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**Shaping British and Anzac Soldiers' Experience of Gallipoli:  
Environmental and Medical Factors, and the Development of Trench Warfare**

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**Introduction**

Works discussing the experience of combatants, based on their writings or on oral testimony, are a well-established genre of military history.<sup>1</sup> However, it is rare to find authors explicitly analysing the various influences that shaped the soldier's experience in any era. This article, which forms part of a wider study of British and Dominion soldiers in the two world wars,<sup>2</sup> attempts to fill this gap by using the Gallipoli campaign as a vehicle to examine some of the factors that shaped the experience of British, Australian and New Zealand soldiers that served at the Dardanelles. Here, 'experience' is defined as 'the process or an instance of undergoing and being affected by an event or a series of connected events'.<sup>3</sup> Such an exploration helps to reveal the extent to which individuals in war have 'agency', the ability to determine their own fate, or are limited by external factors (in sociological terms, 'structural constraints').<sup>4</sup> Such external factors could stem from apparently trivial things, which nevertheless determined a man's fate. In September 1914 Philip Ibbetson and his mate Jack tried to join the Royal Australian Navy in Brisbane, but Jack was rejected because of hammer toes. Both men then enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), which was evidently less fussy about recruits' feet. They eventually found themselves at Gallipoli, rather than experiencing a rather different war at sea.<sup>5</sup> In their case, agency was noticeably absent.

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<sup>1</sup> The classic example is John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1976). Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), is a particularly good example. Martin Middlebrook's books are among the earliest and best examples of the 'oral history' genre; see e.g. his *The First Day on the Somme* (London: Allen Lane, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> *Civilian Armies: The Experience of British and Dominion Soldiers 1914-45*, forthcoming from Yale University Press. A small amount of material has previously been published in my contribution to Michael LoCicero (ed.), *Two Sides of the Same Bad Penny: Gallipoli and the Western Front, A Comparison* (Solihull: Helion, 2017). I am grateful to Dr LoCicero for his permission to re-use it.

<sup>3</sup> This definition is influenced by those in *The Shorter English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) and at <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/experience> (viewed 23 January 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Abercromby, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* (London: Penguin, 2006 [1984]), p.9.

<sup>5</sup> Ts memoir, Ibbetson papers, ANZAC (AUST), Ibbetson PL, Item 1, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

The historiography of the Gallipoli campaign (April 1915-January 1916), abounds in ‘bottom-up’, soldier-oriented studies. C.E.W. Bean’s monumental Australian official history relentlessly focused on the ordinary ‘digger’, in the process doing much to shape the Anzac myth.<sup>6</sup> In the 1970s, Bill Gammage was Beanian in his seminal study of First World War Australian soldiers, while Peter Liddle took a broader international approach in his work on the Gallipoli experience.<sup>7</sup> More recently Nigel Steel, Peter Hart, Terry Kinloch, Stephen Chambers and Richard van Emden, among others, have concentrated on the experience of low-ranking participants in their books on Gallipoli.<sup>8</sup> Glyn Harper devoted a substantial section of his fine 2015 study of the New Zealand soldier in the Great War to the Gallipoli experience, and in the same year Peter Stanley produced an excellent and highly original study of Indian soldiers on the Peninsula.<sup>9</sup> This article builds on such work to take the discussion in a different direction.

The experience of British and Anzac soldiers at Gallipoli is a huge subject, and within the narrow compass of this article analysis is limited to three key factors: environmental and medical aspects, and the development of trench warfare. However, one external factor above all others set the conditions within which soldiers would experience the war. This was the decision to launch an offensive at the Dardanelles at a particular time and under particular conditions. An officer arriving in theatre in July 1915, by which time the Gallipoli campaign was clearly deadlocked at the cost of huge losses to the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF), was told that ‘someone was terribly to blame, and the Army think it is Winston [Churchill]. If Winston was to put his foot near the peninsula I believe he would be scragged alive’.<sup>10</sup> This view was a backhanded recognition of the role that strategic decision-makers

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<sup>6</sup> C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, 2 volumes (St. Lucia, QLD, University of Queensland Press, 1981 [1921 & 1924]). There is a substantial literature on Bean. For a sample, see Jenny Macleod, *Gallipoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.69-72 and E.M. Andrews, ‘Bean and Bullecourt: Weaknesses and Strengths of the Official History of Australia in the First World War’, in Peter Dennis *et al.*, (eds.), *Review Internationale d’Histoire Militaire* No.72 (Canberra, 1990), pp.25-47.

<sup>7</sup> Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974); Peter Liddle, *Men of Gallipoli: The Dardanelles and Gallipoli Experience August 1914 to January 1916* (London: Allen Lane, 1976). For links between Bean and Gammage, see Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), pp.129-34.

<sup>8</sup> Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Defeat at Gallipoli* (London: Macmillan, 1994); Peter Hart, *Gallipoli* (London: Profile, 2011); Terry Kinloch, *Echoes of Gallipoli: In the Words of New Zealand’s Mounted Riflemen* (Auckland: Exisle, 2005); Stephen Chambers and Richard van Emden, *Gallipoli: The Dardanelles Disaster in Soldiers’ Words and Photographs* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Glyn Harper, *Johnny Enzed: The New Zealand Soldier in the First World War* (Auckland: Exisle, 2015); Peter Stanley, *Die in Battle. Don Not Despair: The Indians on Gallipoli, 1915* (Solihull: Helion, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> C.J.L. Allanson, diary, 20 July 1915, in Harry Davies (ed.), *Allanson of the 6<sup>th</sup>*, (Worcester: Square One, 1990), p.26.

played in shaping the character of the campaign that soldiers had to endure. Both the initial naval operations at the Dardanelles and the subsequent launching of the land campaign at Gallipoli were based on a fundamental misjudgement of Ottoman morale and resilience. The ‘Turks’ were judged by recent poor combat performances, as well as racial stereotyping, and were wrongly viewed as a grossly inferior foe which would not put up much of a fight.

Given this underlying assumption, the slapdash planning and inadequate resourcing of the land campaign becomes explicable, if not excusable.<sup>11</sup> Moreover this explains the rationale behind the dispatch of force consisting of raw Australians, New Zealanders, British Territorial and Kitchener’s Army divisions, and the hastily improvised Royal Naval Division (RND), stiffened by the Regular (but *ad hoc*) 29<sup>th</sup> Division, all without their full complement of artillery. All were deemed to be good enough to defeat what was seen as a weak, colonial-style enemy.<sup>12</sup>

### **Environmental factors**

The climate on the Gallipoli peninsula in summer was broadly similar to that of Melbourne, thus many Australians would have been used to such conditions.<sup>13</sup> Men coming from New Zealand and the UK were not so fortunate. For Englishmen, summer temperatures at Gallipoli would, at home, have been regarded as a ‘heat wave’.<sup>14</sup> Regular units of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division came from stations in places such as India, Burma and Mauritius, so many of the soldiers would already have been familiar with hot weather. For some troops that were dispatched from the British Isles, such as those of the Territorial Force 42<sup>nd</sup> (East Lancashire) Division, there was the chance to acclimatise while undergoing extensive training in Egypt. By contrast, most of the Kitchener volunteers of 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division sailed from England in

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<sup>11</sup>For the inadequacies of British planning, see Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010 [2009]).

<sup>12</sup>For modern assessments of the Ottoman forces, see Edward J. Erickson, *Ottoman Military Effectiveness in World War I: A Comparative Study* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); Harvey Broadbent, *Defending Gallipoli: The Turkish Story* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015).

<sup>13</sup>*Taranaki Daily News* (NZ), 19 Oct. 1915, p.7; Peter Chasseaud and Peter Doyle, *Grasping Gallipoli* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2005), p.4; Jessie Birkett-Rees, ‘Capturing the battlefield: mapping and air photography at Gallipoli’ in Antonio Sagona *et al* (eds.), *Anzac Battlefield: A Gallipoli Landscape of War and Memory* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.60; <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/topic/195862-gallipoli-weather-stats/>, viewed 3 Feb. 2017.

<sup>14</sup>Michael J. Mortlock, *The Landings at Suvla Bay, 1915* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), p.49.

early July 1915, and after a brief stop in Egypt was committed to battle at Suvla Bay about a month after leaving the UK.<sup>15</sup>

The heat was one of the major characteristics of the experience of men at Gallipoli. A comment of a Regular officer of 1/Borders (which had been previously stationed in Burma) is representative: ‘Life... became very irksome... Little shade was available anywhere and one’s “dug out” during the heat of the day became a veritable Turkish Bath’.<sup>16</sup> The inevitable result of troops from the British Isles campaigning in a Mediterranean summer climate was, as a corporal of 1/5 Manchesters wrote, ‘the exposure... caused all the skin on our faces to peel off’.<sup>17</sup> In the hot weather, to varying extents, conventions of uniform were relaxed, although an Royal Marine Light Infantry [RMLI] officer complained that, in early June, they were ‘still wearing our thick serge tunics, breeches and puttees’.<sup>18</sup> Australians and New Zealanders seem to have gone the furthest, reducing clothing to the bare minimum of ‘shorts, boots, hat & singlet’.<sup>19</sup>

The problems of operating in what was, for many, an unfamiliar and enervating climate were exacerbated by a chronic lack of water. Failures in planning and logistics were exacerbated by ‘shallowly buried’ corpses polluting available water supplies. Moreover, the saltiness of one of the staples of the soldiers’ diet, bully beef, one man wrote, ‘made us twice as thirsty’.<sup>20</sup> The shortage of water became a major scandal, the subject of an entire section in the *Report of the Dardanelles Commission*. This was mostly devoted to Suvla, where operations were materially impeded by shortage of water,<sup>21</sup> although it briefly discussed the situation at Anzac, stating that the water ‘supply seems to have been barely sufficient’. Of Helles, the report stated that ‘a moderate supply of water’ was found and ‘subsequently there

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<sup>15</sup> Stair Gillon, *The Story of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division* (London: Nelson, 1925) pp. 4-5; K.W. Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-1916* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.89; Bryan Cooper, *The Tenth (Irish) Division at Gallipoli* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1992 [1918], pp.35, 38.

<sup>16</sup> A.J. Ellis, ts memoir, p.42, B[order] R[egiment] A[rchives], C[umbria’s] M[useum] of M[ilitary] L[ife].

<sup>17</sup> Cpl. Cyril Barnes to Flo, 16 May 1915, MR3/16/56, M[anchester] R[egiment Archives], T[ameside] L[ocal] S[tudies] and A[rchives] C[entre].

<sup>18</sup> A.R. Chater, ms memoir, p.10, CHATER 1/2, L[iddell] H[art] C[entre] for M[ilitary] A[rchives].

<sup>19</sup> A.A. McQueen, ts memoir, p.14, Acc. No.1991.381, K[ippenberger] M[ilitary] A[rchive], N[ational] A[rmy] M[useum] N[ew] Z[ealand].

<sup>20</sup> Lord Rochdale, statement to Dardanelles Commission, CAB 19/29, T[he] N[ational] A[rchives]; Cecil and Douglas Gunning, ts diary, 3 Jan. 1916, RDFA/018/1/3, R[oyal] D[ublin] F[usiliers] A[ssociation] Archive, D[ublin] C[ity] A[rchives].

<sup>21</sup> Rhys Crawley, *Climax at Gallipoli: The Failure of the August Offensive* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), pp.181-82; J.M. Heath, diary, 8, 11 Aug. 1915, CAB 45/253, TNA.

does not appear to have been any difficulty with the supply'.<sup>22</sup> The latter comment was too sanguine. While the situation might have been better than in the other sectors, there was never enough drinking water at Helles.<sup>23</sup>

If heat and the sun posed problems for soldiers at Gallipoli, so did cold nights and occasional rain. The unpleasant situation of living in very primitive trenches at the beginning of the campaign was worsened by the fact that for some time troops had little more than they stood up in. The New Zealand sapper who wrote on 1 May that 'We have no blankets or waterproof sheets here yet so it's a bit cold and wet at times' spoke for many other soldiers in a similar predicament.<sup>24</sup> Lacking any overhead covering, wearing wet clothes was an occupational hazard.<sup>25</sup> However, it was the 'sharp and biting'<sup>26</sup> winter weather that affected troops on Gallipoli the worst. A blizzard on 26 November 1915 caused widespread suffering.<sup>27</sup> Some of the severest conditions occurred at Suvla. Here, trenches were still fairly primitive, and many soldiers and officers were inexperienced. A Territorial battalion, 1/1 Herefords, was flooded out of their trenches by the blizzard and spent the night in the open, in the snow. The sheer misery snapped the fragile bonds of discipline, and men looted some rum: 'The effect on empty stomachs and in that cold was simply devastating. Filled with a spurious warmth' men lay down and even undressed. NCOs and officers were unable to impose order or perhaps joined in. Some men died as a result.<sup>28</sup>

This episode illustrates the impact of extreme weather on the experience of the soldiers, which was exacerbated by primitive trenches, and infrastructure that was all but non-existent; if the men had been withdrawn to a hutted or even tented camp, with facilities for hot food and to change into dry clothes, things might have been very different. As it was, these civilian

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<sup>22</sup> *The Final Report of the Report of the Dardanelles Commission*, Part II, (Cmd. 371) 1917, pp.62.

<sup>23</sup> A.E.F. Fawcus, statement to Dardanelles Commission, CAB 19/29, TNA; Murray, diary, 19, 20 July 1915, in Joseph Murray, *Gallipoli 1915* (London: New English Library, 1977 [1965]), p.123; F.L. Morrison, *The Fifth Battalion the Highland Light Infantry in the War, 1914-1918* (Hamburg: Tredition 2013 [1921]), pp.33, 45. For the collection of ground water and use of wells, see Gibbon, *42<sup>nd</sup> Division*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur Bellingham, diary, 1 May 1915, Acc.1991.2731, KMA/NAMNZ.

<sup>25</sup> Claude Worthington diary, 13 May 1915, in Robert Bonner (ed.), *Great Gable to Gallipoli* (Knutsford: Fleur de Lys, 2004), p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> James Brassell to brother, 20 Oct. 1915, in *Maitland Weekly Mercury* (NSW), 1 Jan. 1916, p.3.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. Tom Rumsey to Mr. Williams, 12 Dec. 1915, in *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 13 Jan. 1916, p.2, H. Maldwyn Davies, *A Flintshire Territorial at War* (Bridge Books, Worthenbury, 2016), pp.60-1.

<sup>28</sup> 26-28 Nov. 1915, & Appx. 2 to Nov. 1915, W[ar] D[iary], 1/1 Herefords, WO 95/4323, TNA; Capt. Peter Ashton, diary, 26-28 November 1915, quoted in T.J.B. Hill, *Manu Forti: A History of the Herefordshire Regiment 1860-1967* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1996), pp.46-48.

soldiers' powers of endurance were pushed beyond what they could endure. Perhaps the surprising thing was that at Gallipoli, such occurrences were not more frequent.

As in in all military campaigns, the soldiers' experience was materially shaped by the ground over which they fought.<sup>29</sup> The terrain affected the experience of the troops from the first moments of the land campaign. When Major-General Hunter-Weston recorded that his 29<sup>th</sup> Division had landed on 25 April and overcome strong defences manned by entrenched Ottoman infantry which had considerable fire-support, he glossed over the very different situations faced by assault troops on different beaches, which included lightly- and unopposed landings.<sup>30</sup> After the failure of the Helles force to break through at the First Battle of Krithia (28 April), the front solidified. The Ottomans made excellent defensive use of the terrain, and had the advantage of holding high ground. As a British officer wrote, 'The worst part of the fighting was the rough nature of the ground, and the thorough concealment of the enemy's trenches and positions. The ground was perfect for defence, being a mass of nullahs and ravines'.<sup>31</sup> Achi Baba, the objective of so many Allied attacks, gave Ottoman artillery observers superb views over the MEF's positions. At Suvla, the terrain, a plain overlooked by high ground which was held by the Ottomans, also favoured the defenders.

The initial landings at Anzac Cove confronted the assaulting Australians and later New Zealanders with formidable heights and extremely broken terrain, which contributed to a loss of cohesion in the advance of these green troops, which were later driven back. This left the Anzacs, 'in a most annoying, not to say humiliating, position... We have only a cheese-bite out of the cliffs – a little more than 2 miles along (sic), with a perimeter of defence of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles & a depth in its widest part of  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile'.<sup>32</sup> The terrain at Anzac played a critical part in moulding the experience of the men who fought there. Ottoman trenches were in many places very close to those held by the Anzacs, and there was no scope for tactical withdrawal. Quinn's Post was under more-or-less permanent attack, often with grenades being thrown in an attempt to render it untenable. However, the retention of Quinn's was critical to the survival of the beachhead, for it offered a direct route into the heart of the Anzac position via

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Doyle and Matthew R. Bennett, 'Military Geography: The Influence of Terrain on the Outcome of the Gallipoli Campaign, 1915', *Geographical Journal*, 165, 1. (Mar. 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Hunter-Weston to Wigram, 6 May 1915, Hunter-Weston papers, 6503-9-21, National Army Museum.

<sup>31</sup> Ellis, memoir, p.36, BRA/CMML.

<sup>32</sup> Godley to Rawlinson, 23 July 1915, Maurice papers, MAURICE 3/4/16, LHCMA.

Monash Valley. Thus a series of Australian and New Zealand units underwent some of the most stressful experiences endured by any troops at Gallipoli.<sup>33</sup>

## Medical Factors

Faith in medical arrangements is often cited as an important factor in maintaining military morale.<sup>34</sup> Many soldiers at Gallipoli found the medical facilities to be grossly defective. During the initial planning for the campaign, General Sir Ian Hamilton and his staff had failed to involve medical officers, and casualties were grossly underestimated.<sup>35</sup> As a result, medical facilities were poorly organised and inadequately resourced, and were rapidly overwhelmed, unlike on the Western Front, where ‘medical services reached a level of efficiency and sophistication unprecedented in British military history’.<sup>36</sup> These failures of planning played an important and baleful role in shaping the experience of soldiers at the Dardanelles.

The importance of hygiene and sanitation was fully recognised by the Army. *Field Service Regulations* (1909) presciently stated that ‘Neglect of sanitary precautions inevitably result in great loss of life and efficiency’, and the *Manual of Field Engineering* stated that ‘5 [latrine] trenches should be provided for 100 men for 1 day’.<sup>37</sup> However these manuals did not envisage a situation where a sizable force was cooped up in a small area, in which latrines had to compete with many other things such as supply dumps and field hospitals. Under these conditions, the ideal very quickly went by the board. Furthermore, latrine building was complicated by the shortage of basic materials.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Frank McKenzie, ts diary, 2 June 1915, Acc.1999.571, KMA/NAMNZ; Peter Stanley, *Quinn’s Post, Anzac, Gallipoli* (Crow’s Nest, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> e.g. Karen S. Vogt, ‘Origins of Military Medical Care as an Essential Source of Morale’, *Military Medicine*, 180, 6, p.604.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Hamilton privately admitted that some medical aspects suffered from ‘insufficiency of preparation’: Hamilton to Babbie, 22 Jan. 1917, Hamilton papers 8/1/17, LHCMA. See also Michael Tyquin, *Gallipoli: The Medical War* (Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1993), p.82.

<sup>36</sup> Harrison, *Medical War*, p.171. For Gallipoli, see Chapter 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Field Service Regulations Part I* (HMSO, 1909), pp.69, 83-84; *Manual of Field Engineering* (HMSO, 1911), pp. 57-58.

<sup>38</sup> Babbie to Hamilton, 26 Jan. 1917, Hamilton papers 8/1/7, LHCMA. Babbie was quoting his submission to the Dardanelles Commission: see Cmd. 371, pp.158-59.

Problems of sanitation were exacerbated by the fact that at least some troops had not been trained in the basics of hygiene.<sup>39</sup> Men from impoverished civilian backgrounds who had dwelt in insalubrious dwellings, may, in any case, have had low levels of hygiene.<sup>40</sup> The Regimental Medical Officer of 2/Royal Fusiliers devised a sanitation system for the trenches and in July instructed the RMOs of two newly-arrived units of 13<sup>th</sup> Division. He was not impressed: 'K[itcheener's] Army seems to have a jolly poor idea of sanitation!!!'<sup>41</sup> Men were supposed to use latrines on the beaches, but because of the sheer practicalities of actually getting to the latrines, especially when suffering bowel disorders, and the fact that the beaches were under fire, 'men frequently did not use the places set aside'.<sup>42</sup> In any case, shallowly-dug latrines 'were quite useless'.<sup>43</sup> All this helped create a vicious circle, in which unburied faeces led to diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery, resulting in yet more untreated excrement. So it came to be that the ground was covered with human excrement – or, as one writer euphemistically commented about Helles, 'the whole earth soon became tainted in spite of every care'.<sup>44</sup>

Even the most fastidious soldier found maintaining personal cleanliness extremely taxing, especially since water was so difficult to obtain. Cyril Barnes, a middle-class corporal of 1/5 Manchesters, noted that at a rest camp he had his first wash for six days and he 'washed a pair of socks & a shirt & a singlet which I have been wearing for a month'.<sup>45</sup> Some washed their clothes in the sea.<sup>46</sup> Sea bathing was a popular, if risky pastime, for just as on land, swimmers were not immune from enemy shells and bullets.<sup>47</sup> Other factors contributed to disease, including the fouling of drinking water (see above), and 'dead bodies in hundreds decaying all around the trenches [i.e. in no man's land]'.<sup>48</sup> Such unburied remains had often been there for some time. The resulting stench was frequently mentioned by eyewitnesses.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Harrison, *Medical War*, pp. 177, 199.

<sup>40</sup> Leonore Davidoff, 'The Family in Britain', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, Vol. II, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.123.

<sup>41</sup> George Pirie, diary, 14, 27, 29 July 1915, in Michael Lucas (ed.), *Front Line Medic – Gallipoli, Somme, Ypres* (Solihull: Helion, 2014), pp. 60, 63, 64.

<sup>42</sup> C.M. Begg, NZMC, statement to Dardanelles Commission, CAB 19/28, TNA.

<sup>43</sup> Leonard S. Dudgeon, 'Personal Experiences on the Gallipoli Peninsula', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 9, (1916) p.110.

<sup>44</sup> John Buchan, *The History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers (1678-1918)* (London: Nelson, 1925), p.335.

<sup>45</sup> Barnes to Flo, 28 May 1915, MR3/16/56, MRA/TLSAC.

<sup>46</sup> Lee to mother, 29 Aug. 1915, in Lee, *Letters*, pp.41.

<sup>47</sup> Cecil Malthus, *Anzac: A Retrospect* (Auckland, NZ: Reed, 2002) [1965], p.82.

<sup>48</sup> Tyquin, *Gallipoli*, p. 112; Harrison, *Medical War*, p.196; Pte. John Brassell to John Brassell, 5 Oct. 1916, in *Maitland Weekly Mercury* (NSW), 1 Jan. 1916, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> e.g. McQueen, memoir, p.13, Acc. No.1991.381, KMA/NAMNZ; Simpson-Baikie to wife, 16 Jun 1915, Simpson-Baikie papers, LHCMA.

Swarms of flies were a particular trial. A soldier of 7/Royal Dublin Fusiliers wrote from Suvla in mid-September that ‘the flies seem to increase every day, there certainly didn't seem half as many as when we first came’: flies multiplied because of the corpses and filth at the front.<sup>50</sup>

There were 10,383 admissions to hospital of British (not including Dominion) soldiers suffering from diarrhoea, (a figure that certainly underestimates the number of cases), a ratio of 88.69 per 1,000 troops on the ration strength,<sup>51</sup> and 29,728 admissions for dysentery and 811 deaths, or a ratio of 253.94 and 6.93 per thousand respectively.<sup>52</sup> Anzacs were also badly affected by these diseases.<sup>53</sup> Tellingly, Private Fred Morgan’s death was announced in his local newspaper under the heading of ‘*Another Harfat Lad Succumbs to Dysentery*’.<sup>54</sup> Medical staff themselves were not immune from sickness, and this further reduced the effectiveness of already inadequate medical provision.<sup>55</sup> Thus, a major factor shaping the distinctive experience of troops at Gallipoli was widespread suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery, diseases that were much less prevalent on the Western Front.<sup>56</sup>

The debilitating impact of diarrhoea and dysentery made enduring campaign conditions, and performing military duties effectively, much more difficult. Many historians have identified poor health of the troops as an ingredient in the failure of the August Offensive,<sup>57</sup> but in truth many soldiers on the Peninsula were unwell for much of the campaign. Just moving kit from the beaches to the front line, or manning a trench, was a trial for a soldier suffering from diarrhoea. Sufferers had to make multiple trips to the latrine, sometimes under fire. Padre Best of 42<sup>nd</sup> Division recorded that on one night ‘Eleven times... did I have to bolt for it... This is too much – pain and sickness intolerable’.<sup>58</sup> The effects of diarrhoea and dysentery were not just physical; they were also psychological.

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<sup>50</sup> Henry Kavanagh to brother, 16 Sept. 1915, RDFA/0034, RDFA Archive, DCA.

<sup>51</sup> T.J. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, *Medical Services: Casualties and Medical Statistics of the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1931), p.205.

<sup>52</sup> Mitchell and Smith, *Medical Services*, p.81.

<sup>53</sup> Tyquin, *Gallipoli*, pp.116-17.

<sup>54</sup> *Haverfordwest and Milford Haven Telegraph*, 17 Nov. 1915, p.3. (emphasis added).

<sup>55</sup> Eric Hunter and Lesley Oldham, *The Manchester Medics* (privately published, 2016), p.42.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell and Smith, *Medical Services*, p.81.

<sup>57</sup> e.g. Rhys Crawley, *Climax at Gallipoli: The Failure of the August Offensive* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), pp.56-58.

<sup>58</sup> Diary, 21 Sept. 1915, in Gavin Roynon (ed.), *A Prayer for Gallipoli: The Great War Diaries of Chaplain Kenneth Best* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011 [2012]), p.217.

Recent scholarship has pointed to the soldier's diet being a major factor in ill-health among Australian and New Zealand soldiers to Gallipoli. The food provided was 'nutritionally inadequate' and this contributed to ill-health. Indeed, the very food probably contributed to sickness: excessive amounts of fatty food (such as bully beef) is a trigger for diarrhoea. Moreover, the monotony of the rations undermined morale.<sup>59</sup> A (fairly typical) account by an Australian soldier of his meals mentioned bully beef, bacon, hardtack biscuit, and the occasional onion and potato, and jam.<sup>60</sup> Over time, at least at Helles, as the logistics improved, so did the quality of the food: a battalion of 52<sup>nd</sup> Division received 'frozen meat of excellent quality instead of bully', and biscuits were replaced by 'good bread'.<sup>61</sup> At Helles, there was limited access to a canteen, which supplied chocolate and cigarettes.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the diet was poorly chosen for a hot climate. Although Rachel Duffett has convincingly argued that provision of food to the BEF was not without its problems (men sometimes went hungry, even when fed were not always satisfied by the fare, and the food lacked nourishment)<sup>63</sup>, by comparison to their counterparts on the Western Front the men at the Dardanelles fared poorly.

## Wounding

Some men were relatively fortunate to be wounded very early on in the initial amphibious assault, and were promptly evacuated.<sup>64</sup> Other were not so lucky, because 'evacuation arrangements – such as they were – fell into disarray'. Many wounded had to lie on the beach, exposed to the glare of the sun and at risk of being wounded again.<sup>65</sup> Once the front had stabilised, a system for evacuation was put into place, but how quickly a wounded man was treated was all too often a matter of chance. For instance, Private Harry Askin (RMLI) was wounded at Helles on 10 July. He made his way to an aid post in the trenches, to be told

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<sup>59</sup> Nick Wilson *et al*, 'A nutritional analysis of New Zealand military food rations at Gallipoli in 1915: likely contribution to scurvy and other nutrient deficiency disorders', *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 126, 1373 (Apr. 2013), pp.12-29 (quote from p.23); Alison Wishart, "'As fit as fiddles" and "as weak as kittens": the importance of food, water and diet to the Anzac campaign at Gallipoli', *First World War Studies*, 7:2, (Aug. 2016), pp.131-64.

<sup>60</sup> Laddie Morris to parents, in *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 16 Dec. 1915, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> Morrison, *Fifth HLI*, p.50.

<sup>62</sup> F.S. Kelly diary, 22 May 1915, in Jon Cooksey and Graham McKechnie (eds.), *The Lost Olympian of the Somme* (London: Blink, 2016 [2015]), p.101.

<sup>63</sup> Rachel Duffett, *The Stomach for the Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp.230-1

<sup>64</sup> K.M. Little, ts diary, Acc. 1997.1824, KMA/NAMNZ.

<sup>65</sup> Harrison, *Medical War*, p.177; Peter Pedersen, *The Anzacs: Gallipoli to the Western Front* (Camberwell, Vic: Penguin, 2007), p.66.

that 'if I could walk at all, I'd better set off as I wouldn't get a stretcher for hours'. He started off for a Field Ambulance, four miles away, but exhausted himself in the process, and only made it by being carried by two Good Samaritans in the shape of Australian gunners.<sup>66</sup> The heat complicated matters, for wounds in hot weather 'became septic and infest[ed] with maggots' within twenty-four hours.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, there was no equivalent of the routine of Western Front soldiers in going into 'rest' sufficiently far from the front lines to be out of danger. This had an impact on psychiatric casualties: a contemporary argued that almost all soldiers evacuated from Gallipoli to Lemnos in late 1915 were 'neurasthenic'.<sup>68</sup>

Once a wounded or sick man had reached a field hospital, he might well still be in great danger. Given the lack of depth to each beachhead, and the paucity of cover, medical posts, patients and medical staff were continually exposed to enemy fire. The war diarist of a Field Ambulance of 52<sup>nd</sup> (Lowland) Division noted that they were moving to a new site: 'Not sorry to go, as owing to crowded state of ground, & proximity of aerodrome, ordnance stores, R.E. Park etc. we were more or less constantly under shell fire'.<sup>69</sup> The lack of advanced medical and surgical facilities on the peninsula mean that many men cases had to be evacuated by sea to Lemnos, but with the most severe cases being sent to Alexandria (48 hours sailing) or Malta (55 hours).<sup>70</sup> The time between a man being wounded or taken ill and reaching hospital had obvious implications for their chances of recovery. The conditions in which wounded and sick were evacuated were also a matter of chance. They might travel on specialist hospital ships, or in much less salubrious conditions. One incident, involving the use of an ammunition ship to carry wounded, became notorious.<sup>71</sup> Soldiers at Gallipoli knew that, if they were wounded or became seriously ill, a harrowing period lay ahead of them.

## **The Emergence of Trench Warfare**

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<sup>66</sup> Askin memoir (based on a diary) in Jean Baker *et al* (eds.), *A Marine at Gallipoli and on the Western Front* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015), p.54.

<sup>67</sup> C.M. Begg, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 28 Aug. 1917, Q29083. See also Tyquin, *Gallipoli*, p.100.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p.141.

<sup>69</sup> W[ar] D[iary], 1/1 Lowland Field Ambulance, 5 Jul 1915, WO 95/4319, TNA.

<sup>70</sup> Crawley, *Climax*, p.186.

<sup>71</sup> A.C. Purchas, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 5 Sept. 1917, Qs 31129, 31135, 31143. See also Tyquin, *Gallipoli*, p.100.

The failure of the landings of 25 April to usher in a swift victory was a critical factor in shaping the experience of the soldier at Gallipoli. Brigadier-General Hugh Simpson-Baikie, who arrived from the Western Front in May to command 29<sup>th</sup> Division's artillery, concluded:

This campaign has now got into the regular trench warfare as in France. This is exactly what I foresaw... would very likely be the case... Progress will therefore be very slow & very costly in life & munitions.<sup>72</sup>

Major actions were the exception rather than the rule. Once the lines congealed, soldiers had to adjust to what one RND officer described as

the routine of trench warfare... strengthening of defences... constant work on saps... of the deepening and traversing of old trenches, and the making of new ones, on the construction of strongpoints and machine-gun emplacements.<sup>73</sup>

This was in addition to holding the line, wiring, carrying out and enduring sniping and bombing, enduring shelling, and sometimes attacking enemy positions or repelling attacks. At first trenches were primitive, and dangerously shallow, and much labour was expended on them.<sup>74</sup> By July an officer on his first trip to the line marveled that the trenches 'are a veritable labyrinth and it's very easy to lose your way'.<sup>75</sup>

Under these conditions of trench warfare, soldiers had to learn new skills, and specialised units and sub-units were soon organized. 'Mining' or 'tunnelling' was an integral part of trench warfare, as both sides sought to burrow under their opponent's trenches, pack the tunnels with high explosive, and detonate it. On occasions, tunnels would be broken into by enemy miners, and there would be fighting below the earth. Both sides also tried to destroy the other's tunnels by firing small countermines. Initially, tunnelling at Helles was carried out by infantry under the supervision of trained sappers, some being instructed in classes by 'expert miners'. This was regularised in July with the formation of VIII Corps Mining Company, which later became part of 254 Tunneling Company, R.E.<sup>76</sup> At Anzac, specialised units were improvised from Australian infantry in late May, in response to developments at Quinn's Post, the most exposed part of the Anzac position. Increasingly, men who had been

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<sup>72</sup> Simpson-Baikie to wife, 9 June 1915, Simpson-Baikie papers, LHMCA.

<sup>73</sup> Douglas Jerrold, *The Royal Naval Division* (London: Hutchinson, 1927), pp.139-39.

<sup>74</sup> 42<sup>nd</sup> Div. G.S., WD, 20 June 1915, WO 95/4313, TNA.

<sup>75</sup> M. Beresford, ts diary, 15 July 1915, CAB 45/247, TNA.

<sup>76</sup> 42<sup>nd</sup> Div. G.S., WD, 13 June 1915, WO 95/4313, TNA; [H.L. Pritchard, (ed.)], *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers* Vol. VI (Chatham: The Institute of Royal Engineers, 1952), p.88. For the experiences of an infantryman (from a mining background) attached to VIII Corps Mining Company from Hood Battalion, see diary entries (especially 20 & 21 Sept. 1915) in Murray, *Gallipoli*, pp.142-48.

miners in civilian life were used for this work.<sup>77</sup> With the passage of time, mining operations became more sophisticated and extensive. Miners from 42<sup>nd</sup> Division and their Ottoman counterparts, for instance, engaged in extensive reciprocal mining operations in September.<sup>78</sup>

The hand grenade, or ‘bomb’, was the quintessential weapon of trench warfare. In short supply at the begin of the campaign, bombs were improvised from jam tins until better models and eventually, Mills Bombs, became readily available.<sup>79</sup> Like mining, bombing became an increasingly specialized, and bureaucratized, affair. By September 1915, things in the bombing world at Helles were changing. Bombing operations were codified, with a Bombing School set up. A special ‘Grenadier Badge’ was introduced, and so that it should not be seen as ‘too “cheap”’, to earn it men had to undergo a course and pass a test.<sup>80</sup> Thus the experience of some groups of soldiers, as part of the MEF’s response to the development of trench warfare, was of increasing specialisation.

Between the extremes of holding trenches and engaging in major assaults, soldiers at Gallipoli participated in three types of offensive operations. The first was patrolling by night in No Man’s Land. While patrols on the Western Front were often intended to dominate No Man’s Land, it seems that on Gallipoli the usual purpose of patrolling was to reconnoitre; thus one patrol, tellingly described as being composed of ‘scouts’ of 1/8 Manchesters, located concealed enemy machine-guns.<sup>81</sup> Patrolling seems to have been carried out on an *ad hoc* basis. Indeed, in some places, the enemy trenches were so close as to effectively prohibit it.<sup>82</sup>

The second type of action was the raid, a small-scale ‘hit and run’ offensive, which did not aim at capturing and retaining ground. Successful raids were intended to ‘dispirit the enemy and [keep] him in a state of apprehension’, and to keep up the MEF’s offensive spirit.<sup>83</sup> On the Western Front raids were to become staple of the infantryman’s experience, but at Gallipoli they were relatively infrequent. According to the Divisional History, 42<sup>nd</sup> Division’s

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<sup>77</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division GS, WD, 29 May 1915, A[ustralian] W[ar] M[emorial]4, 1/42/4 part 2; C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac* Vol. II (St. Lucia, QLD, University of Queensland Press, 1981 [1924]), p. 266; Stanley, *Quinn’s Post*, pp. 72-4, 110-12, 125-17.

<sup>78</sup> 42<sup>nd</sup> Div. G.S., WD, 22 Sept 1915, WO 95/4313, TNA; 1/6 Manchesters, WD, 20-21 Sept. 1915, WO 95/4316, TNA.

<sup>79</sup> Gibbon, *42<sup>nd</sup> Division*, p.56.

<sup>80</sup> See appendices 6, 9 and 23 to 52<sup>nd</sup> Div. GS WD, Sept, 1915, WO 95/4317.

<sup>81</sup> 42<sup>nd</sup> Div. G.S., WD, 15 May 1915 WO 95/4313, TNA (for other reconnaissance patrols see entries of 10-11 July 1915).

<sup>82</sup> Bean, *Story of Anzac*, vol. II, pp.54-55.

<sup>83</sup> Appx. 4 to May 1915, HQ ANZAC GS, AWM4 125/2/ part 5.

first raid was carried by six volunteers commanded by Second-Lieutenant Bennet Burleigh (1/7 Lancashire Fusiliers) around 18 June 1915. Bennet Burleigh's presence in the front-line is confirmed by the Battalion's war diary, but the raid is not mentioned, suggesting that it was carried out on his own initiative. This contrasts with a carefully-planned raid on the night of 15/16 December, when a party destroyed an Ottoman mine head. These two raids, carried out six months apart by the same battalion, perhaps indicates the way that the soldiers' experience had changed. Just as was the case on the Western Front, trench warfare had become increasingly bureaucratised.<sup>84</sup> The freelance style of raiding and patrolling of the summer had given way to a more methodical approach, as indicated by the previous reconnaissance and the organisation that is apparent behind the December action.<sup>85</sup>

The final category of action was the 'minor enterprise'. These were divided into stand-alone actions, and operations in support of activities elsewhere. At Helles early as 9 May Hunter-Weston ordered 29<sup>th</sup> Division to 'maintain "a ceaseless initiative" by means of local advances'. This continued to be the mantra of high commanders.<sup>86</sup> The objective was to expand the beachhead by pushing the line forward. Such operations were also carried out at Anzac. At Helles, the RND pushed forward about 800 yards in four advances by night in May, for under 50 casualties. By contrast, as Ottoman defences improved, all too often these minor enterprises, even if successful, developed into small-scale attritional actions that were very costly in casualties. The RND assaulted and captured an Ottoman trench on 19 June, but this precipitated a battle that stretched out over three days. Eventually the RND cut its losses and left the trench in Turkish hands.<sup>87</sup> Such costly operations formed the backdrop to many a soldier's time at Gallipoli.

There were several ways in which soldiers' experience at the Dardanelles differed from that of their equivalents in France. Enemy artillery bombardments were much heavier on the Western Front, and battle casualties were higher.<sup>88</sup> British high command feared that the Ottomans would use chemical weapons, but in the event poison gas was a horror endured by

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<sup>84</sup> Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 56-75.

<sup>85</sup> Gibbon, *42<sup>nd</sup> Division*, pp.42, 55-56; 1/7 Manchesters, WD, 17 June, 16 Dec. 1915, WO 95/4315, TNA.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. Lt.-Gen. Davies: 'more small offensive operations must be undertaken', Corps Commanders conference, 2 Sept. 1915, VIII Corps GS WD, WO 95/4273, TNA.

<sup>87</sup> Jerrold, *RND*, pp.139-41.

<sup>88</sup> C.E.W. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France*, Vol. III (St. Lucia, QLD, University of Queensland Press, 1982 [1929]), 218; Prior, *Gallipoli*, p.243.

soldiers in France but not by men at the Dardanelles.<sup>89</sup> Compared to the Western Front, the level of Central Powers' air activity at Gallipoli was low. Soldiers' letters and diaries often mention seeing enemy aeroplanes, and sometimes the dropping of bombs, but this was never much more than an irritant.<sup>90</sup> The Gallipoli campaign took place too early in the conflict for aircraft attacking ground targets to become a major feature of the soldiers' experience.

In some ways trench warfare on Gallipoli was actually worse than the equivalent in Flanders. 'The officers & men here have a much harder time in every way than in France', wrote an officer who fought in both theatres. At Gallipoli, 'the troops *never* get any Rest. In France when they come out of the trenches they go to houses far removed from shell fire. Here they go to Rabbit holes' - 'infantry !!!! Rest !!!! Camps'.<sup>91</sup> All of this ensured that the soldier's predominant experience of Gallipoli was one of attritional, trench-bound warfare. The Allies were pinned into two small beachheads which could only be expanded at the margins, if at all. This had the important consequence that almost everywhere on the Peninsula was exposed to enemy fire. Lieutenant-General Sir Francis 'Joey' Davies, who took command of VIII Corps at Helles in August, stated that 'I do not know of a single yard that was safe from shell fire', and it was much the same at Anzac and Suvla.<sup>92</sup> Enemy rifle fire was also a constant hazard, even in the rear areas.<sup>93</sup> Behind the front space for camps, hospitals, supply dumps, headquarters and the like was at a premium. The opening of a third front at Suvla provided a bigger beachhead with a larger hinterland, but otherwise the same constraints applied.

The factors that underpinned the stalemate were much the same as those that applied in Flanders. At the operational level, the trenches at Helles had secure flanks, so every assault had to be made frontally; only once was an amphibious hook attempted. At Anzac the extremely difficult terrain proved a formidable barrier to a flank attack. Tactical factors included the fact that when protected even by rudimentary trenches, stubborn defending infantry and machine gunners proved difficult to neutralise sufficiently to allow attacks to

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<sup>89</sup> See e.g. Birdwood to GHQ MEF, Anzac WD, Appx. 40, May 1915, AWM4 1/25/2 part 5, AWM; Yigal Sheffy, 'The Chemical Dimension of the Gallipoli Campaign: Introducing Chemical Warfare to the Middle East', *War in History*, Vo. 12 (3), 2005, pp. 278-317.

<sup>90</sup> K.M. Little, ts diary, Acc. 1997.1824, KMA/NAMNZ.

<sup>91</sup> Simpson-Baikie to wife, 9 June and 6 Aug. 1915, LHCMA.

<sup>92</sup> Lt. Gen. Sir F.J. Davies's statement to Dardanelles Commission, p.1. CAB 19/29, TNA; John Gallishaw, *Trenching at Gallipoli* (New York: Century, 1917), pp.64-65.

<sup>93</sup> Entry, 29 May 1915, in John Gillam, *Gallipoli Diary*, (Stevenage: Strong Oak, 1989 [1918]), p.110.

make progress. Moreover, counter-battery fire was embryonic and largely ineffective. Therefore, attacking across No Man's Land was invariably costly and rarely achieved much; the Ottomans were no more able to break through strongly-held trenches than were the British or Anzacs. The experience of battle (as opposed to merely holding trenches, albeit under fire) for the most part took the form of bloody, attritional combat, with the same piece of ground being fought over time and again. At Helles, in July 1915, a soldier cursed the 'haunted' Achi Baba Nullah: 'This miserable piece of scrubland has been paid for over and over again: this constant nibbling is getting us absolutely nowhere and is costing us the youth of Britain'.<sup>94</sup>

Another significant problem, in Flanders as well as at the Dardanelles, was inadequate command and control. The absence of reliable communications greatly reduced the ability of higher commanders to influence operations once they had been committed to battle. Planning of operations was often poor, and matched by the problems in disseminating orders. 1/Borders received its instructions on 28 April, shortly before an attack was to take place, 'and it was practically impossible for everyone to understand in a hurry from a map the exact position we were to reach'.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the biggest problem, however, was that the MEF had insufficient artillery and ammunition, as astute observers recognised from very early on. 'Given plenty of high explosive shells & hand grenades ad lib', Brigadier-General William Marshall (87 Brigade) wrote in early July, 'there would be none of this delay in getting through. Without high explosive (& heaps of it) the task of turning the Turk out of trenches (a perpetual succession of them)' would only result in 'appalling losses'.<sup>96</sup>

As with so many other things, decisions taken at the outset of the campaign powerfully influenced the soldiers' experience. On landing on the Peninsula, four divisions of VIII Corps should have been equipped with 304 guns, but in fact they had a mere 118, some of which were obsolete.<sup>97</sup> Eventually, the number of guns and howitzers with VIII Corps rose to 123, although the bulk of these (84) were 18-pdr field guns rather than heavy weapons; there was also 20 obsolescent 15-pdrs. The CO of a counter-battery unit in VIII Corps testified that by

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<sup>94</sup> Diary, 13 July 1915, in Murray, *Gallipoli*, pp.119-20.

<sup>95</sup> Ellis, memoir (quoting contemporary letter), pp.28, 31, BRA/CMML.

<sup>96</sup> Marshall to brother, 4 July 1915, Marshall papers, LHCMA.

<sup>97</sup> C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli* Vol. I (London: William Heinemann, 1929), pp.110-11.

October, only four out of a possible ten heavy guns were available at any one time.<sup>98</sup> Shells, as well as guns, were in short supply. In mid-May HQ MEF ordered that the obsolete 15-pdr was to be used in place of the 18-pdr 'where possible', and even in repelling attacks the 'necessity for economy of ammunition' was to be born in mind.<sup>99</sup> Naval gunfire support proved an inadequate substitute, and in any case this diminished after the arrival of German U-boats forced the battleships to be withdrawn.<sup>100</sup>

Moreover, the tactical techniques that in 1917-18 were to transform the conduct of operations on the Western Front were still being formulated. Looking back, G.B. Hurst (1/7 Manchesters) recognised that Gallipoli methods were 'out of date in France in 1917':

a vast concentration of gun power, infinitely equipped and munitioned, a scientific use of barrage fire, nicely adjusted to the movements of a great infantry force, itself organised to develop the fullest use of machine guns, Lewis guns, and grenades, would have broken the defences of Achi Baba. Our army knew none of these advantages... It was realised nowhere at this period that the rôle of infantry in attack is quite secondary to that of the guns'.<sup>101</sup>

He might have added a virtually insuperable problem, that opportunities for training on the Peninsula were limited at best. An officer recorded that 'training of any kind was impossible [at Helles] ... There was no ground unswept by fire on which to train'.<sup>102</sup>

## Learning

Part of the soldier's experience at Gallipoli was the process of learning collectively and by individuals. Some of this was simply becoming battlewise. The decision of a battalion commander to remove badges of rank and dress as an Other Rank for fear of snipers is one example of this.<sup>103</sup> Units sent as reinforcements to the Dardanelles at least had an opportunity to prepare themselves. Officers of 1/5 HLI obtained, apparently before they landed at Gallipoli in June, copies of *Notes on Trench Warfare in France*, and later they

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<sup>98</sup> Lt.-Col. D.E. Forman, statement to Dardanelles Commission, p.3, CAB 19/29; Crawley, *Climax*, p.78.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, WO 95/4304, WD, 29<sup>th</sup> Division General Staff, Force Order No. 11, 13 May 1915.

<sup>100</sup> C.E. Callwell, *The Dardanelles*, (London: Constable, 1924), pp.339-42; Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli* Vol. II, p.394.

<sup>101</sup> G.B. Hurst, *With the Manchesters in the East* (London: Longmans, 1918), p.73.

<sup>102</sup> Morrison, *Fifth HLI*, p.53.

<sup>103</sup> Darlington to wife, 14 and 18 May 1915, Darlington papers, LHCMA.

borrowed the *Trench Standing Orders* of 2/Royal Fusiliers.<sup>104</sup> There was also a tactical learning process. In May, Forward Observation Officers, who liaised between the artillery and infantry, were introduced into 29<sup>th</sup> Division. Aircraft spotted targets for the guns, albeit that this was ‘never entirely satisfactory’ during the Gallipoli campaign.<sup>105</sup> ‘Joey’ Davies introduced cutting-edge practices into VIII Corps from the Western Front, where he had previously commanded the Regular 8<sup>th</sup> Division; for instance, he personally instigating the appointment of a Divisional Bombing Officer and Bombing school to replace the ‘haphazard and perfunctory’ methods that had prevailed hitherto.<sup>106</sup>

In June-July 1915, the MEF and the French began to use a form of what would become known as ‘bite and hold’, that is to launch a strictly limited offensive, with the infantry supported by massed artillery. The aim was to take a ‘bite’ out of the enemy’s position, which could then be consolidated and held against counterattacks. These methods were employed during Third Krithia, 4-6 June 1915. GHQ’s orders specified that until the enemy front line was ‘thoroughly secured no further advance will be made, but as soon as this has been done every opportunity of gaining further ground will be seized, the advance being made step by step with the conversion and consolidation of the successive positions gained’. The Allies achieved an advance of some 500 yards, inflicting 9,000 casualties on the Ottomans, and suffering some 6,500.<sup>107</sup> In other circumstances this would have been advantageous to the Allies, as was the case on the Western Front in 1917, where the Entente had longer attritional pockets. But at Gallipoli, where both battle and non-battle casualties were high, reinforcements were slow to arrive in-theatre, and units routinely went into action seriously understrength, the Allies simply could not afford to sustain this level of loss. Whatever its virtues in France and Flanders, ‘Bite and Hold’ was simply inappropriate for the Dardanelles.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Morrison, *Fifth HLI*, pp.27, 32.

<sup>105</sup> Lt.-Co. D.E. Forman, statement to Dardanelles Commission, p.2, CAB 19/29, TNA. For the importance of individuals in transmitting lessons between theatres, see Aimée Fox-Godden, ‘Beyond the Western Front: The Practice of Inter-Theatre Learning in the British Army during the First World War’, *War in History*, Vol. 23 (2), (2016), pp.203-08.

<sup>106</sup> Lt.-Col. A.E.F. Fawcus, statement to Dardanelles Commission, p.3, CAB 19/29, TNA. For the importance of individuals in transmitting lessons between theatres, see Aimée Fox-Godden, ‘Beyond the Western Front: The Practice of Inter-Theatre Learning in the British Army during the First World War’, *War in History*, Vol. 23 (2), (2016), pp.203-08.

<sup>107</sup> Braithwaite to VIII Corps, 2 June 1915, para.9, WO/4273, TNA; Hamilton to Kitchener, 2 July 1915, in Sir Ian Hamilton. *Gallipoli Diary*, Vol. I, (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), pp.363-64.

<sup>108</sup> Stephen Badsey, ‘The August Offensives in British Imperial Grand Strategy’, in Ashley Ekins (ed.), *Gallipoli: A Ridge Too Far* (Wollombi, NSW: Exisle, 2015 [2013]), p.62.

The operational conditions had important implications for the experience of the MEF's soldiers. Too often they were committed by higher command to operations that were intended to achieve breakthroughs when such an outcome was never a realistic possibility. By the end of the campaign, units were undoubtedly more militarily effective at prosecuting trench warfare, and individual soldiers had become veterans. However, there is much evidence that morale in at least some parts of the MEF had suffered quite seriously.<sup>109</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The way that soldiers experienced the Gallipoli campaign was shaped by numerous factors. The agency of individuals, while not absent, was severely limited. This was in large part the consequence of an external factor, the chronic underestimation of the enemy by British strategic decision-makers, that ensured that the force sent to the Dardanelles was simply inadequate for the task. This was accompanied by poor, myopic planning. The failure to win a quick victory meant that the MEF had to cope with numerous challenges that helped to determine the nature of the soldiers' experience at Gallipoli. This article has highlighted some of the most important: the environmental factors of climate and terrain; the military factor of tactical deadlock, which led to the creation of a trench system; sanitation and medical support; and the development of trench warfare and tactical and operational techniques. None of these factors was hermetically sealed. Rather, each factor was influenced by others. Thus the sanitation problem was exacerbated by the small size of the beachheads, which were in part a product of the failure of the initial assault to be converted into an operational success (which arguably was heavily influenced by faulty strategic decisions taken at the outset); and the subsequent emergence of tactical stalemate.

Some factors were affected by others that have not been given much consideration here. The suffering of the Herefords as the result of the blizzard in November, for instance, was exacerbated by failures of leadership within the battalion. Thus there was a kind of negative symbiosis between various factors that helped to create the distinctive character of the Gallipoli campaign. This was in some ways similar to, but in others very different from the

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<sup>109</sup> For morale and discipline at Gallipoli, see Gary Sheffield, "'All Pretty Well Fed Up and Worn Out'?" Morale, Command, and Military Effectiveness in the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli', *British Journal of Military History* (forthcoming).

‘flavour’ of other campaigns undertaken by British Empire soldiers in 1915, such as the Western Front or Mesopotamia.

After the First World War, the Dardanelles expedition became the subject of a ‘heroic-romantic myth’.<sup>110</sup> In reality, there was little that was romantic about the campaign for the men who served there. Gallipoli was the product of a set of circumstances that shaped a campaign that, even by the standards of the First World War, was for the participants an exceptionally unpleasant, dangerous, and gruelling experience.

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Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre (Barnes papers)

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<sup>110</sup> Macleod, *Gallipoli*, p.138. For an example see John North, *Gallipoli: The Fading Vision* (London: Faber, 1965 [1936]). The preposterous dedication is ‘To All Those Who Had The Good Fortune To Serve in Gallipoli’ (p.7).