

REPORT ON GALLIPOLI RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

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In May and June, 1974, the writer visited Australia and New Zealand in the course of a research project on the history of the Gallipoli campaign of 1915. The purpose of the visit was above all to meet Anzac veterans, to tape their recollections, to forage for and gather in original material and copies of material for permanent preservation, and to work in Australian and New Zealand archives institutions on the Gallipoli campaign. Naturally, a good deal of research work outside the Gallipoli campaign was undertaken, and indeed it would have been foolish to have neglected the opportunity of meeting old soldiers and sailors who had been involved in the capture of German New Guinea, or Samoa, or had been engaged in active service at Gaza, or in the Jordan Valley, or at Flers and Messines on the Western Front.

Throughout the work, and perhaps more particularly now that the research has been successfully accomplished, the sense of the tremendous privilege accorded to me has been very real. The archives collection at Sunderland, dealing with the First World War, has been tremendously enriched, the book I am working on on Gallipoli ought to be so much better balanced, and I have had a lastingly memorable experience of work with people and papers in countries where I have been received with heart-warming hospitality.

That the journey could be made at all was due to a large extent to the generosity and faith of Sunderland Polytechnic and its Rector, Dr Maurice Hutton. In the absence of any major grant to support that of the Polytechnic, and apart from my own efforts to raise funds, the only substantial help I received was from the Priestman Trust in Sunderland and from some 1914-18 veterans who made generous donations.

At the outset I must record some outstanding debts to both Australians and New Zealanders. The astonishingly vigorous and well-organised Gallipoli Legion of Anzacs in Western Australia with the splendid leadership of Secretary George Shaw and the great kindness of individual members guaranteed success there. The Sharman and Carr families ensured that the South Australian and Tasmanian sections of the itinerary would be fruitful and happy. The help of the Vinning family in Canberra and the Smythe family in Sydney was vital to me at the conclusion of my stay in Australia.

In New Zealand one man stood behind the faultlessly thorough preparations — this was Colonel Bill Murphy. His good name, and that of the President of the Gallipoli Association of Veterans Don Stacey, stood me in good stead throughout New Zealand. I should like especially to mention the consistent support of the Gallipoli Association and of the Returned Services Association which in each N.Z. centre provided every help. In Northland I remember Ken and

Mrs Stevens; in Wellington Mr and Mrs Brosnahan; in Christchurch Captain and Mrs Arthur Marris; in Blenheim the admirable organisation of Mr Watson; and in Dunedin, Mr Taverndale . . .

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

I left Sunderland for London by train on 15th May. The first cause for concern was a twelve-hour delay in the flight out of Heathrow of the Qantas service on which I was booked. With a long journey through Teheran and Bombay ahead of me, I had to look forward to arrival in Perth in the small hours of the morning. Despite the hour, George Shaw and his wife were there to meet me. The following day began with a look at the city and its fine King's Park with not only an impressive War Memorial and an avenue of trees each individually commemorating a fallen West Australian, but also a newly-designated Anzac Bluff, marking its similarity to a headland in that cove in the Aegean Sea now so much a part of Australian history.

The tape-recording of the reminiscences of Gallipoli veterans began on that first day, but a proper programme got under way as a result of my being able to speak at the Annual Meeting of the Gallipoli Legion of Anzacs in Western Australia, and my being able to meet the President, Mr Syme. Each day one of the members took me by car to widely dispersed areas outside of Perth, and their company made the journeys a great pleasure. The journeys undertaken with Harry Kahan were particularly extensive and a very pleasant evening was spent at the home of Reg Nicholas.

I visited an English R.F.C. veteran at Coolbellup, and I found in the same Church of England settlement an Australian Imperial Camel Corps man. Mr Birtwistle made an excellent tape, and it was pleasant indeed to meet again some of the First World War men whose acquaintance I had first made on the other side of the globe.

The Western Australian TV coverage proved to be extremely helpful, and I had the pleasure of meeting the survivor of four brothers, the other three of whom had been killed on Gallipoli. One veteran, having made a good tape-recording, generously offered to cover the cost of any untoward events, and in fact the need nearly arose for me to call upon his assistance when one of the tape-recorders threatened to collapse from what I can only assume was exhaustion!

Altogether in Western Australia twenty-eight people were interviewed and twenty were taped, but in addition documents of great interest were presented to our archives. Among this fascinating material there is an engrossing account of a situation bordering on mutiny on board a troopship, a description of the landing at Anzac Cove handed by a dying soldier to a Western Australian private in the Hospital Transport Corps, and a bullet-scarred pack of playing cards.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On Thursday 23rd May I left for Adelaide, and was met at the airport by the son of a Gallipoli veteran. Arrangements had been made in advance for material relating to the Gallipoli campaign to be got ready, in the State Archives, for me to study. The Hutton diary for example had graphic accounts of the effects of shell-fire. ". . . Pte E. C.

Bell — both legs and one arm blown off . . .” and of dysentery “. . . I am passing slime and blood, but we have to stick it . . .” The 10th Bn. War Diary showed that orders for the landing clearly instructed that “No rifle fire is to be employed until broad day light. The bayonet only is to be used. No bugle calls to be sounded after leaving Lemnos. No bugles are to be sounded during the charge.” There was also this entry for 29th April. “Our men were thoroughly exhausted and their nerves shattered after 96 hours continuous fighting.”

An enjoyable lunch at the Returned Services League Club, some tape-recording of the recollections of Gallipoli men, and the taking of some feet of film of Adelaide: these activities took up a good deal of my time, but I was still able to visit an attractive wild-life park on the slopes of Mount Lofty overlooking the city.

VICTORIA

My arrival in Melbourne on Saturday, 25th May was unfortunately coincident with a specially sacred institution in that city — the “Weekend” — and I was unable to meet veterans until the Monday. However, the La Trobe Library was open and useful work was done in a long Sunday session on both published and unpublished sources. The librarians produced for me a rare copy of the Truce Instructions, and then there were the careful preparations to leave a fully equipped field hospital to cater for severely wounded in the event of evacuation developing into a battle on the beach and cliffs which could have prevented orderly withdrawal.

TASMANIA

I arrived at Launceston, Northern Tasmania, on 27th May, to stay with Mr and Mrs Carr on a farm at Dunorlan, and I began a particularly happy and fruitful section of the work. Mrs Carr's father, a Gallipoli veteran, lives beside his daughter on the farm, and helped in the task of making contact with, and interviewing the other veterans. In Devonport, Launceston and Hobart, where I stayed for a night with friends of the Carrs (Mr and Mrs Scott) tape-recording proved very successful. In Hobart I was put in touch with a nurse who had gone out with the First A.I.F., and a veteran who had been taught by her in a school pre-1914, inoculated by her on the troopship, and nursed by her when wounded, Mr Lapthorne not only made an excellent tape but also provided interesting documents and an early Gallipoli trench periscope and a turkish army issue rifle cleaning set. A lady passed over to me a long-treasured diary of her fiance killed on the day following the last entry, and Major General Wordsworth was quite adamant that his Squadron in the First Light Horse had neither fired a round nor dug a trench before they landed on the Peninsula. A frail British army V.C. (Major Holland) bravely made a tape in a Hobart hospital and at my departure the influence of TV and Press interviews was being reflected in increasing correspondence.

The lovely scenery of Tasmania and the excitement that an urbanised Englishman feels at being quite near bush still partly unexplored, the kangaroo trails in the bush above the farm where I was staying, the possums and the bandicoots, the brilliantly-coloured

parrots, the butcher birds, the noisy miner birds — all these gave an especial fascination to travel and work in so warmly hospitable an island. Even the unsensationalised Press reporting made a delightful change.

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

On 1st June I arrived in Canberra to stay with Howard and Joan Vinning. It was a real education for one used to finding architectural satisfaction almost exclusively in a medieval to Georgian setting to visit Canberra. I began to experience a growing admiration for the Canberra concept — a 20th Century planned city, with wide avenues spaciouly situated, clean-lined buildings each in an oasis of trees and grass — embassies each built in its own exciting national style, and each inviting a guess as to which country was represented.

I worked with a small number of veterans, and at the Royal Military College at Duntroon I had the great pleasure of reading the Gallipoli letters of Captain Christopher Carrington, whose brother Charles had been such a help to our archives. I found time spent in the National Library and the Australian War Memorial very rewarding. Every help was given by both institutions, and Max Draheim, head of the Department of Printed Books and Written Manuscripts at the War Memorial, ensured that I had full access to General Bridges's diary, Birdwood's diary, J. S. Kirkpatrick's letters and other valuable material.

It was interesting to read a letter from the Australian journalist K. A. Murdoch, which revealed that his criticism of leadership at Gallipoli was not limited to English commanders. A letter to the Australian Minister of Defence, George Pearce, was written on 13th September 1915. "Monash and Hughes dashed their men against a high post here — Baby 700 — and they should have known after the first line went out that the job was hopeless. It was pitiful — fine Australian heart and soul and muscle wiped out in an impossible task. Oh yes there is a lot of murder through incapacity." To hear Monash spoken of in these terms must surely throw light on the selectivity exercised in publishing Murdoch's famous letter to the Australian Prime Minister — or does it not indeed throw more light on Murdoch himself? Incidentally a simultaneously undertaken investigation in archives in Wellington and Canberra as to the responsibility for the Good Friday battle of the Wasser would have extremely little chance of producing a jointly-agreed report — as it is abundantly clear from Australian sources that the New Zealanders were responsible, while the New Zealand archives demonstrate that the Australians were to blame.

NEW SOUTH WALES

By the time I arrived in Sydney on 5th June, a thorough but demanding schedule had been prepared for me. This involved the recording on tape of the recollections of thirty-three men. In addition to completing this programme with the help of my host Mr Clyde Smythe, I travelled by train to Newcastle to work with some veterans from that city. The Combined Services Club in Sydney did all it could to help with my work, and, in travelling round the metropolitan area

with Mr Smythe to meet those who could not come to the Club, I saw something of the superb harbour and the deservedly-famous bridge, the bow of H.M.A.S. *Sydney*, a gun from the *Emden*, and the War Memorial.

Among the men with whom I worked was Mr R. L. Jones, who was in the Gaba Tepe raid, Colonel Holmes who was in New Guinea, Brigadier Bachtold who had interesting experiences of mining activity at Anzac, and men who had such useful diaries like those of Cobden Parkes and A. E. Joyce. Mrs Gittins's husband had kept a fascinating private war museum which I visited, and of course I spent a profitable time at the Mitchell Library. Not all of the documents I selected from the catalogue could be found, but there was much of importance. A letter of T. J. McKinley described the Lone Pine action:

The noise was unbearable and as it was my first experience in a battle you can imagine my feelings and thoughts with no time to look around but look straight and fire straight.

A letter from a medical orderly aboard the S.S. *Seang Choon* describes in harrowing detail conditions on board this ship: far greater numbers of wounded than were ever anticipated were crowded aboard. ". . . All this was someone's fault but God knows it was not ours, who already had a superhuman task before us. Some day it may be fixed to somebody holding a much higher position than any of ours. Surely a want of preparation and foresight on somebody's part."

The sheer intensity of the work in Sydney at the end of a demanding month left its mark on me, and a somewhat fragile Englishman embarked for New Zealand on 12th June. Though I carried with me all the original material with which I had been entrusted, I had so many unit histories that I had to send two big parcels off to England by air freight. A similar parcel had to be sent from New Zealand.

AUCKLAND

Colonel Bill Murphy and Don Stacey met me at Mangarere airport and on the following morning I spoke to 49 veterans at the R.S.A. Club. Through excellent organisation, a taping schedule was worked out, and a high proportion of these men were interviewed. Mr Fagan had grim memories of a hospital ship from 27th April, 1915; Mr Salisbury gave me his diary and a Bible with deeply implanted shell fragments, and Mr Claridge similarly honoured our archives with his diary. C. R. G. Bassett was there to give predictably modest accounts of the action in which he won the V.C., and other men were similarly helpful. During the next days Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park recorded both his Gallipoli and his R.F.C. experiences, I met a long lost relative, and Bill and Don ensured that I saw the War Memorial Museum and a good deal of the rain-sodden but still attractive city.

WHANGAREI/MARSDEN BAY

After a long bus journey north from Auckland I was met at Marsden Bay by Ken Stevens and was soon lodged in the delightful ocean bay setting of the home of Ken and his wife. Ken has written of his First World War experiences in a book which he presented to

me, together with diaries and other original papers. A near neighbour, Mr Berry, brought me one of the primitive "gas hoods" of which I had seen a few photographs taken during the later months at Gallipoli. Of course, gas was not used on the Peninsula, but a recently-discovered German ordnance report shows that the Allied evacuation took place only just before our troops would have had to face, had they stayed on Gallipoli, both poison gas and flame throwers.

A meeting organised at the Whangarei R.S.A. Club went very well and was well reported in both press and radio. Among the men whose recollections were being taped and who in fact made a kind donation to the cost of the research there was one who was honest enough to admit that, having lied about his age in order to get into the Army, he had at a tender 16 years been so scared from the time he was first given bullet-holed bloody equipment on arrival at Anzac that he and some others had "manufactured" work for themselves in a side gully on 8th August, until they were found and ordered up to the attack. Another man watched, sadly, the sinking of the *Royal Edward*, while his ship, the *Alnwick Castle* did not stop to pick up survivors. Mention should also be made of Captain R. H. Harris who, though soon to face a major operation, travelled nearly 150 miles to Auckland to meet me and was now organising, along with Ken Stevens, the tape recording of the Whangarei men's reminiscences.

WELLINGTON

There is no disguising the fact that my first impression of Wellington, on June 18th, was most unfavourable. When I saw its snow-topped hills brooding over a grim, grey sea; when I felt the wind which chilled the marrow in my bones and the icy rain which numbed the spirit, I began to wonder "Where are the huskey teams, the igloos and the holes for fishing through the ice?" However, a warm welcome awaited me from my hosts Mr and Mrs Brosnahan: and so many people had worked so hard to prepare the way for my visit that I soon forgot about the climatic conditions. Television and radio coverage brought a tremendous response in telephone calls and letters. I was able to meet two men from the occupation of Samoa — the first Allied victory of the war. Mr A. G. Jennings, Mr B. B. Brown, Mr J. Cochrane, Miss D. Comyns provided some excellent documentation, and I have since received still more material.

Miss Carol Dickie at the Alexander Turnbull Library, and Miss Hornabrook at the National Archives, gave me great assistance. In the Turnbull Library I saw a pay book entry for A. F. Gascoigne . . . "Killed 20-5-15 Balance Credit £2." Trooper Gascoigne had written on the 7th of that month to a Miss Casemore that he was "en route for a bit of a tussle with the Turks — if Joe knows I am writing a letter to you I can see us having a duel if we meet at the Front." His diary for the day before he was killed records that "Last night was the worst we have had and also today." Sapper Clifton wrote a graphic diary account of a fearful night movement on 27th November to Hill 60. "All the saps were cut up to deep slush or slippery mud . . . Pitch dark and bitterly cold wind blowing. Commenced night's experiences we shall never forget." H. E. Browne wrote from an

English hospital "Whatever else, the Turk is certainly a brave foe," and his account of the Chunuk Bair assault makes grim reading.

I read the evidence of a New Zealander given to the Dardanelles Commission, on food. "We had some of Moir's and Machonochie's which was quite good, but I know the men did not like Fray Bentos." Then, having dealt with the serious problem of water, he came to the main source of the spread of enteric fever:

If we could have got the latrines properly fixed up we could have done away with the fly nuisance to a great extent though it would not have been done away with altogether with so many dead bodies lying about the lines.

BLLENHEIM

I was at Blenheim on 23rd June. Thanks to the very good arrangements of Mr O. L. Watson, the help of the R.S.A. Club and the R.S.A. Ladies, I conducted a very successful tape-recording session. Lieutenant-Colonel Parker with whom I had previously been in touch made a good tape which included a delightful story of the Zionist Mule Corps receiving dispensation to allow them to carry bacon, and eat their bacon ration, and making appeal for the back rations lost prior to the dispensation. A thoughtful widow of a veteran brought me a second Gallipoli gas mask. The Blenheim veterans, having accommodated me royally, provided the air fare to enable me to fly to Christchurch, rather than take the much slower bus journey.

CHRISTCHURCH

I was at Christchurch on 24th June. Once again splendid organization and widespread goodwill ensured the success of this stage of the tour, and this was to a large extent due to the kindness as well as to the efficiency of Captain and Mrs Arthur Marris with whom I stayed. I must however mention the R.S.A. Club, Mr and Mrs Colwell, and Mr John Stringleman, the Librarian of the Canterbury Public Library, and his staff. Once again TV and press coverage was thorough, though this did not interfere with the taping programme. I enjoyed hearing of the contrast in reading matter bought by two New Zealand men from an Ismailia book stall. The Canterbury Professor bought Ovid, but Sir Kenneth Gresson, with a distinguished career ahead of him as a judge, bought *La Vie Parisienne!* Mr J. A. Anderson spoke of the reconnaissance which prepared the way for the raid on Suvla at the beginning of May, and Mr Foord remembered the stretchers being packed below the barbed wire on his transport at the landing. Captain Marris, Mr Taylor, Mr Leaman and Mr C. E. Fenwick were among those who assisted me to very good effect with original documentation.

Undoubtedly the most interesting Gallipoli document in the Christchurch Library was the J. L. Anderson diary which included the following entry for 7th May: "There will have to be an Armistice soon for identifying and burying the dead." As many of my readers will realise, he was over two weeks premature with that forecast: few would however disagree with his 5th May impression of Anzac "The whole place really beggars description."

DUNEDIN

I was in Dunedin on 26th June. Despite all Mr Taverndale's efforts only a small number of veterans were well enough to come into the R.S.A. Club in Dunedin so I abbreviated the last working stage of the tour. One man recalled an interesting detail of a Padre's sermon on the troop ship on 25th April. The sermon was interrupted by the bringing up on to the deck of four grinding stones to sharpen the bayonets of those who had not effectively seen to this in Egypt. The work I had come to the Antipodes to do was finished by the afternoon of 27th June, and by re-arranging flights I was able to set off for home a day and a half earlier than I had planned.

CONCLUSION

Flying to Auckland via Christchurch I was met by Bill Murphy and Don Stacey and I was able to give a reporter an outline of the outstanding success of the New Zealand section of the itinerary. I appreciated the fact that Bill and Don, who had been in it from the beginning, and had been vitally concerned throughout, should be there at the end.

Laden, to an even greater extent than before, with letters and other memorabilia of the Gallipoli campaign (150 letters, additional to what I had before, had been sent to me to be collected at Auckland) I set off for the Fiji Islands, changing planes to travel across the Pacific to Honolulu and then Los Angeles. Somewhere en route we had crossed the International Date Line and I am still trying to work this out. An enforced brief stay convinced me that in America cars are bigger than ours, and clog up the roads much more effectively. Then with only Edward G. Robinson missing from an oft-imagined scene we left Los Angeles for New York where we breakfasted before the Atlantic crossing to Heathrow.

Could this be England? Troops and armoured troop carriers everywhere? Yes, indeed it could! And to prove it, my luggage remained "mislaid" for an agonisingly long period. Just long enough in fact to prevent me from getting the North East that night. The pleasure had to be delayed until the morning of Saturday, 29th June; but with my wife and children meeting the plane at Teeside Airport the long haul was over in a very happy reunion.

Statistics can only be used to prove success with arguable validity; better criteria will later be provided by a greatly enriched archives, and, I hope, by the quality of the book on Gallipoli, once it is published. With over 100 people in Australia, and the same number in New Zealand, having actively co-operated in the work, and with a vast amount of original documentation having been collected together, and the large amount of research having been carried out on the theme of Gallipoli in Australian and New Zealand libraries and archives institutions, and the gathering in of a great number of unit histories, some quite rare, I believe that the right ingredients are there to provide a happy outcome for the proving of the academic pudding. Suffice it to say, at this stage, that I am deeply grateful to all who made possible such a venture, and to all who made it so fruitful. It has been a wonderfully memorable experience.

B. T. BURNE

[The Editor wishes it to be known that some names of people who helped Mr Liddle have been omitted from the report, as originally submitted to him. This has been done in the interests of space. The full report can be seen by any person applying for the opportunity to do so. Address requests to the Editor of this journal.

Mr Liddle would still be delighted to hear from anyone who feels he could help in this work. His address is: Mr. P. H. Liddle, 10, The Precinct, Tunstall Hill, Sunderland SR2 9DN, England.]