

BRAW LADDIES

AMIDST THE

CLASH OF THE EMPIRES

8^d



WW100
SCOTLAND

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM ALL THIS?

INTRODUCTION

The name Gallipoli has a mournful echo in the memories of many nations – not least in Scotland's, for many brave young Scottish soldiers ended their lives there in appalling conditions in 1915.

The names Cape Helles, Gully Ravine and Achi Baba Nullah have a sadder ring, as these were the places where scores of young men died, mowed down by machine

gun fire or blown to bits by shells.

Commemorative Services are being held across Lowland and Highland Scotland and eminent historian Sir Hew Strachan will be delivering a Lecture at the University of Stirling on Thursday 4th June 2015 – one hundred years after the Scottish Battalions arrived in Gallipoli.



THE KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS, LEAVING PARADE, 1915

DEPARTING FROM LIVERPOOL, 1915



Stirling is the location for the 4th June commemoration as it was where the 52nd Lowland Division trained before sailing from Liverpool for the eastern Mediterranean.

In the summer of 1914 Andrew Riddell was working as a wool power-loom turner in Hawick. Married in 1910, he had three small children. He also belonged to the Territorial Army, serving in the 4th Battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSBs).

In August 1914, Andrew and his fellow Territorials had headed off for their annual summer camp. The declaration of war on 4th August meant a sudden change to plans. The 4th Battalion were mobilised and moved to Cambusbarrow near Stirling where they spent the next eight months.



THE KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS, 1915

A CLASH OF EMPIRES

Gallipoli, perhaps more directly than any other campaign of the First World War, was a clash of Empires. Its geographic significance, specifically with regards to access to Russia's only warm-water ports, provided a key focus for Britain, France and Russia as they debated and reviewed their strategies for 1915. For the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire provided a route to the world beyond Europe and so enabled them to strike at their enemies' overseas

Empires. This gave it such strategic significance that for some it was more promising than the western or eastern fronts in Europe. Gallipoli was a peninsula on the European shore of the Dardanelles, the straits linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The casualties of this conflict were, of course, ordinary young men from as far away as Australia and New Zealand and also as close to home as Hawick, Kelso, Duns, Dalbeattie, Portobello, Kilmarnock and Leith.

The Dardanelles is a long narrow strait dividing Europe from Asia Minor along the Gallipoli peninsula.



WHY GALLIPOLI?

The decision to mount the Gallipoli operation was the climax of a struggle in the British Government over future strategy. The Ottoman Empire (today Turkey) had formed an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in August 1914 but had not entered the

war until the end of October. The British and French Navies could open the warm-water route to Russia so that both countries could give more direct support to Russia in its war with Germany on the eastern front. In addition success here might enable the

THE 12-INCH GUNS OF THE ROYAL NAVY BATTLESHIP HMS CANOPUS
FIRE AT TURKISH BATTERIES DURING OPERATIONS IN THE
DARDANELLES DURING 1915



Navies to reach Constantinople, then the capital of the Ottoman Empire, and so possibly force the Turks out of the war.

The main British champion for this was the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. He won Cabinet support on 13 January 1915 for a purely naval attack through the Dardanelles using older but heavily gunned battleships to attack and destroy the Turkish forts on the peninsula.

Churchill clinched the issue by offering the services of the Navy's latest dreadnought the mighty HMS Queen Elizabeth, which would test her 15-inch

guns against the enemy targets.

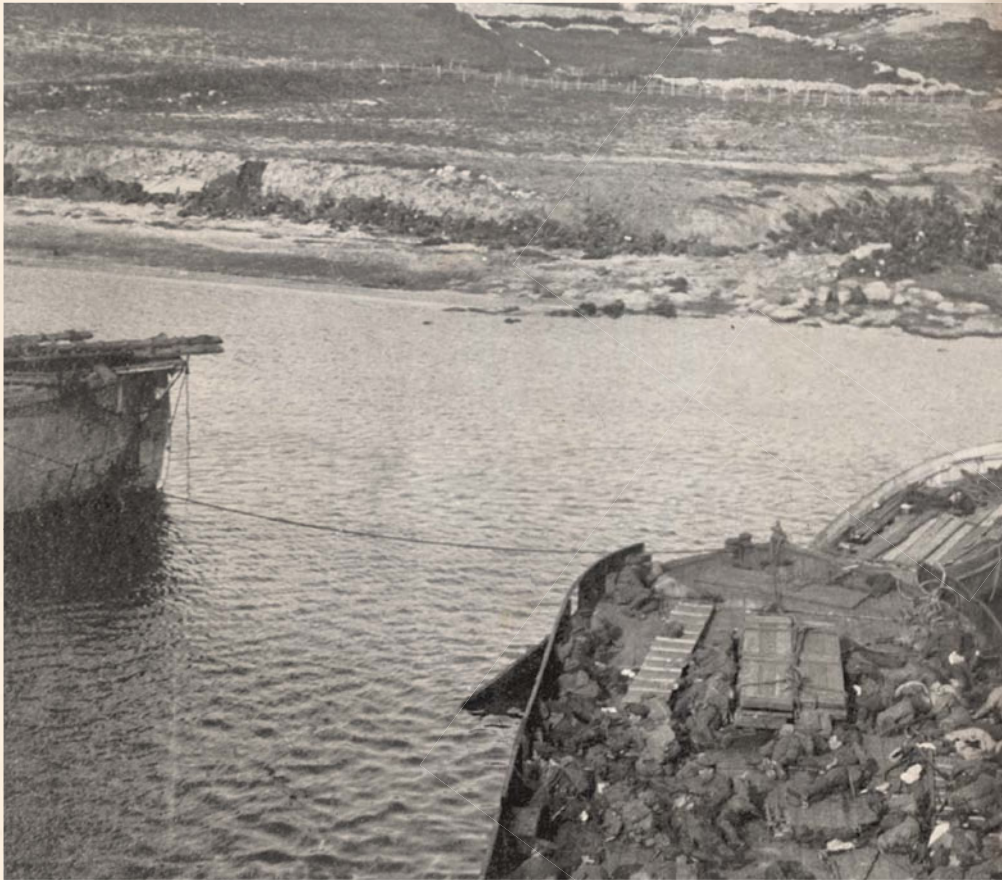
At that time there was little up-to-date intelligence about the strength of the Turkish defences; all that was known was that British warships had successfully bombarded the entrance to the Dardanelles in November 1914, causing panic amongst the Turkish defenders. The planners in London did not know that the attack had encouraged the Turks, under German command, to increase their minefields and to strengthen the Gallipoli defences with modern mobile howitzers.

THE FIRST NAVAL ASSAULT

The naval plan was put into operation on 19 February 1915 under the command of Vice-Admiral Sackville Carden. Carden proposed to destroy the outer defences first, using his ships' long-range heavy weapons against targets at the entrance to the straits. Once the defences had been breached he would move in closer

to destroy the remaining gun positions and the reduction of the defences would allow the minefields to be swept safely. At that point it would be possible for the British and French Fleets to proceed to Constantinople (today Istanbul).

The campaign was therefore not planned as a land operation. Troops would be used,



V Beach, where the British suffered particularly heavy casualties, 25 April 1915

Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of War, also planned to use the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), then training in Egypt. Meanwhile the French agreed to deploy the Corps Expéditionnaire d'Orient, a mixed force of French and North African troops.

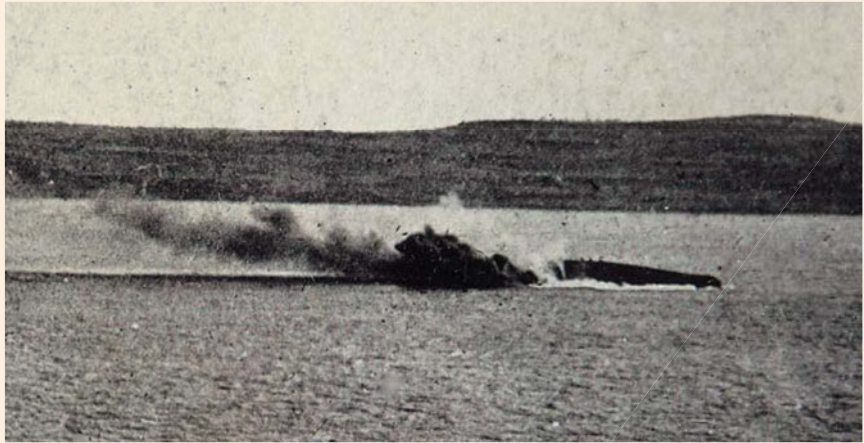
if at all, as the consequence of naval success. The British and French Armies were already fully committed, and the war office was under pressure to deploy more soldiers to France. In February it was agreed to earmark the British 29th Division and the Royal Naval Division.

However, the naval attack did not go

according to plan: Carden's ships failed to make much impression on the Turkish defences – the guns' trajectories were too flat and the high explosive failed to damage the heavily defended Turkish forts – and it proved impossible to sweep the minefields due to the accuracy of the Turkish field guns and the strength of the local currents.



On 13 March he gave the command to General Sir Ian Hamilton, a former Gordon Highlander. Hamilton was a veteran of the Boer War and one of the most experienced soldiers in the British Army.



FRENCH BATTLESHIP BOUVET CAPSIZED AND SINKING, 1915

FAILURE OF FURTHER NAVAL OPERATIONS

On 18 March the British and French warships, now under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir John de Robeck, made a fresh attack in three lines against the fortifications at Kilid Bahr and Chanak (Çanakkale today) which guarded the narrows and the entrance into the Sea of Mamara. The idea was to open fire at long range and then to reduce the range for a final onslaught, but this depended on the successful sweeping of known minefields in Eren Keui Bay where the fleet would begin the assault.

To begin with the battleships seemed invincible. Early in the day the fire from the forts began to slacken, encouraging hopes of a quick victory but shortly after two o'clock disaster struck when the French battleship *Bouvet* hit a mine, as well being hit by shellfire, and quickly sank.

At the same time howitzer fire forced the allied minesweepers to scatter.

It was obvious that Eren Keui Bay was littered with mines – unknown to the Allies a Turkish minelayer had carried out the operation ten days earlier – and the hidden weapons began inflicting more losses. Minutes after the sinking of the *Bouvet*, HMS *Inflexible* hit a mine, followed in short order by further strikes on HMS *Irresistible* and HMS *Ocean*, both of which sank after their crews

**Only a handful of
Bouvet's crew of seven
hundred survived.**

had been saved. Not surprisingly de Robeck called off the attack. Not only had he lost three battleships with another

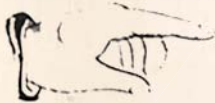
three disabled, but the Turkish forts had not been destroyed. The land forces, originally intended to support the naval attack, now assumed the principal role.

The Turks had been busy. Beaches had been wired and mined and new defensive positions with deep trenches had been hurriedly constructed – no easy matter given the hard unyielding ground.

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**MAJOR-GENERAL AYLMER HUNTER-WESTON (LEFT FRONT)
AND STAFF AT CAPE HELLES, GALLIPOLI, 1915**

Aylmer Hunter-Weston was known as "Hunter-Bunter". He was a hard and aggressive commander who frequently stated that he cared nothing about casualties; with his gruff red-faced ferocity he might have been a figure of fun had he not been in such an important position.

THE LANDINGS AT CAPE HELLES AND ANZAC COVE

The main offensive was launched at the Cape Helles beaches on 25 April and was directed by Major-General Aylmer Hunter-Weston, a Royal Engineer who had been born at Hunterston in Ayrshire in 1864. His 29th Division (*"The Incomparable"*) was considered to be one of the best trained in the Army and contained two Scottish infantry Battalions, 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) and 1/5th Royal Scots, a Territorial Force Battalion, together with IV (Highland) Mountain Brigade, Royal Field Artillery.

Yet before they could give an account of themselves in the fighting they had to be taken ashore. That proved to be no easy task. In addition to a specially adapted Clyde-built collier the *River Clyde* which was run ashore at V beach carrying two thousand men, the main force was landed in ships' cutters pulled by a variety of tug boats. The intention was to secure the beaches and then to advance on the ridge between Krithia and Achi Baba which would be the key to taking control of the peninsula. As was the case throughout



TROOPS OF THE 5TH BATTALION, ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS
(52ND DIVISION) AT WORK ON THE CAPE HELLES CLIFFS, JUNE 1915

the campaign things did not turn out that way.

In the initial stages the Turks seemed confused by the breadth and strength of the allied attack but they soon regrouped and at V and W beaches the British forces took heavy casualties when they found themselves pinned down by heavy and accurate machine-gun fire. In contrast, the

landings at X and Y beaches were unopposed. However, there were serious staff and communication failures between the two landing forces which meant that they were unable to exploit the situation, even though they faced minimal Turkish opposition.

Attacking Y beach was a combined force of two thousand but their progress was stymied by a muddle over who

should take command. Forced to dig in quickly, the Scots used their packs to reinforce their defences and later admitted that the "trenches" never deserved the name.

The Allies were confined to their beach-head while the Turks held on to the higher ground and could not be dislodged. At the same time the Turks failed to drive their enemy back into

The two thousand troops at Y beach comprised 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB), the Plymouth Battalion Royal Marines and a company drawn from 2nd South Wales Borderers.

the sea and the fighting degenerated into as bitter a struggle as anything seen on the Western Front. By the end of the month, less than a week after they had landed,

the British had lost some 400 officers and 8500 other ranks, around one-third of the attacking force. The landings at Anzac Cove, on the Mediterranean side of the peninsula, had been equally costly.

**A HOME MADE GRENADE BEING LAUNCHED, CAPTAIN W.R. KERMACK,
7TH BATTALION, 1915**



THE BATTLES OF GULLY RAVINE AND ACHI BABA NULLAH

The 52nd (Lowland) Division began to arrive at Gallipoli on 6 June, and the 1st Brigade was first in action on 28 June on the left flank at Helles along the Gully Ravine.

The assault Battalions were 1/4th Royal Scots, 1/7th Royal Scots and 1/8th Scottish Rifles.

As a result of intensive Turkish machine gun fire they paid a terrible price, they were also inadequately supported by the naval guns firing from the sea. The Edinburgh Battalions lost heavily: the 1/4th Royal Scots had 16 officers and 204 soldiers killed or missing while the 1/7th Royal Scots had been reduced to six officers and 169 soldiers, roughly the size of a company.

The division launched its first major offensive on Achi Baba Nullah on 12 July. Alexander Burnett, 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers, looked back at the battle-field and regretted the loss of men who had joined up with him in

Kilmarnock at the beginning of the war: *"We were all boys together at school, we'd started jobs as apprentices, we'd formed friendships. And there they were a line of them all killed at one time, none of them over seventeen."*

As well as dreadful losses the men were also suffering under appalling conditions. The fighting was conducted at close-quarters with some trenches being almost within spitting distance. And the physical hardships were worse than anything faced on the Western Front. Despite the best efforts at maintaining basic sanitation, disease was rampant, especially dysentery and enteric fever which was spread by the absence of proper latrines and washing facilities and by the ever-present swarms of black buzzing flies.

One Medical Officer said it was impossible to eat with the flies around as they immediately swarmed onto every spoonful between plate and mouth.



In the battle on 12th July there were almost 100 Hawick men killed. Most of these disappeared without trace. Andrew Riddell was wounded and died shortly after. He was one of the few from Hawick who was buried in a marked grave. Husband and Father, he was just 28 years old.



THE BRITISH WOUNDED, 1915



As the casualty lists started appearing in the Edinburgh newspapers, families all across the central belt were left to mourn the loss of young lives.



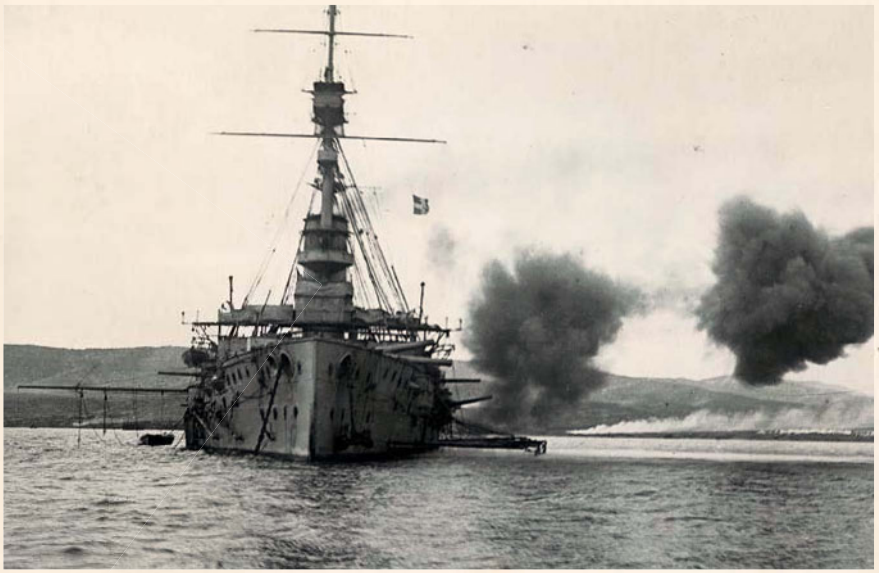
DUG OUT, ANZAC, 1915 *Disease and searing heat added to the difficulties and in August alone over 40,000 soldiers had to be evacuated, the majority suffering from dysentery.*

STALEMATE

Despite the arrival of further reinforcements the deadlock could not be broken and the men on the peninsula were becoming increasingly weakened. In August an amphibious landing at Suvla Bay, further to the north, was designed to support a major offensive at Anzac, intended to cut across the peninsula to the straits. The Turks were able to rush reinforcements into the area to push the ANZACs off the ridge at Chunuk Bair and also prevent the creation of a bridgehead at Suvla. The news of the failure was met with dismay in London and compounded the idea that 1915 had been a year of military

disasters with no change in the position on the Western Front and stalemate in Gallipoli.

In October Hamilton was sacked and was replaced by General Sir Charles Monro, a veteran of the fighting on the Western Front. Having taken stock of the situation he recommended evacuation, although this was not accepted until the beginning of November when Kitchener himself visited the battle-front and agreed that the difficulties were insuperable. A heavy and unexpected winter storm also helped to decide the issue.



HMS CORNWALLIS FIRING AT TURKISH POSITIONS AFTER THE EVACUATION OF ANZAC AND SUVLA, DECEMBER 1915

WITHDRAWAL AND EVACUATION

The British Government authorised the evacuation to begin from Suvla Bay on 7 December 1915; the last troops left Helles on 9 January 1916.

In all, some 480,000 Allied forces took part in the Gallipoli campaign, at a cost of more than 250,000 casualties, including some 46,000 dead. On the Turkish side, the campaign also cost an estimated 250,000 casualties, with 65,000 killed.

The British finally withdrew their forces at the end of 1915, without any casualties, not least because the Turks had no interest in hindering the Allies' departure. The great adventure to gain an advantage in the war by other means was finally over.

One statistic will stand for many:

when 1/4th Royal Scots were evacuated they had been reduced to two officers and 148 men.

The failure of the Gallipoli campaign has provided history with one of its great conundrums, the conditional "if only" being applied to most aspects of it. If only the tactics, the leadership, the reinforcements and the munitions had been better, if only the execution had matched the conception, then a sordid defeat could have been a glittering triumph. The original reasons for the deployment had much to recommend them but an absence of clear thinking and the half-hearted conduct of the campaign must account for its failure and for the waste of so many lives and so much equipment.

THIRD BATTLE OF KRITHIA ON 4 JUNE 1915



Soldiers who served on both fronts admitted that the conditions on the peninsula were worse than anything they encountered in France and Flanders.

AFTERMATH

The legacy of the campaign is one of remembered loss in many communities. Gallipoli has become a founding legend in Australia and New Zealand and 25 April is commemorated each year as ANZAC Day. Unlike the Western Front where optimism survived for a surprisingly long time and victory was eventually achieved, there were no good words to be said about Gallipoli. However, the Turks not only won the campaign but also discovered the future hero of today's Republic,

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Some, like John Brown who served in the Lovat Scouts as part of the Highland Mounted Brigade, 2nd Mounted Division, came to believe that they had been forgotten and condemned to die of starvation and disease. Probably none who fought at Cape Helles or Suvla would have disagreed with the words of Brown's Commanding Officer Lord Lovat: *"It will be... to all eternity as sordid and miserable a chapter of amateur enterprise as ever was written in our history."*



GROUND LEADING TO ACHI BABA NULLAH, 1919



**TWO DOG SURVIVORS FROM HMS MAJESTIC TORPEDOED OFF
GALLIPOLI ON 27 MAY 1915**

HMS Majestic was the second of two warships torpedoed in three days by a German U-boat, and as a result the major ships were pulled back:

LEST WE FORGET

A Memorial Service has been held in Hawick every July since 1916 to mark the loss of so many local men in one day at Gully Ravine. In 1965 a small group of survivors from Hawick travelled back to the Helles Peninsula to commemorate their fallen comrades. In 2015 a group from Hawick will again travel to the site of the battle to commemorate the occasion.



**GALLIPOLI VETERANS PARADE TO HAWICK
WAR MEMORIAL 12TH JUNE 1976**

Text edited by Stuart Delves from original text by Trevor Royle, with contributions from Sir Hew Strachan.

Designed by Wolffe.

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Gallipoli

George Hope Tait, Borders poet, 12th July 1915

*Dawns the day of Border sorrow,
Hallowed shades of heroes rise –
They who fought for Britain's glory
Crowned it with their sacrifice.*

*Shall it be with tears we ponder,
Or with racial pride recall
How they charged and fell out yonder
In the blood-red battle thrall.*

*Ask not how they died! Nor wonder
Which the trench or where the clod –
Down the four winds 'mid the thunder
Went our warriors home to God.*

*War-torn crests of Achi-Baba
Sentinel their nameless grave;
Every Border Heart's an abbey
Consecrated to our brave*

*Tweed goes smiling down the valley,
Eildon peaks are flaming red –
They who slumber in Valhalla
Are today our glorious dead!*





“YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS
YOU”

ALFRED
LEE