



# *The Spire Sentinel*



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



***ISSUE 77 - July 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	<b>.Branch AGM and Members Evening</b> - 3 short presentations by Jon-Paul Harding, Andy Rawson and Grant Cullen
February	1st	<b>`Steaming to The Front` - Britain`s Railways in The Great War</b> by Grant Cullen
March	1st	<b>`They Think It`s all Over` ....</b> 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	<b><i>Soldiers and Their Horses - Horses and Their Soldiers</i></b> by Dr Jane Flynn - a sympathetic consideration of the soldier - horse relationship 1914-18
May	3rd	<b><i>`Finding Deborah`</i></b> by Mike Tipping. How the team that discovered tank Deborah D-51 went on to find me, and my journey to Deborah
June	7th	<b><i>The Cost of the War`</i></b> By Roy Larkin. Hansard tells us that the Great War of 1914-18 increased the National Debt to £7,435,000,000 or £377,144,063,927 at today's value which took 100 years to pay off.
July	5th	<b><i>The Italian Front 1915-1918</i></b> 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	Peter Hart returns to Chesterfield - last time was just before the first lockdown in March 2020. The title of Peter`s talk is <b>Rupert Brooke and the `Glitterati` at Gallipoli`</b>
September	6th	<b><i>The Inventions Department</i></b> 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	<b><i>`British League of Help`</i></b> 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	<b><i>`Shell Shock and the History of Psychiatry`</i></b> by Jill Brunt. Based upon sessions on this subject presented to students at Northern College, Barnsley
December	1st	TBA

## ***Issue 77 - list of contents + WFA Webinars***

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### **July 2022 WFA Webinar**

**ONLINE:** The foreign fields that are forever England - the CWGC around the world Apologies. This presentation had to be postponed because of technical problems. We have rescheduled it for Monday 4th July and the NEW link to join this event is shown here: [The foreign fields that are forever England - the CWGC around the world](#)

From time to time, the WFA's work on Pension Card records uncovers unusual stories - one example is that of **Charles Simon**, a civilian who received an award for gallantry and whose dependants were granted a military pension.

Adam Charles Simon (who preferred to be called Charles) was born in Bangkok in June 1880 - his father was Belgian whilst his mother was British. Charles was educated in Europe and later trained as a draughtsman. In April 1907, he married Leonie and set up home in Namur. By the outbreak of war, they had two children.

On the outbreak of war, Charles was deported to Germany but subsequently was allowed to return to Namur. On his return, he joined what was called 'The Lenders Service' - a group that collected details of German troop movements and passed these on to the Allies. However, in April 1915, the group was betrayed and all the group members were arrested and imprisoned in Liege to await trial. On 5 June 1915 the group came before a military court and were sentenced to death - with the sentence to be carried out on 7 June 1915. They were transferred to Fort Chartreuse where the sentence would be carried out.

On the morning of execution the prisoners were taken from their cells to the execution site. Charles had wished his body to be returned to Namur but all were buried at Chartreuse after a brief funeral service. Just two week's after her husband's death, Leonie gave birth to a daughter, Isabelle.

After the war, Charles was made an honorary sergeant in the British Army, with his wife being granted a military pension based on that rank. She also received a lump sum of 14000 francs (worth about £560 at the time - at today's values, worth £56,000).

In October 1919, the bodies of the group members were exhumed and returned to their next of kin. The execution ground is now a memorial park, with 48 stone crosses bearing the names of all those executed at Chartreuse on the Lawn of Honour.

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



## *Secretary's Scribbles*

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the July 2022 edition of our Branch Newsletter.

For Tuesday evenings Branch meeting we welcome John Chester - John has been to speak at our Branch before - but it was a few years ago. John is Chairman of the Spalding and South Lincolnshire Branch of the WFA, and a Deacon in the Baptist Church. He is also well known as the Cenotaph Parade Marshal at the WFA's annual Armistice Day commemorations at the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Over the last 27 years of public speaking, he has visited just about every branch of the WFA, delivering informative talks on a variety of subjects. John's talk on Tuesday night will be ***The Italian Front 1915-1918*** and covers the fighting in Italy from beginning to end. Includes the contribution of the British and their part in ending the war.

You often hear the comment 'it's a small world', well I got an example of that last Wednesday. As most of you are aware I am Branch Secretary of the Worksop and District Branch of the Royal British Legion. Since our last Branch Chaplain moved away from the area to take up parish work elsewhere we had been seeking a replacement. We have a good relationship with the Vicar of Worksop Priory Church and he said he could recommend a former military chaplain who lives near Mansfield and who had been assisting him. Anyway I and several members of the local RBL committee met at Priory Church to meet with this chap and during the introductions he turned to me and said... 'are you the guy who takes to do with Chesterfield WFA?....I am a member' ....and so he is.....although current pastoral duties means he can never get along on a Tuesday night.....as I said... 'small world' .....

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see that Andy Rawson has put together an excellent itinerary for the proposed visit to the sites around what was Redmires Camp in the hills just west of Sheffield. What we need now is to fix a date and time - would need to be on a weekend. Andy will speak to us at the start of Tuesday's meeting....let's get this show on the road!!



Next month we have the welcome return of Peter Hart to Chesterfield - last time was just before the first lockdown in March 2020. The title of Peter's talk is **Rupert Brooke and the 'Glitterati' at Gallipoli**

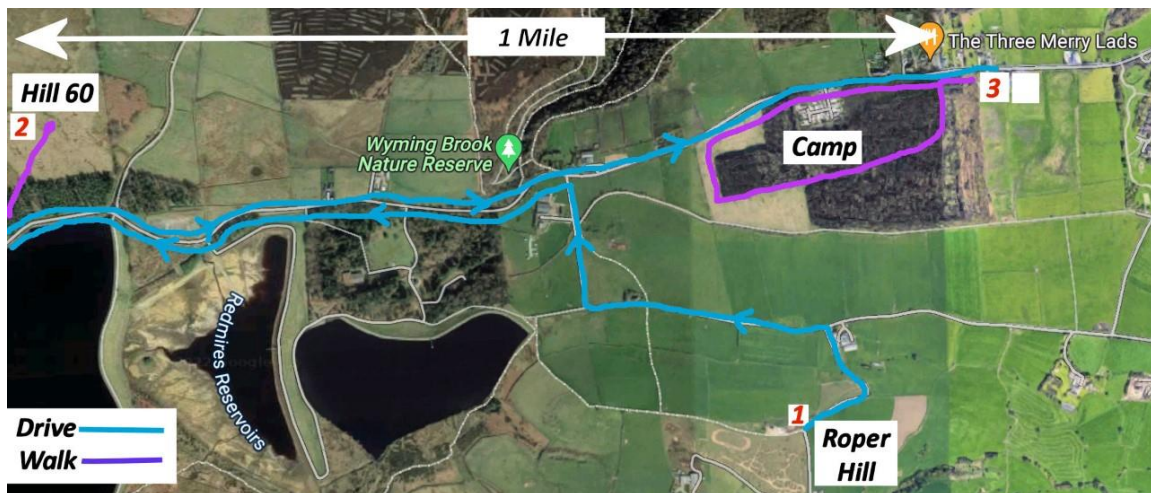
Looking forward to seeing you all on Tuesday.

Best wishes, Grant Cullen    Branch Secretary    07824628638

## REDMIRE CAMP VISIT

Andy Rawson has put together his proposed itinerary - we need to fix the date !!

Andy will be at Tuesday`s meeting (July 5<sup>th</sup>) and will talk about it for a couple of minutes at the start.



In summary there is a map attached with the stands and route

Stand S: Meet and organise cars/instructions

Stand 1: Roper Hill for introduction, orientation and the evolution of the camps

Stand 2: Walk up Hill 60 for training life at the camp

Stand 3: Walk through the WWII prison camp and around the WWI soldiers' camp

Times are estimated and involve talking time and travel to the next stand.

## REDMIRE VISIT: CHESTERFIELD WFA

**Stand S for Sugar: Car Park behind the Sportsman Pub**

Rendezvous at car park; introduction/instructions and organise cars

Drive to Point 1: Roper Hill (route not shown on map)

**Stand 1: Roper Hill (20 minutes)**

Involves: A 1 minute slight downhill walk on grass, involving one stile (not essential)

Orientation of the Redmires area and the evolution of the camps (WWI and WWII)

Hazards: Parking for three cars maximum on a wide verge

## **Stand to Point 2: Hill 60: (40 minutes)**

Views over the reservoirs close to the practice trenches and silhouette soldier memorial

Involves: Parking in car park and walking up a hill for 10 minutes

Hazards: A large car park but it can get busy on weekends  
The walk is up a fairly steep but well used path  
Keeping the soldiers busy and the training regime

## **Stand to Point 3: The Camp (60 minutes)**

Walk through the WWII camp and around the perimeter of the WWI camp

Involves: Returning back to the original carpark  
Walk through the woods which now cover the prison camp  
Walk around the perimeter of WWI  
Return through the woods (or along the road)

Hazards: Flat 45-minute walk on woodland paths  
Can return along the road but the first half has no footpath  
Retracing the route would be more relaxing

## **Point S for Sugar**

Rendezvous back at the cars

Three Merry Lads pub, where soldiers liked a drink

Involves: Taking in the views over Rivelin valley from the beer garden

Hazards: Beer!

**Total Estimated Time: 2 hours + pub**





# 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](http://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/](http://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   |



## June Meeting



Over the past few yers I have been following , with interest Roy Larkin` posts on Facebook - always informative - so I decided that I would like Roy to make the long journey up from Tadley in Hampshire to Chesterfield to give us presentation.

Roy has a lifelong interest in road transport history with particular emphasis on the WW1 period. Author of two books - *Destination Western Front - London's Omnibuses Go to War* and *We Can Do It! - Fred Cooper Remembers Edward Box & Ernest Holmes* (the story of heavy haulage in the Great War) - on which the some of his talks are based following talks are based. He has his own website (worth a visit - [www.historicroadways.co.uk](http://www.historicroadways.co.uk))

Roy travelled up from Hampshire with his wife and after spending the day in chesterfield they came to our venue. After spending the night locally, they went touring around /Derbyshire and the Peal district before returning home.

Roy did all his talk without notes - as he says - my slides are my notes. The title of his talk was **'The Cost of the War'**

Hansard tells us that the Great War of 1914-18 increased the National Debt to £7,435,000,000 or £377,144,063,927 at today's value which took 100 years to pay off. This of course means that everyone in attendance who has paid ta has, in some small way contributed to the cost of WW! !The fully illustrated and thought-provoking talk explored where some of the money went by examining Mechanical Transport costs and a wide variety of ways in which the government spent large amounts of money.

The following is a small selection of the slides which Roy used to illustrate his talk.





**1 / 4 / 1918 to 31 / 3 / 1919**

**177,000 tents**

**£4,764,000 [£171,748,966 at current prices]**

**2,983,000 groundsheets**

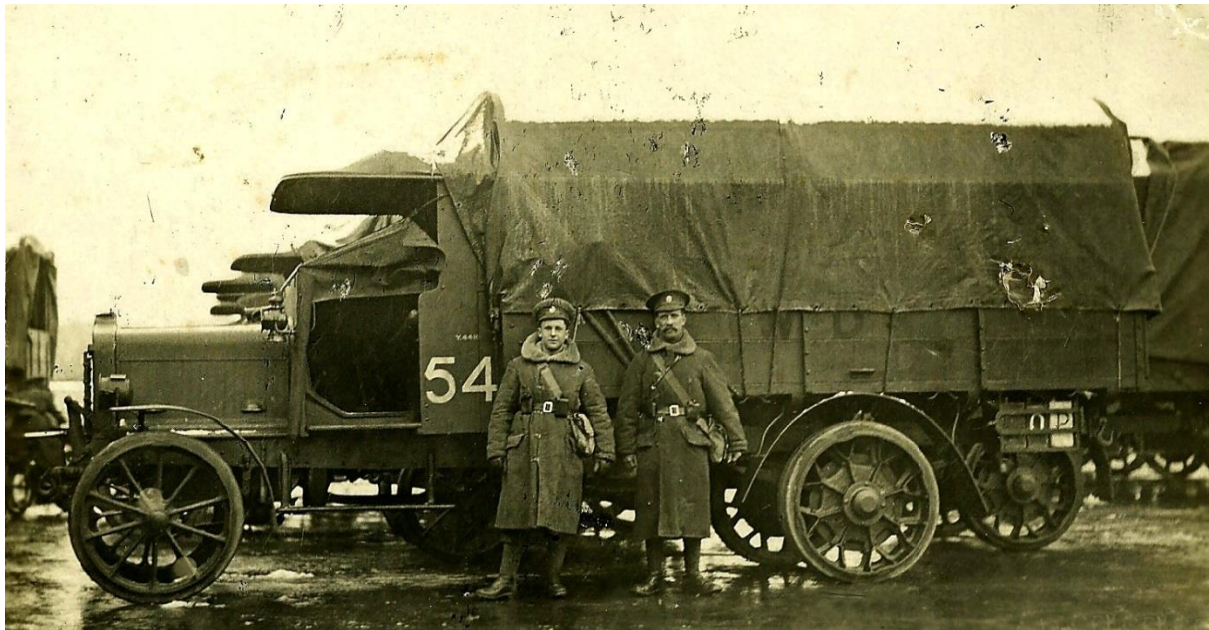
**£2,034,000 [£73,328,589 at current prices]**

**In total 4 / 8 / 1914 to 31 / 3 / 1919**

**1,653,000 tents**

**16,259,000 groundsheets**





Winter clothing issued by Ordnance to 23 November 1914

No.2 British Warm Coat - **£1.13.01 [£133]**

**16,706 – [£2,221,898]**

Coats lined with fur - **£3.13.06 [£296]**

**7,025 – [£2,079,400]**



Liverpool - 25/5/1915

78 ships in the Irish Sea awaiting berths



**£3,900 [£279,923] per day**

Ships queuing to get into port incurred **£50 [£4,028] per day demurrage**

Dieppe 1916

ss. *Warnow* arrived 27/4/1916 & began discharge 10/5/1916

13 days **£650 [£46,654]**

ss. *Pontypridd* arrived 30/4/1916 & began discharge 17/5/1916

17 days **£850 [£61,008]**



Wool destroyed

Hangar du Chambre de Commerce, Quai Freycinet 6, Dunkerque  
during air raid on 1/9/1917

**5,000,000Fr (£181,818) [£8,806,752]**

Wool purchased



1/4/1917 to 31/3/1918

**£89,000,000 [£3,531,046,403]**



Karrier (Clayton) 3-tonner

1914 - **£795 [£64,048]** @ 5 per week - **£3,975 [£320,241]**

November 1917 - **£815 [£39,476]**

25/11/1914

100 lorries (all approved makes) per week being supplied

**£79,500 [£6,404,829]**

During his summing up Roy drew everyone`s attention to fact that, as the war went on, France and Italy ran out of credit and were unable to pay for the desperately needed munitions from their principal supplier - the United States.

So how did they manage to continue equipping their forces and carrying on with the war. ?

The British Government and Treasury stepped to fill the gap and thereby kept our Allies in the war

## Flora Sandes

Flora Sandes, was born in Yorkshire. She was brought up in rural Suffolk but moved to Croydon, then part of Surrey, with her family between 1891 and 1901. Here she was taught by a governess and enjoyed the finer things in life. She was particularly fond of horse riding and shooting, often confessing that she wished she was a boy. She took a job as a secretary and quickly learnt to drive. She was keen to experience the world and quickly joined the growing First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY). With the FANY she improved her horsemanship, learnt first aid, signalling and drill. She wanted more from the FANY so left to join a similar organisation, The Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy. This organisation looked for opportunities to undertake humanitarian work; they were able to provide Flora with the adventure she craved. The Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy quickly volunteered their support in Serbia and Bulgaria during the First Balkan War in 1912 and Flora went with them. After a successful period assisting the Serbian Military, Flora jumped at the chance to volunteer to be a nurse on the outbreak of the First World War. Unfortunately the War Office turned her down as she had no formal qualification. This did not stop Flora, she joined Mabel Grouitch's St John Ambulance unit, largely consisting of American volunteers and rushed to the aid of the Serbian Army once more. She joined the Serbian Red Cross quickly on her arrival, finding herself posted to the ambulance supporting the Second Infantry Regiment of the Serbian Army. These soldiers were notorious for their battle prowess and were certain to feature heavily in any battles. The tides of War turned against the Serbian Army and they along with nurses like Flora were forced into retreat. During this retreat life was difficult for Flora, she was in an alien world and feared for her future.

To afford herself the best possible protection she took the decision to enrol as a member of the Serbian Army. She was no longer there to care for the sick and wounded, she was now a soldier in her own right. Possibly even living out her childhood dreams. The Serbian Army were clearly impressed with Flora and her abilities; she was quickly promoted to Corporal. She would have lived the life of a soldier; she would have had basic rations, irregular access to warm dry beds and regular encounters with the enemy. One such encounter in 1916 was to change Flora's war once more. In close quarter combat on the Serbian advance to reclaim Monastir, she was severely injured by a grenade.

Following this injury she was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major and received one of the highest available Serbian Decorations, The Order of the Karadorde's Star. She was too badly injured to return to the fighting force; instead she raised money to improve the levels of comfort afforded to Serbian soldiers, particularly those that had been taken prisoner. She knew how lucky she had been to avoid such a fate. At the same time she ran a hospital to support the sick and wounded once more. Following the War Flora remained in service with the Serbian Army. She became the first woman to receive a commission and retired at the rank of Captain in the 1920s. By 1927 she had settled back into civilian life, however she remained in Serbia. She married Yuri Yudenitch and they lived happily in France and Yugoslavia for many years.

When Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941 she and Yuri were once more called to action, however the invasion was over before they reached military lines. Shortly after Yuri took ill and sadly passed away, prompting Flora to move back to the Surrey region. She later returned to Suffolk and at the time of her death in 1956 was living in Wickham Market.

Flora was a strong, courageous and principled woman. Like many hundreds of other women in Surrey she wanted to do her bit to help with the War Effort, but also sought out adventure. Her contributions like the many nurses and VAD's that worked alongside her greatly contributed to the success of the medical services during the First World War and beyond.







### Flora at home in June 1956

As the years passed, her old wounds caught up with her and she took to using an electric wheelchair to travel between the local villages. She would set off, white hair streaming behind her, as she pushed it to its full speed. Increasingly nostalgic for the war, she lived for the annual gathering of the [Salonika Reunion Association](#), for whom she was a heroine. After a brief illness, she died

at Ipswich and East Suffolk Hospital on 24 November 1956 of ‘obstructive jaundice’, aged 80. She had renewed her passport shortly before she died, still dreaming of places to see and trips to take.

## The Irish at Gallipoli

A series of six podcasts recorded by Dr Jeff Kildea, Keith Cameron Chair of Australian History at University College Dublin in December 2014 for The History Hub (<http://historyhub.ie/the-irish-at-gallipoli-by-jeff-kildea>)

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## Episode 1 – Background

In 1916 Michael MacDonagh wrote a book called *The Irish at the Front*, in which he declared “Gallipoli will ever be to the Irish race a place of glorious pride and sorrow”. Alas, MacDonagh’s bold prediction has not come to pass and the Gallipoli campaign of 1915 and the part played by the Irish in it has largely faded from public memory in Ireland. This is in stark contrast to the manner in which in my own country, Australia, and also in New Zealand, Gallipoli continues to resonate down the generations.

Each year on 25 April, the anniversary of the beginning of the military phase of the Gallipoli campaign, tens of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders turn out in cities, towns and suburbs to attend commemoration services and to march, or watch others march, in honour of those who fell in that campaign and in all wars since in which their countries have participated.

In Ireland, especially the 26 counties, the Gallipoli campaign is largely unknown and, except for commemorations organised by Australians and New Zealanders living in Dublin, the anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli passes almost unmarked in Ireland, notwithstanding that about the same number of Irishmen as New Zealanders died there. For, although the Irish were as gallant in battle as the Australians and New Zealanders, who came to be known as the Anzacs, the sacrifice of the Irish at Gallipoli in the Empire’s cause was often portrayed at home as a betrayal of the Irish nation and its struggle for independence. In the words of the nationalist song *The Foggy Dew*, which commemorates those who died in the Easter Rising: ‘Twas better to die ’neath an Irish sky than at Suvla or Sedd-el-Bahr’.

In recent years, and in particular during this decade of commemorations, the Irish people have begun to rediscover the First World War, a war in which a grandfather or a great-uncle may have served and, in some cases, not returned. Although most of the fighting in which the Irish were engaged occurred in the trenches of the Western Front, for eight months in 1915 the allies attempted to break the stalemate that had set in there by launching an attack on one of Germany’s allies Turkey, by landing at Gallipoli a large invasion force that included thousands of Irishmen.

In this series of podcasts we will examine the part played by the Irish during the Gallipoli campaign, looking in particular at the landing on 25 April, the advance to Krithia between April and July, the August offensive, both at Anzac Cove, when Anzacs and Irishmen fought literally shoulder to shoulder, and at Suvla Bay, and finally the evacuation. In this first episode I will give an overview of the origins of the Gallipoli campaign and the events leading up to the landing.

### Origins

Following Turkey’s entry into the war on the German side in October 1914, some on the British War Council had suggested an attack on Turkey as a means of breaking the stalemate which had come over the Western Front and of assisting Russia.

Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, put forward a proposal to force the Dardanelles, the narrow waterway that connects the Mediterranean with the Sea of Marmara. From there another narrow waterway, the Bosphorus, leads past Constantinople (now Istanbul) to the Black Sea and Russia. This sea-route had been closed on Turkey’s entry into the war. The aim of the plan was to enable a fleet to pass through the Dardanelles to the Sea of Marmara and stand off Constantinople to intimidate and, if necessary, to bombard the Turks into surrender.



Success would re-open this all-year sea route enabling the Allies to send supplies to Russia and the Russians to ship wheat to the Allies. In addition, Churchill reasoned that the neutral Balkan states (Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria) would be inclined to join the Allies if Turkey were defeated.

Apart from these military considerations, ever present in the background was the long-held imperial ambition of each of Britain, France and Russia to carve out for themselves a slice of the Ottoman Empire once Turkey had been defeated. As we now know Britain's and France's ambitions in this regard were met in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement concluded between the two nations in May 1916 with the assent of Russia.

Initially the Dardanelles campaign was conceived as a joint naval and military operation. To overcome the objection of Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener that British troops could not be spared from the Western Front, Churchill's plan involved the use of Greek troops.

However, while the Greek government was then pro-British, King Constantine, who was married to the Kaiser's sister, was opposed to the proposal and Greece declined to participate.

The idea therefore languished until early January 1915, when Grand Duke Nicholas, supreme commander of the Russian forces and a cousin of the Czar, appealed to Britain for a military demonstration to draw away the Turkish troops who were attacking his armies in the Caucasus.

While Kitchener rejected the use of troops, he left open the possibility of a naval operation. Consequently, Churchill requested Vice-Admiral Sackville Carden, commanding the British East Mediterranean Squadron and a scion of an Anglo-Irish family from Tipperary, to prepare a plan for a naval operation against the Dardanelles. Carden came up with a plan to use battleships to knock out the forts and mobile batteries which guarded the Dardanelles and trawlers to clear away the mines which the Turks had laid in the waterway.

Within a short time the idea of attacking the Dardanelles, which had been developed to relieve pressure on the Russians, assumed a life of its own, for the Russians were able to defeat the Turks in the Caucasus without Allied help.

The idea continued to attract support because there were those in the War Council who believed the stalemate on the Western Front could best be broken by a successful campaign in the east. They were called "easterners" and included Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George.

On 28 January 1915 the War Council formally adopted Churchill's proposal for a naval attack on the Dardanelles, while two weeks later a decision was made to send to the Greek island of Lemnos a military force, including a brigade of Australians who were then training in Egypt, to prepare for a possible landing on the Gallipoli peninsula in support of the naval operation.

### **The naval operation**

The Dardanelles is about 2 miles wide at its mouth widening to 4 miles at Eren Kuei Bay before narrowing to just over 1 mile near Canakkale at what is called the Narrows and which is overlooked by the Kilid Bahr plateau.

Forts lined both sides of the strait leading up to and just beyond the Narrows with ten minefields laid across the strait. The location of the minefields was known to the British. However, an 11<sup>th</sup> line of mines parallel to the strait was laid in secret after the naval operation began. It would have a devastating effect on its outcome.

The naval bombardment of the forts began on 19 February 1915. A few months earlier, on 3 November 1914 (two days before Britain and France formally declared war on Turkey), British and French ships had fired on the forts at the mouth of the strait, achieving some success by detonating the magazine at Sedd-el-Bahr fort at Cape Helles, thus inspiring confidence in the efficacy of a naval attack. However, in the main round the navy had only limited success.

While a few forts were knocked out (some with the assistance of marines who had been landed on shore), others remained operational. Forewarned by the attack in November, the Turks had spent the intervening period strengthening their defences, so that, despite losing some forts, the remaining forts and the elusive Turkish mobile field batteries continued to prevent the minesweepers from clearing a path through the mines.

By mid-March it was decided that the navy should make an all-out attempt to force the Dardanelles. By then Admiral Carden had been relieved from command due to illness and replaced by fellow Irishman Admiral John de Robeck. The date chosen was 18 March. It proved disastrous for the Allies and provided a great victory for Turkey. Not only did the Anglo-French fleet fail to knock out the forts and clear the mines, three battle ships were sunk by Turkish guns and mines and three others badly damaged in the attempt. Hundreds of sailors were killed. Unbeknown to the Allies, the 11<sup>th</sup> minefield had been laid on the night of 8 March in Eren Kuei Bay the Allied ships used for turning. At least two of the battleships struck those mines causing alarm and confusion. In an afternoon the Allies lost more than a third of their strength.

Instead of cancelling the campaign, given the failure of the naval operation and the Russian victories in the Caucasus, it was decided to press on with a military attack on the peninsula to knock out the forts from the landward side.

### **The military plan**

The man appointed to command the expedition was Sir Ian Hamilton, a 62-year old veteran of numerous campaigns in Afghanistan, South Africa and Egypt. At his command was a force of some 75 000 soldiers comprising:

- two divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, whose initials ANZAC have now become the word “Anzac” used to describe Australian and New Zealand soldiers of the First World War;
- the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division, comprising regular soldiers recalled from the far reaches of the Empire, including three Irish battalions: the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers both recalled from India and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers recalled from Burma;
- the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the French Corps Expéditionnaire d’Orient, a mixture of French and French African colonial troops; and
- the Royal Naval Division, a military formation made up of naval personnel surplus to the requirements of the Royal Navy.

In late April 1915 Hamilton’s forces began to assemble in Mudros Harbour on the island of Lemnos awaiting the order to launch the invasion.

## Episode 2 - The Landing

In the first episode of this series we looked at the origins of the Gallipoli campaign and the unsuccessful naval operation to open up the Dardanelles sea-route to the Black Sea and Russia. In this episode we will look at the opening of the military campaign with the landing of ground troops on the Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915.

The main landing would be by the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division at Cape Helles around the toe of the peninsula, at five beaches designated from east to west as S, V, W, X and Y, with V and W beaches being the main points of attack. After landing, the 29<sup>th</sup> Division was to occupy the village of Krithia (or Alçıtepe as it is now called) about 7 kilometres north of Cape Helles and a hill, which the British called Achi Baba, 2.5 kilometres behind the village. It would then advance to Kilid Bahr, a plateau near Maidos (now Eceabat) which overlooks the Dardanelles at the Narrows.

The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, the Anzacs, would land on the Aegean coast just north of a headland called Gaba Tepe on a strand designated as Z Beach. Inland from Z Beach is a mountain range called Sari Bair, with three ridges splaying south-westerly from the high ground of Chunuk Bair to the Aegean Coast. On landing, the Anzac covering force was to move inland and occupy those three ridges while the main force would pass through the covering force to occupy Chunuk Bair. It would then advance across the peninsula to a hill called Mal Tepe near Maidos to prevent reinforcements from the north hindering the 29<sup>th</sup> Division's advance while cutting off Turks retreating from Helles.

As a diversion, the French would land at Kum Kale on the Asian side near the mouth of the Dardanelles. Another diversion by the Royal Naval Division would take place in the Gulf of Saros near Bulair on the far north of the peninsula.

The Turkish forces on the peninsula comprised about 80,000 men of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army in six divisions under the command of a 60-year old German officer General Otto Liman von Sanders. Although von Sanders was well aware of the impending invasion of the peninsula he did not know the precise date and time nor did he know where the main thrust would occur.

So, he had to distribute his troops in places where he thought the attack would most likely occur, thus spreading his force.

Two divisions were deployed near and north of Bulair, two divisions on the Asian side and two divisions on the main length of the peninsula.

One of the peninsular divisions (the 9<sup>th</sup>) was spread along the coast, while the other (the 19<sup>th</sup>) under Colonel Mustapha Kemal was held in reserve at Boghali near Maidos so that it could move to where ever the need arose. The men of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division were so thinly spread that they could be expected to do no more than to check an invader so as to give time for the reserves to come up. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> divisions were part of III Corps, a battle-hardened formation that had fought in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Although defeated there, they had learned valuable lessons and were seasoned soldiers.



## Anzac Cove

The first ashore on 25 April were the Australians of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division who were the covering force. Divided into two waves, the covering force began to come ashore in the dark at about 4.20 am, between moonset and sunrise. In the process of landing, their frontage, which was supposed to be about 3000 metres, narrowed to about 900 metres and they landed bunched up on both sides of a headland called Ari Burnu at the northern end of a cove now known as Anzac Cove. This meant that they had to navigate cliffs rather than gently sloping ground in order to advance inland. However, on the positive side it meant that they avoided the better prepared Turkish defences along the straight stretch of beach south of Anzac Cove and were shielded from enfilade fire along that beach that would have come from Gaba Tepe.

Consequently, the covering force came ashore relatively unscathed, but the commander of the covering force, concerned to protect his right flank from an expected counter attack from Gaba Tepe, paused on the Second Ridge in order to consolidate his position and then directed the first wave of the main force to go to the right rather than to pass through the covering force on the left to advance along the Second Ridge to seize the undefended Chunuk Bair.

These two decisions proved to be decisive as it gave the Turks time to bring up their reserves who occupied the high ground, pushed the small numbers of the covering force from their advance positions at Baby 700 just below Chunuk Bair and occupied the Third Ridge, effectively winning the battle for the heights and preventing any advance by the Anzacs beyond the Second Ridge. The small number of Australians who had reached the Third Ridge before the order was given to pause were either killed or forced to withdraw when the Turkish reserves arrived and pushed over the Third Ridge to occupy the landward side of the Second Ridge.

It was during the desperate fighting for the heights and the ridges, rather than on the beach, that most of the more than 700 Anzacs were killed in the first days of the campaign.

While the Anzacs were fighting it out on land, an Australian submarine the *AE2* under the command of an Irishman, Lieutenant Commander Henry Dacre Stoker of Dublin, made its way through the Dardanelles to the Sea of Marmara, where it began to disrupt Turkish shipping before it was disabled and forced to scuttle.

## Cape Helles

While the Australians had opted for an attack in the dark to preserve the element of surprise, Major General Aylmer Hunter-Weston, GOC 29<sup>th</sup> Division, decided on a daylight attack so as to minimise confusion.

At 6.25 am, a small flotilla of open boats carrying three companies of the Dublin Fusiliers struggled against the current towards a thin strand of sand near the village of Sedd-el-Bahr, designated in the plan of attack as V Beach. Alongside them, a 2000-ton collier, the *River Clyde*, steamed towards the beach carrying about 2100 men, comprising the Munster Fusiliers, two companies of the Hampshire Regiment, the remaining company of the Dublin Fusiliers and additional support troops.

The idea was to run the collier aground in the shallow waters off the beach so that a string of lighters, or small barges, that were being towed by the ship would be carried forward to the beach by their momentum and, with the assistance of a small support vessel, be held in place to form a bridge between the ship and the shore. The soldiers inside the hold of the *River Clyde*, shielded from Turkish bullets until the last

minute, would emerge through access ways cut into the ship's sides and run the short distance across the lighters to the beach, where they would form up and advance to their objectives.

With the gangway finally in place, the soldiers filed out of the ship's hull to be met by an intense hail of bullets and shrapnel. Captain GW Geddes, Officer Commanding X Company of the Munster Fusiliers, who led his men out, was unscathed, but the next 48 men behind him all fell. The Turkish defenders in Sedd-el-Bahr fort could fire on those emerging from the starboard side, while those inside Fort No. 1 on the heights above the beach, at a range of no more than 300 metres, covered the port side and enfiladed any of the troops who made it ashore. Their only cover was a sandbank, where Captain Geddes took shelter with the survivors. Geddes later wrote that in the process he lost 70 percent of his company.

The losses among the troops in the open boats were also high. In some cases, the oarsmen were shot so that the boats drifted and the helpless soldiers crammed into them were mown down. In other cases, the defenders waited until the men, having tossed their oars, were within 20 metres of the shore and then swept the boats with fire. Captain Guy Nightingale of the Munsters wrote in his diary that, of the first boat-load of 40 men, only 3 reached the shore, all wounded, while altogether the Dublins in the open boats lost 560 men and 21 officers in 15 minutes. In all, it is estimated that more than half of the Irish troops who tried to get ashore were killed or wounded. It was reported that the sea in the bay was red with blood.

Apart from a small party that had managed to get close to the Sedd-el-Bahr fort and had dug itself in, the survivors continued to shelter under the sandbank until nightfall, when the rest of the troops on board the *River Clyde* were landed under cover of darkness. According to Geddes, the two companies of Hampshires who disembarked that night did so without a shot being fired at them.

Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief of the expedition, acknowledged the disaster in his memoirs when he wrote: 'Would that we had left [V Beach] severely alone and landed a big force at Morto Bay, where we could have forced the Sedd-el-Bahr Turks to fall back'. So heavy were the Irish losses, that for three weeks after the landing the Dublins and the Munsters ceased to exist as separate units, being amalgamated into a composite battalion attached to the 87<sup>th</sup> Brigade and nicknamed the 'Dubsters'.

W Beach was also a scene of slaughter, with six Victoria Crosses being awarded to men of the Lancashire Fusiliers, one of them an Irishman Private William Keneally of Wexford. The three other beaches were relatively quiet, with the Inniskillings, who landed at X Beach in a supporting role, not meeting serious opposition until they moved inland.

Badly mauled, the invading force was unable to move much beyond the beach head. On the day after the landing Corporal William Cosgrove of the Munster Fusiliers was awarded a Victoria Cross for his part in the fighting to capture Sedd-el-Bahr village. Two days later, after consolidating its position, the 29<sup>th</sup> Division began its advance to Krithia and Achi Baba.

### Episode 3 - The Advance to Krithia

In episode 2 we looked at the landings on 25 April 1915 at Anzac Cove by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (the Anzacs) and at Cape Helles by the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division, which included a battalion from each of the Dublin Fusiliers, the Munster Fusiliers and the Inniskilling Fusiliers.

As we have seen, the Dublins and Munsters, who landed at V Beach, suffered such huge losses that for a few weeks thereafter they were amalgamated into a composite battalion nicknamed the Dubsters, while the Inniskillings were more fortunate in that they landed at X Beach, which was lightly defended.

Y Beach, further north on the Aegean coast, was not defended at all and the 2000 British troops who landed there climbed a pathway to the cliffs atop the beach and sat down to await the main force which was to advance from the southern beaches. Y Beach is close to Krithia, one of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division's objectives for the first day, but the landing party made no attempt to seize the village, which was virtually undefended. Nor did they make their way south to assist the troops at V and W Beaches who were unable to advance to meet them because they were facing stiff opposition. Eleven hours after the landing Ottoman reinforcements launched an attack on the Y Beach landing party, eventually causing them to withdraw in disorder back to the beach from where they were evacuated.

For the next two days the 29<sup>th</sup> Division pushed forward from V, W and X Beaches to consolidate its beachhead in preparation to advance on Krithia and the high ground behind it, which the British called Achi Baba. They were joined on the right by the French, who on the first day had made a diversionary landing at Kum Kale on the Asian shore of the Dardanelles and later by the Royal Naval Division, which had made a feint in the Gulf of Saros.

#### First Battle of Krithia

At 8 am on 28 April the advance began. The plan was for the line, which stretched across the foot of the peninsula, to swing like a gate hinged on the right. This meant that the British on the left had further to march than the French on the right. On the far left was the 87<sup>th</sup> Brigade, including the Inniskilling Fusiliers, who found their progress impeded by the rough terrain of Gully Ravine and the Turkish machine guns which brought relentless fire on the attackers.

Turkish counter attacks drove the allies back in places, necessitating units on their flanks to fall back as well. By 6 pm the attack was called off. Progress had been made but, despite the allies suffering 3000 casualties, Krithia was still in Turkish hands. Thus ended the First Battle of Krithia.

The Commander in Chief Sir Ian Hamilton decided to bring in reinforcements of artillery and infantry before trying again. Among the reinforcements were the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Brigade, the New Zealand Brigade and five batteries of Australian and New Zealand artillery, transferred from the Anzac sector. While the British paused to build up their forces, the Turks counter-attacked. On the night of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> May they tried to break through with a force of 16 000 men. One of the points of the attack was a part of the line held by the Dubsters. Despite being less than battalion strength, the composite force of Irishmen held on. A second counter-attack on 4 May was also repulsed.



## Second Battle of Krithia

On 6 May at 11 am the Second Battle of Krithia began, led by troops of the 88th Brigade with the Irish and the Anzacs in reserve. But it faltered before it really got started. The attacking formations had advanced only a few hundred metres before they ran into heavy fire from hidden machine-guns, which was so effective that it halted their progress for the rest of the day. Sir Ian Hamilton ordered Major General Hunter-Weston to resume the attack the next day, but this time to start an hour earlier. As before, the Turkish machine-gun positions had a devastating effect on the lines of advancing infantry. By 2 pm the second attack had also stalled. Hunter-Weston then committed the 87th Brigade, which included the two Irish battalions, the Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Dubsters. But again the attack failed.

Observing the adage 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again,' Hamilton ordered another attack on the third day. The plan of attack for the third day provided for the New Zealanders to replace the 88th Brigade. The Irish of the 87th Brigade would be on their left. As Major CB Brereton of the Canterbury Battalion led his company out of the Dubsters' trench, one of the Irishmen called out, 'It's no good advancing, sir, you'll all be killed. It's no good, sir'. He was not far wrong. By midday the attack was once more brought to a halt, with only a minimal gain of ground. Sustained Turkish machine-gun and rifle fire had inflicted heavy casualties on the New Zealanders, including Major Brereton, who was severely wounded.

Despite four failed attempts, Hamilton was still not ready to admit defeat, even though his force had not yet reached or even sighted the Turkish front line. At 5.30 pm on 8 May, the attack resumed. The leading battalion of the 87th Brigade was shot down as soon as it left its trenches and not a metre of ground was gained. Meanwhile, the 2nd Australian Brigade, given only a half-hour's notice, ran forward to a trench occupied by British soldiers, which the Australians called the 'Tommies' Trench'. Unclear as to what they were meant to do next, many of the Australians either jumped into the trench or lay down behind it. When their commander, the Irish-born Colonel McCay, arrived, he climbed on to the parapet and called out, 'Now then, Australians! Which of you men are Australians? Come on, Australians!' With Turkish bullets whizzing into the parapet and raising clouds of dust, the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade rallied to the cry of 'On Australians! Come on, Australians!' and scrambling out of the Tommies' Trench, their bayonets glinting in the afternoon sun, advanced towards an unseen enemy, who poured a hail of bullets and shrapnel down on them.

All the while McCay prowled up and down the parapet, exposed to fire, urging newly arrived men, exhausted by reason of the rush and their heavy packs, to press on. When the attackers reached a point within 550 metres of the Turkish line they could see for the first time where the enemy was located, but it was a cruel deception - what they couldn't see were Turkish skirmishers hidden by the scrubby undergrowth 100 metres in front of the trench, who continued to pour a heavy fusillade into the advancing Australians. With the Turkish trench still more than 350 metres ahead, the remnants of the 2nd Brigade's front line eventually faltered and became stationary, with the survivors desperately scraping holes in the ground in order to find some respite from the Turkish bullets. The Australians had lost one half of their 2000 strong force. There would be no attempt the next day to resume the attack. Hamilton had done his dash. Without effective artillery support and against an unseen and disciplined enemy, it was always going to be a worthless gesture.

With the arrival of fresh reinforcements from Egypt, the Anzac infantry were relieved to be able to return to the northern sector at Anzac Cove. During May the

British pushed the line forward by a series of stealthy night attacks to get within striking distance of Krithia.

The lack of artillery support for a general advance was exacerbated when HMS *Goliath* was sunk by a Turkish torpedo boat on 13 May and HMS *Triumph* and HMS *Majestic* were sunk by a German submarine on 25 and 27 May.

### Third Battle of Krithia

Following the failure of the previous two battles, Hamilton insisted that the next attack be limited to seizing the Turkish trenches and establishing a new line 500 metres beyond. On 4<sup>th</sup> June the Third Battle of Krithia began. The 29<sup>th</sup> Division was on the left of the attacking line with the French on the right and the newly arrived 42<sup>nd</sup> Division in the middle. The attacks on the left and the right bogged down as the troops found it difficult to make progress in Gully Ravine on the left and the Kereves Dere ravine on the right. In the middle the Manchester Regiment fought its way to the outskirts of Krithia and to the lower slopes of Achi Baba.

However, with its flanks unprotected it had to withdraw. Once again progress was made, mostly in the middle, but at a huge cost: 4500 British and 2000 French casualties. Yet Krithia was still out of reach.

### Actions at Kereves Dere and Gully Ravine

Instead of launching a fourth major attack, General Hunter-Weston decided to undertake limited attacks along the two flanks. On 21 June the French began on the right, capturing the Haricot Redoubt, a Turkish strong point in the Kereves Dere which had proved troublesome in earlier attacks. On 28 June it was the turn of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division to attack along Gully Spur, Gully Ravine and neighbouring Fir Tree Spur. They had some success, particularly on the left of their line where the Irish regiments were engaged, but the Turks mounted a massive counter attack along Gully Ravine. In the vicious hand to hand fighting that followed two Inniskilling Fusiliers, Captain Gerald O'Sullivan and Corporal James Somers, were awarded the Victoria Cross for recapturing a trench taken by the Turks.

Inspired by the success of these limited attacks, Hunter-Weston ordered another thrust in the centre and on the right for 12 July. However, after some initial success Turkish counter- attacks nullified much of the gains. By now, both sides had fought themselves to a standstill at Helles and the focus of the campaign would shift to the Anzac . Episode 4 - The August Offensive (Sari Bair)

In the previous episode we saw how in a series of battles between April and June 1915 the Allies' frontline at Cape Helles had been pushed a few kilometres north at great cost but without managing to capture the village of Krithia or the high ground of Achi Baba, which had been the objectives for the first day of the campaign. Consequently, Sir Ian Hamilton decided in July to shift the point of attack from Helles to the northern sector, at Anzac Cove. Here the frontline to the east of the cove extended along the Second Ridge from below Chunuk Bair to Lone Pine on the 400 Plateau. The aim was to capture Chunuk Bair and the summit of the Sari Bair range Hill 971, and to join up with a subsidiary force that would advance from Russell's Top across the Nek to Baby 700, a knoll just south of Chunuk Bair. A series of feints would be made to deceive the Turks as to the location of the main attack including a 'demonstration' at Lone Pine and attacks on the Turkish trenches from positions along the Second Ridge. At the same time, a force would be landed at Suvla Bay to secure a base of operations for all the forces in the northern sector.

The attacks on Chunuk Bair and Hill 971 were to be carried out by men of the New

Zealand and Australian Division, commanded by an Irishman, Major General Alexander Godley. The Anzacs would be reinforced for the attack on Sari Bair by the 29th Indian Brigade, comprising regular battalions of Gurkhas and Sikhs, and by four brigades of the British New Army, including the 29th Brigade of the 10th (Irish) Division, comprising the 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, the 6th Battalion Leinster Regiment and the 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers as well as the 10th Battalion Hampshire Regiment. The Lone Pine feint was assigned to the 1st Australian Division, while the Suvla Bay landing was to be carried out by Britain's IX Army Corps, comprising New Army troops of the 11th (Northern) Division and the two remaining brigades of 10th (Irish) Division, the 30th and 31st.

Between 2 and 6 August, the New Army reinforcements landed at Anzac Cove at night under cover of darkness. In the early hours of 6 August the Irishmen of the 29th Brigade found themselves camped alongside Australians and New Zealanders in Shrapnel Gully. Within a short time they learned why it had been so named, when a few of their number were killed or wounded by exploding shells. These men were citizen soldiers like the Anzacs alongside whom they were about to fight. But unlike the Anzacs, they had not been in battle before.

### Lone Pine

At 4.00 pm on 6 August, the great offensive began, starting with a feint at Helles to divert Turkish attention. An hour and a half later, the Australian 1st Division commenced its assault on Lone Pine. It was to be one of the bloodiest fights of the whole campaign, resulting in more than 2000 Australian and 5000 Turkish casualties over the next four days. Seven Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross. It was at Lone Pine that the 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers first saw action, supporting the Australians and helping to clear the Turkish trenches of the dead, dragging the bodies to Brown's Dip for burial.

Meanwhile, two companies of the 6th Battalion Leinster Regiment relieved the Australians holding Courtney's Post and Quinn's Post, both precarious positions on the Second Ridge, where throughout the night the Turks kept up a stream of rifle and machine-gun fire. General Godley later wrote to the commander of the 29th Brigade that 'the work of the Leinster Regiment at Quinn's Post & Russell's Top has been excellent throughout'.

Nevertheless, the actions at Lone Pine, Courtney's and Quinn's were merely diversions, whose purpose was to draw Turkish reserves to the south of the Anzac position, while the main Allied force under General Godley stealthily climbed the rugged spurs leading to the coveted prizes of Chunuk Bair and Hill 971, the high points of the Sari Bair range.

### Battle for Sari Bair

The initial phase of this operation was completed successfully with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles seizing the foothills that left the way open to Chunuk Bair.

Unfortunately, the task of actually getting that far had proved more difficult than the plan had envisaged and the assault on the peak was running behind schedule - enough for the Turks to work out what was afoot and to reinforce their flimsy force on top of the hill. As a result, all attempts to seize the summit during the day were beaten back at great expense to the attackers.

In the early hours of the next morning, 8 August, the Wellington Battalion of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade, supported by two New Army battalions of the 13th (Western) Division attacked under cover of darkness. Much to the surprise of the Wellington commander, Lieutenant Colonel Malone, a New Zealander of Irish



descent, the crest at the southern shoulder of Chunuk Bair was found to be unoccupied. During the artillery barrage that had preceded the attack, the Turks had abandoned the position. For the first time since 25 April, men of the Anzac force could look out on the Dardanelles - the ultimate prize of the whole campaign. But theirs was a feeble foothold, for once day broke the Turks began to pour a withering fire onto the position and onto Rhododendron Ridge, a spur which ran down from it, forcing the rest of the Allied troops to scatter into the deep gullies on either side of the spur. By 9 am, the companies of the Wellington Battalion clinging to the crest had been wiped out, leaving the support companies holding a trench just below it. For a day and half they held on. On the night of 9-10 August they were relieved by two English battalions. Out of the 760 men of the Wellington Battalion who went into the fight, only 70 were unwounded, with Malone among the dead.

Birdwood still saw the chance to achieve success by bringing up additional troops to attack Chunuk Bair. He ordered his reserves, including the 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, to join Godley's force. Leaving Anzac Cove at 10 am on 8 August, the reserve force marched north to Chailak Dere, one of the ravines that led inland. But their progress was blocked by a stream of wounded and other traffic coming down the gully from the battlefield above. After a night of scrambling over very rough country they arrived at a small plateau beneath Chunuk Bair called 'the Farm', where British and New Zealand troops occupied trenches around its outer edge. In the Australian Official History, Charles Bean wrote that the Farm 'projected from the hillside like a terraced tennis-court or cricket-field ... any attempt to cross the terrace was deadly'. He then described what happened next:

'As they lay there, an order came to a company commander of the [Royal Irish] Rifles to advance over the terrace. 'Surely you won't do it - it can't be done,' said an officer of the Maoris who lay next him. 'I'm going - I've been told to,' was the reply. He led forward the men round him, and, according to the testimony of the Maori officer, none came back.'

Bean recorded in a footnote to his account that bodies of men of the Royal Irish Rifles were found after the war within 20 metres of the crest of Chunuk Bair.

The 6th Battalion Leinster Regiment was also committed to the fight, arriving on the night of 9 August at the Apex, a knoll on Rhododendron Ridge a few hundred metres from the summit. But by then the Turks, under Mustapha Kemal, were assembling on the far side of Chunuk Bair in readiness for a counterattack that was unleashed the next morning. Waves of Turkish infantry swept over the summit killing most of the New Army defenders on the crest and driving the remainder back down the western side. The 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, fighting desperately to hold the Farm, lost almost all its officers before withdrawing from the position.

On Rhododendron Ridge, the advance position at the Pinnacle, occupied by the Loyal North Lancashires, was overwhelmed and the way was open for the Turks to push the British Empire troops off the ridge. In front of them was the Apex held by the remnants of the Wellington Battalion, the Leinsters and the massed machine-guns of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade. Major Bryan Cooper, an officer with the 10th (Irish) Division, described what happened next:

*'On the right the Leinsters stood their ground. At last the moment had arrived to which they had so anxiously looked forward. Turk and Irishman, face to face, and hand to hand, could try which was the better man. ... In spite of the odds, the two companies in the front line succeeded in checking the attack, and at the crucial moment they were reinforced by 'B' and 'C' Companies*

*from the support line ... Shouting, they flung themselves into the fray, and drove the Turks back after a desperate struggle at close quarters.'*

Holding the Apex was vital as the New Zealand machine-gunners, who had been concentrated there, were able to pour a withering fire into the Turks, stopping their further advance. After the battle Major General Godley sent for the commanding officer of the Leinsters and complimented him on the work of the battalion that morning.

The Connaught Rangers, who were brought up to support the New Zealanders, reoccupied the Farm. But with the Turks in command of the high ground, their position was untenable and they were ordered to withdraw. Thus ended the battle of Chunuk Bair, the last best hope of an Allied victory at Gallipoli.

In the next episode we will look at the landing at Suvla Bay and the battles in the Suvla sector involving the Irish regiments.

### Episode 5 - The August Offensive (Suvla Bay)

In the previous episode we looked at the August offensive and the involvement of the Irish regiments in the battle for the Sari Bair range. In this episode we will examine another aspect of the August offensive, the operations at Suvla Bay, where Irishmen from the 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division and the 29<sup>th</sup> Division were involved.

On the morning of 7 August, while the men of the New Zealand and Australian Division were attempting to seize the high points of the Sari Bair range and the 29<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division was providing support to the Anzacs, the remainder of the 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division, along with the 11<sup>th</sup> (Northern) Division, were landing at Suvla Bay. The scandalous failure of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stopford, a senior yet inexperienced commander, to order his corps to advance immediately from the beachhead and seize the high ground when the landing was relatively unopposed is notorious.

#### Suvla

The 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division would suffer severely during the Suvla campaign, being not only inexperienced, but also ill-equipped and under strength. As we have seen, one of its brigades, the 29<sup>th</sup>, was sent to Anzac Cove, while the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Brigades landed at Suvla minus the division's artillery, which was still in Egypt, and the division's engineers, who were delayed. Nevertheless, the 10<sup>th</sup> had an early success on the first day, when five of its battalions took part in the seizure of Chocolate Hill, after having advanced across open ground under intense Turkish fire in the heat of the day and without adequate supplies of water. A New Zealand officer, Captain Thornhill described the action:

*The Empire can do with a heap more 'freshies' of the Irish brand ... Those that witnessed the advance will never forget it. Bullets and shrapnel rained on them, yet they never wavered ... How they got there Heaven only knows. As the land lay, climbing into hell on an aeroplane seemed an easier proposition than taking that hill.*

Apart from this success, however, the 'freshies' of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division had little else to show for their sacrifice. Over the following weeks they suffered heavy casualties, particularly in the assault on the high ridge of Kiritch Tepe Sirt, which had been reinforced by the Turks following Stopford's delay in moving from the beachhead. Initially the men of the Dublin and Munster Fusiliers of the 30<sup>th</sup> Brigade made advances along the top of the ridge, but heat, thirst and exhaustion as well as

increasing Turkish resistance slowed their progress. Then the Turks launched a fierce counter-attack with fresh troops and a plentiful supply of bombs, something the Irishmen lacked, thus forcing them to withdraw. At the same time an attack by the 5<sup>th</sup> Inniskilling Fusiliers of the 31<sup>st</sup> Brigade on nearby Kidney Hill was beaten back at great expense to the battalion, which was reduced to less than half strength.

The plight of the Irishmen was not helped when, in the middle of the battle, their divisional commander, Lieutenant General Bryan Mahon, resigned in a fit of pique, after he was passed over for promotion to corps commander following Sir Ian Hamilton's sacking of General Stopford on 15 August.

Six days later, units of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division, including its three Irish battalions, the Dublin Fusiliers, the Munster Fusiliers and the Inniskilling Fusiliers, which had been brought up from Helles to reinforce the New Army troops at Suvla, suffered badly at Scimitar Hill, which had been taken but abandoned on the first day. During the battle, the continuous shelling set the undergrowth ablaze and many of the wounded were burnt alive where they had fallen. At one point the Inniskilling Fusiliers managed to capture the summit, but were forced to withdraw when they drew heavy fire from the Turks on the Anafarta ridge. Having failed to dislodge the Turks from Scimitar Hill, the action was called off with more than a third of the attacking force, some 5300 men, having been killed or wounded.

## Hill 60

At the same time as Irishmen of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division were attempting to capture Scimitar Hill, their compatriots serving with the Anzacs were taking part in a battle to seize nearby Hill 60. The low pimple of a knoll, which gloried in the name 'Hill 60', was of tactical importance because it formed a link between the Suvla and Anzac sectors and provided a view north towards Anafarta. When the first attack began at 3.30 pm on 21 August, the Connaught Rangers on the left of the attacking force had the task of seizing the Kabak Kuyu wells, which could provide much needed water for the parched troops fighting in the heat of the Gallipoli summer. This they did with relative ease, as there were few Turks there, though they came under heavy fire from Hill 60 and from snipers concealed in the scattered bushes. Much to the annoyance of Lieutenant Colonel HFN Jourdain, commanding officer of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Connaught Rangers, Sir Ian Hamilton in his dispatches attributed the victory to the 29<sup>th</sup> Indian Brigade without mention of the Rangers. This erroneous account was published in *The Times*, fuelling complaints by the Irish that their efforts were not being recognised. After correspondence between Jourdain, Godley and Hamilton, *The Times* eventually acknowledged the Rangers' part in the attack, but not until 1920.

After capturing the well, the Rangers charged Hill 60 in support of the New Zealanders. In their wild charge the Rangers lost 12 officers and 248 men, of whom 46 were killed before they were eventually stopped. The Australian Official Historian Charles Bean described the charge in these words:

*[The Connaught Rangers] were seen dashing up the seaward end of the hill, the Turks running before them. This fine charge called forth the admiration of all who beheld it, and such a movement, if it had been concerted and delivered along the whole line of attack with the flanks well guarded, would probably have carried Hill 60.*

By nightfall, the Allies had secured but a foothold on Hill 60, with only the New Zealanders in possession of a small section of the Turkish trenches. The New Zealand commander, Brigadier General Andrew Russell, inspected the troops that



night and, realising that his men were too worn out to extend the line, requested fresh reinforcements.

The 18th Battalion of the Australian 2nd Division had landed at Gallipoli just two days before. Thrown into the battle, the battalion, 750 strong, charged the Turkish line, but it was met by a storm of enfilade fire that in a short time reduced its numbers by 11 officers and 372 men, half of whom were killed.

In less than two days, the attacking force had lost over 1300 men - one third of its number. Nevertheless, it had a toehold on Hill 60, and General Birdwood ordered another assault on 27 August. Reinforced by men of the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade who had returned from the failed attack on Hill 971, the Australians launched a fresh attack at 4 pm, again suffering severely for little gain as wave after wave was cut down. The New Zealanders and Connaught Rangers, however, managed to gain access to a section of Turkish trench shown on their maps as 'D-C'. From there, as night fell, the battle became one of hand-to-hand fighting with bayonet and bomb in the maze of trenches that crisscrossed the hill. During the night, the attacking force was reinforced by the 9th Light Horse Regiment. The War Diary of the 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers gives some indication of the fierceness of the fighting in which Australians and Irishmen fought literally shoulder to shoulder:

*[At 11.55 pm] the Light Horse had come into communication with the [Officer Commanding] Connaught Rangers & had arranged for retaking the trench from D to C. The Australians progressed some distance but were in their turn driven back to D. A further portion of them took & held the more southern portion of the cross trench about 80 yds in front of & parallel to the old New Zealand line. This was done & measures were taken to consolidate this new line. The men advanced in spite of the galling cross fire & shrapnel, in splendid fashion, & made good their footing little by little. It was found, however, that the trench could not be used to the extent desired on account of the piles of dead & debris, which not only littered the trench from D to C, but simply choked it up.*

As dawn broke, the Allied forces held disconnected sections of the Turkish line. During the day both sides deepened and extended their trenches and in between bombing duels tried to rest in preparation for the night to come. But for the Connaught Rangers the fight was over. Reduced to only 164 men they were relieved and replaced by men of the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment.

The Allies never did capture the summit of Hill 60. Nevertheless, they continued to hold the seaward slopes, securing the Anzac flank and keeping open the link with Suvla. Like so much of what happened at Gallipoli from 25 April onwards, the action at Hill 60 was a half-victory gained at great expense, with the fighting of 27-29 August adding another 1100 names to the casualty list.

The battles for Scimitar Hill and Hill 60 marked the end of British attempts to advance at Suvla. As elsewhere on the Gallipoli peninsula the opposing forces had fought themselves to a standstill after suffering and inflicting huge losses.

In the next episode we will look at the conclusion to the Gallipoli campaign with the evacuation of the allied forces and at the aftermath of the campaign for the Irishmen involved.

## Episode 6 - Evacuation and Aftermath

In the last two episodes we looked at the August offensive and the battles in which Irish troops took part, firstly those at Anzac, during which the 29<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division fought alongside the Australians and New Zealanders, and then at Suvla, where the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Brigades of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division as well as the three Irish battalions of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division, were among the British forces trying to extend the allies tenuous hold on the Gallipoli peninsula.

As we have seen, the battles for Scimitar Hill and Hill 60, in which the Irish were involved, marked the end of British attempts to advance at Suvla. As elsewhere on the Gallipoli peninsula the opposing forces had fought themselves to a standstill after suffering and inflicting huge losses. The 10<sup>th</sup> Division, in particular, had suffered severely. When the 29<sup>th</sup> Brigade had landed at Anzac Cove on 6 August, each of its battalions had a strength of about 25 officers and 750 other ranks. But the battles to seize the heights of the Sari Bair range exacted a heavy toll: there the 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles lost 21 officers and 354 other ranks; the 6th Battalion Leinster Regiment lost 11 officers and 250 other ranks; and the 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers lost 8 officers and 105 other ranks. The Rangers suffered further losses at Hill 60. When finally withdrawn the battalion numbered just 164 men.

### The 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division withdraws

Reduced to under effective strength, the units of the 29<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Anzac were employed mostly in work parties until 29 September, when they marched down to the shore and, with their compatriots of the 30th and 31st Brigades from Suvla, boarded ships for Lemnos.

Moved by the sight of his men filing down to the beach, Major Bryan Cooper of the 5<sup>th</sup> Connaught Rangers wrote:

*We had passed that way less than two months before, but going in the opposite direction full of high hopes. Now we were leaving the Peninsula ... our work unfinished and the Turks still in possession of the Narrows. Nor was it possible to help thinking of the friends lying in narrow graves on the scrub-covered hillside or covered by the debris of filled-in trenches, whom we seemed to be abandoning. Yet though there was sorrow at departing there was no despondency.*

Summing up the campaign he added with a tinge of bitterness:

*The 10th Division had been shattered, the work of a year had been destroyed in a week, and nothing material had been gained.*

Among Anzacs and Irishmen there was a mutual respect following their shared experience. The old hands among the Australians and New Zealanders who fought alongside the Irish at Anzac Cove had no grounds to doubt their courage. They well understood the difficulties confronting them. Private John Turnbull, a veteran of the 8th Australian Battalion wrote in his diary:

*We do not blame the Kitch Army too much for their failure. Considering they came straight from home here. They were not acclimatised. The heat, no training to rush these hills, and water beat them.*

In 1916 Lieutenant Colonel Jourdain, the commanding officer of the 5<sup>th</sup> Connaught Rangers, recounted how in November 1915 a party of Australian soldiers who had been evacuated wounded to England met John Redmond MP, leader of the Irish National Party, while visiting the House of Commons and expressed to him their 'highest admiration for the fighting qualities of the Irish soldiers. One charge by the Connaught Rangers was, they said, the finest thing they had seen in the war'. Fifteen years later, Jourdain told the British Official Historian:

*I must say I liked soldiering with the A. & NZ Division, they were delightful to serve with - they remember all this even now in Australia, and they look back with much pleasure to those days in August 1915 - when they were with us in Gallipoli.*

The 10th (Irish) Division's reprieve was brief, for in December 1915 it was sent to Salonika to fight the Bulgarians who, sensing the way the war was then going, had allied themselves with Turkey. The Irishmen's experiences in that theatre would prove no more uplifting than their brief but tragic sojourn at Gallipoli. In September 1917 the division was transferred to Palestine, where it fought alongside the Australian Light Horse in battles such as Beersheba and in the capture of Jerusalem. During its time there the Irish component was steadily diluted due to declining enlistments until by the end of the war it was effectively an Indian division.

### Evacuations

For the Anzacs, the Gallipoli campaign ended in December 1915 when the troops in the northern sector were evacuated in what proved to be the most successful operation of the whole campaign. Despite Commander in Chief Sir Ian Hamilton's fear that up to one half of the force could be lost during the evacuation, not one man was killed and only two were slightly wounded. If as much planning and preparation had gone into some of the battles, the outcome of the campaign might have been different.

The Helles evacuation was similarly successful. On the nights of 7 and 8 January 1916, the 29<sup>th</sup> Division along with the rest of the allied force was evacuated from Helles and all its units returned to Egypt. On 25 February orders were received to move to France. The division arrived at Marseilles in March, from where it was transported by train to the battlefields of northern France. The Division served on the Western Front for the remainder of the war, though the Irish battalions did not always remain with it, being allocated from time to time to other formations.

Gallipoli was a severe defeat for the military forces of the British Empire, and was to have a profound effect on its emerging nations. Anzacs and Irishmen both came away from the peninsula convinced they had been mucked about and butchered by the incompetence of the British generals. Irish nationalist MP John Dillon referred in the House of Commons to British officers 'who had led our regiments at Suvla ... and who hurled them to death on the slopes of those hills which they would have carried, and which would have enabled them to get to Constantinople had they been decently led'. Unionist leaders were also critical, with Edward Carson telling Parliament that Gallipoli 'hung around our necks like a millstone'.

### Aftermath

For Australians and New Zealanders, eager to impress the mother country of their worthiness, Gallipoli, despite the cost, had a salutary effect on the nation-building process without rupturing relations with the British Empire. In contrast, nationalist Irishmen, who sought to impress no-one as they wanted to become not a nation so much as 'a nation once again', were not so forgiving. Separatist nationalists, who



were opposed to the war, exploited the Dardanelles fiasco to whip up anti-British sentiment, while moderate nationalists began to lose faith in the idea that supporting Britain in the war would assure home rule, leading to a decline in recruiting, particularly as the Coalition government formed in May 1915 included unionists, such as Edward Carson, who were implacably opposed to home rule.

For some it was Gallipoli rather than the Easter Rising of 1916 that marked ‘the moment their feelings towards the British began to turn’. In her 1919 memoirs, Katharine Tynan, Irish poet and novelist, wrote:

*So many of our friends had gone out in the 10th Division to perish at Suvla.  
For the first time came bitterness, for we felt that their lives had been  
thrown away and that their heroism had gone unrecognised.*

Today, Gallipoli is well remembered in Australia and New Zealand. For those countries the Gallipoli campaign is widely regarded as the dawning of their sense of nationhood. So strongly do Australians and New Zealanders identify with Gallipoli that many of them believe they were the only ones there, apart from the Turks, of course. Some would be aware that British troops were there, but few would know that they included men from Irish regiments, and fewer still that many of those Irishmen fought alongside the Anzacs in battles such as Second Krithia, Lone Pine, Chunuk Bair and Hill 60, and at iconic places such as Quinn’s Post, or that on the first day of the campaign more Irishmen were killed at the landing beaches than Anzacs, or that, over all, more Irishmen died there than New Zealanders.

But it is not only antipodeans who have forgotten the part played by the Irish; the collective amnesia extends to the Irish themselves. Soon after the campaign ended and for a few years thereafter a number of books did appear, recounting the exploits of the Irish at Gallipoli, including books by popular writers, such as S Parnell Kerr’s *What the Irish Regiments Have Done*, and Michael MacDonagh’s *The Irish at the Front*, both of which appeared in 1916. In the same year Lt Col Jourdain privately published an account of the 5<sup>th</sup> Connaught Rangers’ service from the start of the war to the end of the Gallipoli campaign. The following year Henry Hanna published a book on D Company of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers - the so called “Pals” - at Suvla Bay and in 1918 Major Bryan Cooper published an account of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division at Gallipoli. In the early post-war years regimental histories were published including books relating to the Connaught Rangers, Dublin Fusiliers, Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Rifles. But thereafter little followed and memory of the campaign faded.

From the 1990s, however, memory of Gallipoli began to revive with a new wave of books dealing with the Irish in the First World War that included sections on Gallipoli, such as those by Tom Johnstone, Myles Dungan and Keith Jeffery. In addition, Bryan Cooper’s history of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division was republished in 1993. Since then two more books on the 10<sup>th</sup> Division have appeared, one by Philip Orr in 2006, specifically on Gallipoli, and another by Stephen Sandford in 2014.

The decade of commemorations has stimulated the publication of a range of books and articles on the war in general and on the Dardanelles campaign in particular, such that there is now a substantial and growing corpus of literature on the Irish at Gallipoli. Moreover, it is notable that, unlike the more general regimental and divisional histories, some recent works have sharpened the focus to specific aspects of the campaign, such as Philip Lecane’s book on the landing at V Beach on 25 April 1915, evidencing the increasing sophistication of Irish historiography concerning Gallipoli. Nevertheless, the Gallipoli campaign is yet to penetrate the popular consciousness in Ireland. And with that in mind this series of podcasts aims to increase awareness of the significant contribution of the Irish at Gallipoli.