpie Books, London, 2004; John Laffin, *The Agony of Gallipoli*, Sutton Publishing, 2005; Monash, J, *War Letters of General Monash*, ed. Macdougall, A, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 2002; and Michael Evans, 'Remembering Gallipoli A View from the New Century', in Quadrant Magazine *History*, May 2001, Volume XLV, Number 5.

A plethora of relevant information can also be found on the internet.

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[i] NOTES

That the Allies did not possess knowledge of the Gallipoli terrain is a myth encountered in much of the campaign literature and sedulously fostered by Sir Ian Hamilton himself. Indeed, General Callwell, the Director of Military Operations in 1914–15, was so incensed by Hamilton's deliberately misleading statements to the Dardanelles Commission, that he asked to be able to give further evidence to the Commission, and publicised this in a post-war book. That the invaders had not prepared for the realities of what they encountered on April 25th 1915 and for months after is another question altogether (*see* introduction to Chasseaud & Doyle *Grasping Gallipoli*, Staplehurst Spellmount, 2005).

[ii] WWI started at midnight German time on 4th August 1914 but Turkey, although aligned with Germany, needed another three months and some sharp prodding before she entered the lists.

[iii] That bane of Winston Churchill's wartime tenure as First Lord of the Admiralty, SMS (Seiner Majestat Schiff = His Majesty's Ship) Goeben, launched 1912; 22,616 tons; 611 feet in length; speed with all boilers active 26 knots and armed with 10 x 11.1" guns, was in 1915 Germany's only battle cruiser outside the North Sea. Unfortunately her impressive attributes were at a discount by virtue of her being trapped in the Mediterranean at the outbreak of war. Trapped, that is, until she evaded incompetent RN forces and in late 1914 entered the Dardanelles with the cruiser Breslau in attendance. She was then 'sold' to Turkey and renamed Yavuz Sultan Selim. As both a putative defender of Constantinople and a threat to Turkish shipping she patrolled the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora and the Black Sea, crewed by befezzed German sailors. The breakout became a cause celèbre and court-martial event for Britain. See also below.

[iv] Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable offers the unlikely suggestion (if seventy minutes is correct) that taking into account drift the swim was of about six kilometres.

[v] One night the inevitable happened and Leander never made the other side. Hero then threw herself into the sea and was drowned (ibid).

[vi] Built by France and Egypt; opened 1869; Britain bought out French interests in 1875.

[vii] Very slowly. In 1914, the British army had only 60 motor vehicles in service - Neillands, p.42.

[viii] Who had become even more alarmed at Turkey's alliance with Germany, not only in view of the current fighting but of the German "Berlin to Baghdad" designs: 'Russians now see plainly that the road to Constantinople lies through Berlin.' - Mitrofanoff, S, Professor, *Preussische Jahrbücher*, June 1914.

[ix] Seconded to Turkey as Inspector-General of the Turkish Army in 1914; commander of the Turkish 5th Army at Gallipoli.

[x] British attack 10-13th March 1915. Approx. 13,000 casualties on each side, no appreciable gain - David Schermer, World War I, Octopus Books Ltd, 1973, p.103.

[xi] French campaign at the beginning of 1915. Twelve attacks, twenty counter-attacks; five villages totally destroyed; French advanced less than one mile - Martin Gilbert, p124.

[xii] *Felddienstordnung* (Field Service Order) 1906, paras 265-327 in Neillands, p41. Just about the same was French military opinion, developed painfully in the years following the Franco-Prussian War, that prescribed *l'attaque à outrance* (all-out attack). The irony was that on the Western Front attack became futile and stuttered into defence so early and for so long.

[xiii] Fisher, Admiral Sir John Arbuthnot (later Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone), First Sea Lord, 1904-10 and 1914-15.

[xiv] Fisher, *Records*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1919, pp217-22.

[xv] Jellicoe, Admiral Sir John Rushworth, Chief of Admiralty War Staff (Second Sea Lord) from 1913, replaced Fisher as First Sea Lord, May 1915.

[xvi] Jellicoe quoted in Marder, A J, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era*, (5 vols. OUP, 1961-70).

[xvii] Churchill to Fisher 22nd December 1914 (he conveniently dropped the last sentence in his book *The World Crisis*).

[xviii] Slade,Vice Admiral Sir Edmund, Commission on Oil Fuel supplies, previously Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI). The underlining is Churchill's - PRO (Public Records Office, now known as The [British] National Archives) Admin 137/96.

[xix] The bombardment of the entrance to the Dardanelles took place on 3rd November 1914. Churchill had not consulted Cabinet. Turkey declared war on Britain and France two days later. Not that Churchill's action was defensible as a *casus belli* for the Turks - on 28th October their fleet, now under command of the German Admiral Souchon, had without declaration of war shelled Russian ports on the Black Sea.

[xx] Nekrasov, G, 'North of Gallipoli', in *The Black Sea Fleet at War 1914-1917*, West European Monographs, Boulder, Colorado, 1992.

[xxi] Churchill, *Memorandum on the Mediterranean Fleet*, 15th Mar 1911, para 4 (PRO Cab 37/105/27).

[xxii] As reported by Asquith to his long-time paramour, Venetia Stanley, 11th August 1914 - Brock, M & E (eds) *H. H. Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley,* no. 121 pp 165-6, OUP, Oxford, 1982.

[xxiii] James, R. R, *Gallipoli*, Pan, London, 1974, p.15.

[xxiv] Professional soldier and, arguably, amateur politician (professional pollies rather confused him). Acting in his political role as Secretary of State for War 1914-1916, he had declared in early January 1915 that there was no military force available for a second front (The Stationery Office, London, 2000, p5). Later in the month, probably wearing his Army cap, he stated that the naval attack was vitally important 'If successful, its effect would be equivalent to that of a successful campaign fought with the [ie, my] new armies. One merit of the scheme was that, if satisfactory progress was not made, the attack could be broken off' (CAB 42/1/26). He need not have made any comment whatsoever - Churchill was determined to do the Army's job for it. Not until 10th March, following heavy War Council pressure, was it that 'K of K' finally agreed to send XXIXth Division. Gallipoli might indeed have been inescapable but with reason it can be described as a 'Drift to the Dardanelles' (Miller, *Straits*, p.415).

[xxv] Morgenthau, H, Secrets of the Bosporus, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1918, p139.

[xxvi] Who, 'in reality does nothing; he goes home and sleeps in the afternoon. He is old & worn out & nervous. It is ill to have the destinies of an empire in the hands of a failing old man, anxious for popularity, afraid of any local mishap which may be put down to his disposition. It is sad.' - Captain Richmond RN, diary entry 19th Jan 1915, anticipating Hankey's later opinion. (Maurice Hankey, [later Lord], Lt. Col. Royal Marines, was Secretary of the War Council 1914-5 and of the Cabinet War Committee 1915-16). Richmond, later Admiral Sir Herbert, was at the time A/D Operations Division at the Admiralty. Perhaps it was mainly a case of the new generation pushing the old one aside.

[xxvii] Brock, no. 258, pp. 375-6.

[xxviii] PRO Admin 137/96.

[xxix] Minutes of the War Council, 13th Jan 1915, PRO Cab 42/1/16.

[xxx] He stated that he would not even attend the War Council meeting where the Dardanelles were to be discussed. Asquith then demanded a meeting between the three of them, during which Fisher dropped his opposition to Churchill's plan to force the Dardanelles, judging that the operation could be called off at any time 'without loss of face' (he was not alone in his thinking; Asquith believed it, too, telling Venetia Stanley, 'it is an absolutely novel experience, & I am rather curious & rather anxious to see how it develops' - Brock, no. 310, pp 434-5). So much for strategy; so much for forward planning.

[xxxi] Riddel, the Right Honourable Lord George Allardice (Chairman, *News of the World*), diary entry for 3rd Feb 1915, *Lord Riddel's War Diary*, p58.

[xxxii] Fisher memorandum, 25th Jan 1915, PRO Cab 42/1/24.

[xxxiii] Forgive this paragraph's metaphoric mayhem.

[xxxiv] For example, the Admiralty gaffe that allowed *Goeben* to escape into the safety of Turkish waters 12th August 1914; the sinking of three cruisers - *Aboukir, Hogue* and *Cressy* - by the submarine U9 in a single morning on 22nd September 1914 off the Dutch coast with a loss of 1,459 officers and men; the belated dispatch of half-trained units of the Royal Naval Division (RND) to Antwerp in October of 1914 that failed to avert the loss of the city and had almost ended in disaster for the division; super dreadnought HMS *Audacious* sunk by a mine on 27th Oct 1914 (a panicked Cabinet attempted to suppress this news); pre-dreadnought HMS Formidable torpedoed and sunk in the English Channel 1st Jan 1915; and German shells landing on Scarborough, Whitby, Hartlepool etc. All this had stunned the nation.

[xxxv] Sturdee, Rear Admiral Sir Frederick Charles, Chief of the Admiralty War Staff, 1914. Disliked by Fisher, who dispatched him to the Falkland Islands in December 1914 to get him out of the way, whence he returned in

triumph having sunk four German warships with 2,100 enemy killed to the RN's loss of ten seamen. A victory claimed, of course, by the First Sea Lord.

[xxxvi] 1903, 1904, 1906 and 1908.

[xxxvii] PRO Cab 38/12/60.

[xxxviii] Until the years leading up to WWI the British General Staff included no representative from the Navy. Most of what passed for naval forward planning was held close by the old & worn out First Sea Lord, 'Jackie' Fisher, who had a reluctance to share information that was only matched by the likes of Josef Stalin in WWII.

[xxxix] And see 1939 below.

[xl] Note by Hankey - PRO Cab 38/12/60.

[xli] The Russian navy had been much weakened in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War, where Japan, for the loss of three torpedo boats and 116 men, destroyed eight Russian battleships in a surprise attack at Port Arthur, killing 4000 sailors and capturing another 7300, including three admirals - *Encarta*.

[xlii] 1917 British Parliamentary Commission investigating the failed Dardanelles campaign.

[xliii] *from* the 1917 Parliamentary Commission's report on 1915 War Council proceedings.

[xliv] Admiral Sir John De Roebeck had been made naval OIC in the Dardanelles in March 1915.

[xlv] Gist of telegram De Robeck to the Admiralty, 9th May (*and see* n.68).

[xlvi] This despite General Sir John Maxwell (OIC British army, Egypt 1914-16) reporting to Kitchener on 24th February that Turkey was 'practically a fort', advance against which from any quarter without heavy guns 'would seem to be hazardous'. Turkish preparedness was again reported in March by both Hamilton and Robeck (*see* text).

[xlvii] General Hamilton admitted to the 1917 Dardanelles Commission that lives were used instead of shells 'The vital thing was to make good, and to make good we ought to have had ample artillery, especially howitzers. We had not, and there was nothing for it but to try and get on, as you say, by a sacrifice of human life' (a bit like 2nd Ypres, when you come to think about it; all the British and Canadian generals had there in any strength was infantry). But Hamilton was very experienced in battle and knew, as all combat veterans do, that war is difficult, chaos inevitable and that no-one who knew anything about war would expect it to be any different. A thousand howitzers would have eased his mind, though.

[xlviii] Originally the official name of the Ottoman Court at Constantinople and later used as a synonym for the Turkish government. 'Porte' is the French translation of an Arabic word for 'gate', in this case the Imperial Gate or High ('Sublime') Gate of the seraglio at Constantinople.

[xlix] The day Admiral Cardin opened up the naval attack on Turkish positions in the Dardanelles.

[l] It had been hidden in an Admiralty basement and was 'found' by an assistant to Hankey, who claimed it had been withdrawn from circulation for reasons of extreme secrecy. This was untrue (*see* text above), a fact that Hankey was forced to point out five days later (note by the Secretary, 24th February, 1915 - PRO Cab 38/12/60).

[li] geocities.com/davidbofinger/plan.htm. This 1990s posting is admittedly not the most convincing of references, although the author assures me he didn't make it up and thinks he got it from Hankey's private papers.

[lii] The Stationery Office, p6.

[liii] Hartman, G.K. *Weapons that Wait Mine Warfare in the US Army.* (Annapolis Naval Institute Press, 1979).

[liv] This despite Field Marshal Sir John French, C-in-C, BEF, having stated in January 1915 that 'breaking through on the Western Front is simply a matter of larger supplies of ammunition and especially high-explosive ammunition, and until the impossibility of breaking through on the Western Front had been proved there was no question of making the attempt somewhere else' - *Official History, 1914, Vol I*, p. 65. (Politician Kitchener merely said there were no troops available for a second front.)

[lv] Carlyon, p.92.

[lvi] Neillands, p. 55.

[lvii] The Stationery Office, p18.

[lviii] To add 'and carnage' is probably justifiable, if glib.

[lix] These two paragraphs reflect opinion found on various sites on the internet.

[lx] Letter from Dr John Bourne, Department of History, Birmingham University, in *Great War Generals*, p.8. And apart from any other shortcomings, some were plain unlucky - 224 British general officers were killed, wounded or taken capture in WWI.

[lxi] Sixsmith, E, Maj-Gen., British Generalship in the Twentieth Century, p. 176

[lxii] Limpus, Rear-Admiral (later Admiral) Sir Arthur, Head of British Naval Mission Constantinople, April 1912-15th September, 1914.

[lxiii] Quoted in Gilbert, M, *Winston S Churchill 1914-1916*, vol III, Heinemann, London, 1971, p.359.

[lxiv] Even after General Rawlinson's great breakthrough on the 29th September 1918 the German army, although in full retreat, remained battered but undefeated. By October, Chief of Staff General Gröner had taken

the initiative and destroyed the Kaiser's last delusions in a few blunt words "the Army will march home in peace and order under its generals but not under the command of Your Majesty, for it no longer stands behind Your Majesty" - Neillands, pp 504-5. That this meant there would be no fight to the finish was considered a betrayal by many German line soldiers doing it tough in the trenches. One of them, with a logic that remained twisted until his death, recorded that his country, even though it might have been starving under the RN's blockade, 'infamously' asked for and was given an armistice.

[lxv] Clark, A, *Suicide of Empires - the battles on the Eastern Front 1914-1918*, Macdonald, 1971, p.104

[lxvi] British and Australian opinion of Churchill as war leader tends to be slightly canted and particular. For a more detached assessment try this '[although Churchill was] the personification of British defence and greatness in 1940-41, matters Pacific were necessarily of lesser consequence to Britain after December 1941 he displayed increasingly divisive action as his powers of decision-making diminished and was rightly regarded with considerable suspicion by the US military by the final years of the war' - Willimot, H P, *The Second World War in the Far East*, gen. edit. John Keegan, Cassell & Co, London, 1999, p.214.

[lxvii] Or perhaps it was miscalculation or wishful thinking that was behind what he in retrospect recorded as his rejection of the advice of the then CIGS, General Gill, to build up Singapore's strength at the cost of maintaining the defence of Egypt 'many governments would have wilted before so grave a pronouncement by the highest possible professional authority but I had no difficulty in convincing my political colleagues, and I was of course supported by the Chiefs of the Navy and Air. My views therefore prevailed and the flow of reinforcements to the Middle East continued unabated.' - Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol III*, p.375. And, just as he claims, the British High Command generally backed him. Thus Chief of Staff General Alan Brooke 12th May, 1942, about Australian representative Herbert 'Doc' Evatt '…a thoroughly unpleasant type of individual with no outlook beyond the shores of Australia…I did my level best to make him listen to a short statement of the global situation and where the major dangers existed. He refused to listen and gave me the impression that as far as he was concerned he [therefore Australia] did not mind what happened to anybody else as long as Australian shores could be made safe. It was quite impossible to make him realize that the security of Australia did not rest in Australia. He failed to see that defeat in the Middle East, India and [the] Indian Ocean must inevitably lead to the invasion of Australia, no matter what reinforcements were sent there now.' - Danchev and Todman, p257.

[lxviii] Birdwood, Lt.-Gen. [British] Sir William, Anzac Corps Commander.

[lxix] Admiral Thursby, Hamilton's OIC landings, had said evacuation was administratively impossible. Just as, one recalls, it was at Dunkirk. And note 'administratively' rather than 'operationally', which at least would have been a defensible reason were it true. See n.70 for further indication of Hamilton's rationale.

[lxx] This was a straw-grasping exercise on the Commander-in–Chief's part, having just received the signal from Bram Stoker's nephew that Australian submarine AE2 had penetrated the Dardanelles. Or, being generous, perhaps it was not only that the wording of Birdwood's suggestion had been, to say the least, equivocal, (Carlyon, p.176), but because Hamilton's mindset appears to have been that the campaign at Anzac, popularly considered secondary or diversionary, was 'of *primary* importance, [with] those at Helles and Suvla being… secondary' (evidence given to the Dardanelles Commission, 1917, my emphasis). In any event, his 'there is nothing for it but…' is hardly a morale-raising exhortation.

[lxxi] The phrase's real meaning, 'sacrifice', is horribly appropriate.

[lxxii] Thus De Robeck Many troops have come down. The German have grappled with the situation, and have got their troops scientifically disposed, and heavily entrenched. So much so that they have not much to fear from the flat-trajectory guns of the Navy. The number of field guns on the peninsula is now many times greater than it was - The Stationery Office, p.32.

[lxxiii] This is bureaucratic weasel-wording; 'working well and harmoniously together' does not *ipso facto* achieve success.

[lxxiv] Robertson, Field Marshal Sir William, CIGS.

[lxxv] The Stationery Office, pp.318-9.

[lxxvi] Bean, Vol 2, p.190.

[lxxvii] Nevinson, H W, *The Dardanelles Campaign*, Nisbet & Co, London, 1918, pp. 408-10. This is the earliest use of 'sideshow' in matters of war that I've come across.

[lxxviii] *The Times History of the War*, Vol VII, 'The Times', London, 1916, p.220.

[lxxix] From the official British history of WWI, Vol I - Edmonds, Brig-Gen, Sir James E, *1914 August-September. Mons, the retreat to the Seine, the Marne and the Aisne*, 1922, p. 465.

[lxxx] John Monash, pp. 81-2.

[lxxxi] If, as has been suggested, this cavalier gesture was as a result of Chamberlain's indignation at having been fooled by Hitler post Munich, it bears passing resemblance and was equal in futility to Churchill's attitude to the Turks when he ordered the bombardment of the entrance to the Dardanelles towards the end of 1914.

[lxxxii] Liddell-Hart, B H, *History of the Second World War*, Pan Books, 1977, p.11.

[lxxxiii] For example 'The unpreparedness of Britain in 1914, when it was the only country in the world whose Army had field guns incapable of firing high explosive shells, was eclipsed by Britain's almost unbelievable lack of fighting material twenty five years later in 1939. What had been obsolete in 1914 was still in use…We had no sub-machine guns, no rimless cartridges, no percussion grenades…There were, of course no dive bombers in the Air Force and the tanks were fit only for museums. The solar helmets issued to troops going east to defend India, Burma and Malaya were remnants of the South African [Boer] War. Nearly all the bombs the RAF possessed in 1939 were left over from 1919…It was never questioned, however, that the British Army's cavalry lances, their saddles, horseshoes, picks, shovels and tent mallets were the equal of any in the world.' - in Leasor, J, *War at the Top, based on the experiences of General Sir Leslie Hollis*, Michael Joseph, London, 1959.
As Hollis claims, in the years before 1914 British politicians, though they knew a war was probably coming, did little to prepare for it. Everyone supposed that, if and when war came, the British contribution would be small and the war would not last long [when did we last hear *that*?] Rudyard Kipling, who had reason to be bitter, had this to say concerning the British Army's lack of readiness at the beginning of WWI 'it has been extolled as proof of the purity of this country's ideals, which must be a great consolation to all concerned'. But to maintain a standing army costs taxpayers much money, which is why powers nowadays attempt to make incursions low key...and often fail. Perhaps UAVs will be the salvation of us all.
[lxxxiv] Including of course that mechanism beloved of contemporary commentators, 'exit strategy'.

# The Death `Penny`

In October 1916 the British Government set up a committee to investigate a commemorative memorial plaque that could be given to the relatives of men and women who died during the Great War. It was agreed that the memorial issued would be produced and paid for by the British Government as some form of small bronze plaque.

In August 1917 the committee announced a competition, open to all, for a suitable design with space to record the name of each fallen serviceman or woman.
A shortlist of entries was offered prizes of up to £500 and the winner of the first prize winner had their design cast in bronze and subsequently issued to the hundreds of thousands of families who had lost loved ones.

The competition instructions were published in The Times newspaper on 13th August 1917 with the winning design announced in the paper #OTD in 1918.
The sum of £250 was awarded for two entries submitted under the pseudonym of "Pyramus". The overall winning design was chosen from these two entries by Mr Edward Carter Preston, founder of the Sandon Studies Society in Liverpool.
His design incorporated the figure of Britannia, facing to her left and holding a laurel wreath in her left hand over the box where the commemorated serviceman's name was to be placed. In her right hand she is holding a trident. To represent Britain's sea power there are two dolphins each facing Britannia. A lion is standing in front of Britannia at her feet, also facing to the left with a menacing growl.
As specified by the committee, the words "He died for freedom and honour" are written around the margin of the circular plaque.

A very small lion, with his head facing to the right can be seen underneath the larger lion's feet, biting into a winged creature representing the German Imperial eagle.
Interestingly there was a response to the design from the zoo at Clifton, Bristol, whereby a letter was written to The Times to say that the lion was not very life-like, looked a bit feeble as it was too small in scale compared to Britannia.

The circular shape and coin-like appearance soon attracted several nicknames and the plaque became widely known as the "Dead Man's Penny", "Death Penny", "Death Plaque" or "Widow's Penny".

The first plaques were produced in December 1918 at the Government's Memorial Plaque Factory in Acton at 54-56 Church Road, London W3.

[Source: http://www.greatwar.co.uk/memorials/memorial-plaque.htm] #WW1 #gallipoli #weremember #deathpenny #memorial