

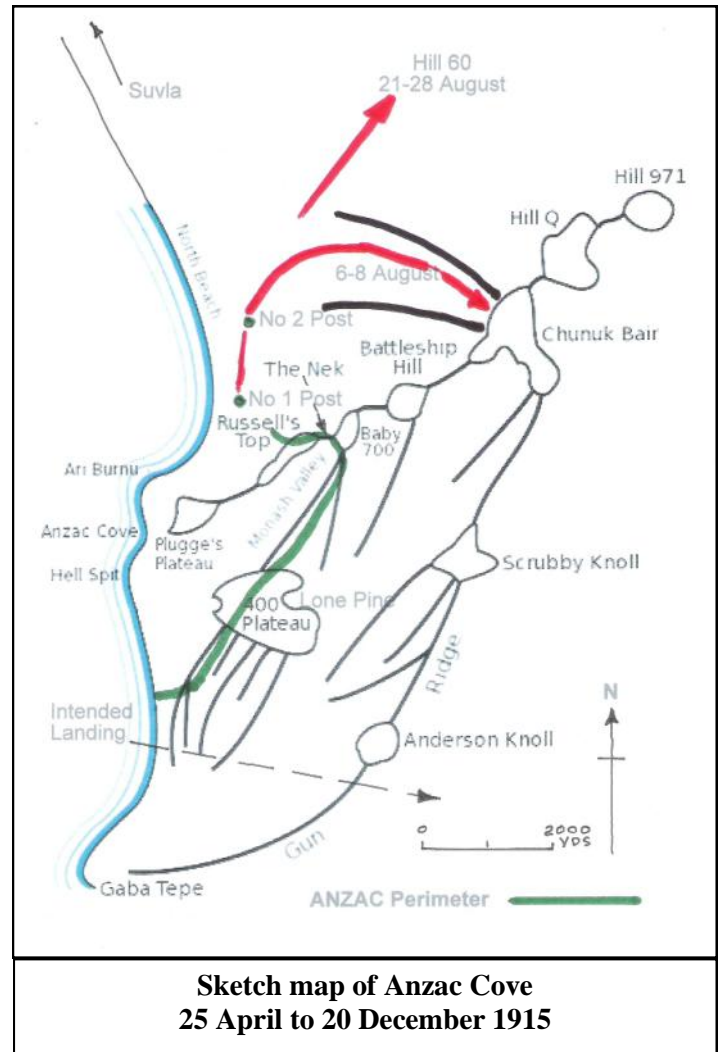
ANZACs a New Zealand Perspective

By Phil Cregeen

As we approach the 100 anniversary of the Gallipoli landings it is appropriate to consider the part played by New Zealand and the arms used by the ANZAC forces in this campaign.

Who were the ANZACs? When the New Zealand Expeditionary Force of some 8574 men sailed from New Zealand in October 1914 they went as members of the Territorial Battalions from which they had been recruited in Auckland Wellington, Canterbury and Otago provinces, their destination unknown but assumed to be England and on to France. The fact that New Zealand had an army ready to send to war is due largely to Major General Sir Alexander Godley a British regular officer of Anglo-Irish stock who had taken up the post of Commander New Zealand Military Forces in 1910 and by 1914 had sufficient men trained and equipped to send overseas with himself as their Commander. This was a Territorial Force, a "Citizens Army" made up of fit young men from rural communities who would prove to be tough dogged fighters; they were lead by part time officers such as lawyers and farmers and a few regular NCOs. Before their arrival in Egypt Godley was told by Major General William Bridges commander of the Australian Force that; "Unforeseen circumstances decided Force train in Egypt and go to front from there. Australians and New Zealand to form Corps under General Birdwood"(sic). Thus the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps came into being and the term ANZAC started when clerks on Birdwoods HQ staff had a rubber stamp made with these initials for marking correspondence. It was next adopted as the telegraph code for the Corps and from there spread into general use. The ANZAC comprised of two Divisions, one under Godley' with a NZ Brigade and 4th Australian Brigade to be known as NZ&A, and the other under Bridges with three Australian Brigades.

In early December the troops disembarked in Egypt and went to Zeitoon Camp where they commence training in the desert. In February 1915 the New Zealanders saw their first action when the NZ Infantry Brigade was sent to defend the Suez Canal from a Turkish attack where they suffered two casualties. Returning to Zeitoon at the end of the month training continued and their numbers were swelled by the Third Reinforcement from home. At this time the British and French Navy tried to force a way through the heavily defended Dardanelles and attack Constantinople, thus putting Turkey out of the war. With three battleships sunk by mines and guns in forts along the coast the attempt failed and it was decided that it would be necessary for an



army to silence the forts on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Thus it was that in early April the ANZACs, less mounted units, sailed from Alexandria to Mudros where they arrived on the 15th.

The Landing. The purpose of the Anzac landing on a long beach North of Gaba Tepe was twofold, to act as a diversion for the main British landing of 29th Division at the southern tip of the peninsular and to advance across a low plain and cut the road south to block Turkish reinforcements. Unfortunately in the dark of the night of 24/25 April the warships and transports anchored a mile too far north and so landed the first wave of Australian troops on a small beach, later to be known as Anzac cove. Here the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade, landing before dawn, were confronted by little Turkish resistance but high ground cut up by steep ridges and deep gullies. A beachhead was quickly secured but progress inland was slowed by the almost impassable terrain. As they struggled inland they secured the first two ridges but the main objective was to secure the high ground held by the Turks, Baby 700. The New Zealanders started landing at 1000 and were due to relieve the Australians the next day, but they were thrown

straight into the fight for Baby 700 and to hold the second ridge as the Turks were rapidly reinforcing and starting to counter attack. Here the New Zealanders fought and died through the rest of the day and the first night alongside the Australians as they struggled to hold the ground that the Australians had won.

Baby 700 was lost but they held at the Nek and second ridge. Fighting continued with rifle, bayonet and bomb, supported by the most effective Maxim guns. On 29 April a heavy Turkish attack was beaten off and on 2/3 May Otago Battalion attempted to retake baby 700 but failed. The Anzac perimeter stabilised and both sides dug in improving their defences as best they could under fire with opposing trenches often only 10 metres apart.



Anzac beach

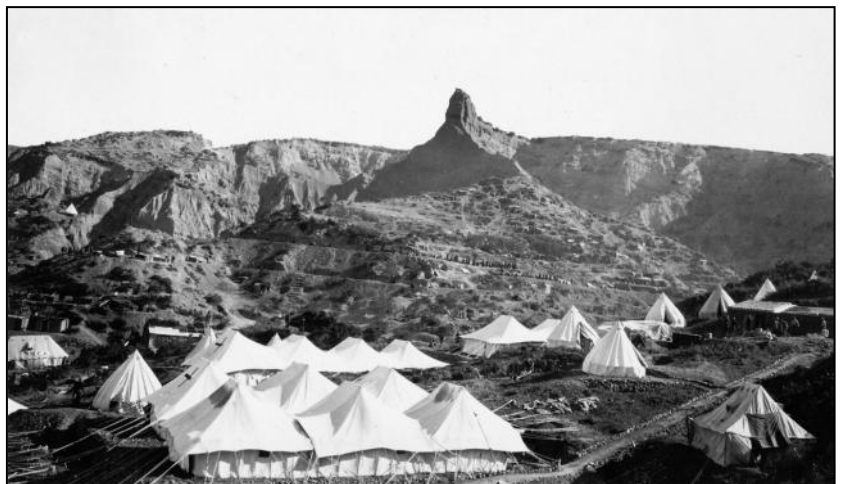
In May the NZ and 2nd Australian Infantry Brigades were sent to Cape Helles to support the British second attack on Krithia where they suffered heavy casualties. On 12 May the New Zealand Mounted Rifles and Australian Light Horse arrived without horses to fight as infantry. Skirmishes continued with the last major Turkish attack on the ANZAC line beaten off at the end of June. In Early August the British went on the offensive on all fronts and made some small gains. British 9th Corps landed at Suvla and the New Zealanders attacked from the north of Anzac, while the Australian attacked Plateau 400 (Lone Pine). The Wellington Battalion captured Chanuk Bair on the 8th and held it for two days, but when relieved by troops of Kitcheners New Army they were driven off by a determined Turkish attack. This brought the 9th Corps advance from Suvla to a halt. In support of another attempted 9th Corps advance the NZMR attacked Hill 60 on the 21st, over the course of a week supported by 4th Australian Brigade they gained the crest of this hill but the Turks still held the summit and stalemate ensued.

In September the surviving New Zealanders were withdrawn to Lemnos for rest although the NZMR

returned to Anzac Cove in November. As winter set in a plan was made to evacuate all British forces from Gallipoli because the campaign had failed. Evacuation of Anzac commenced on the night of 10/11 December with the sick and wounded and by the 20th all troops were removed without the Turks realising.

What of the soldiers who fought at Anzac? Undoubtedly they were very brave, fighting an equally brave opponent, but few New Zealanders were rewarded for their bravery. Godly was not one to hand out praise, officers " were only doing their job" and so only one VC went to Signalman Cyril Bassett for laying and maintaining telephone lines under fire during the attack on Chanuk Bair. At Anzac they suffered heat, flies, fleas, lice, the stench of rotting corpses, poor food (bully beef & biscuits,) shortage of water, lack of sleep and overwork and in winter cold and frostbite. If wounded in an attack they had to crawl away or lay in the sun for days or until bayoneted by a Turk If lucky they were picked up by stretcher bearers and slowly taken back to the beach and eventually a hospital ship. Many suffered from dysentery and other illness, or were hit by snipers, stray bullets or shrapnel behind the lines. They lived in dugouts carved out of the trenches or the sides of the slopes. They fought for their mates and those that had died; even when sick they were reluctant to leave their comrades. Of the original Main Force that had landed those that were lucky enough to survive were shadows of their former selves and most were unfit for further active service.

3,100 New Zealanders landed at Anzac Cove on 25 April, over the course of the next eight months they were reinforced by the NZMR (2000 men) and Reinforcements from home, bringing the total to 14,720. Throughout the Gallipoli campaign 324 officers and 7247 other ranks were killed, wounded, missing or died from disease out of the total landed on the peninsula.



**Anzac Cove looking towards the Sphinx
A Field Hospital in the fore ground**



Top: Magazine Lee Enfield Mk I* and Pat. 1888 Bayonet sighted for Mk VI .303 cartridge. Used by NZ Infantry.
Bottom: Short Magazine Lee Enfield Mk III and Pat 1907 Bayonet sighted for Mk VI .303 cartridge for NZ Forces and Mk VII cartridge for Australian Forces. Used by NZ Mounted Rifle, Artillery and Engineers and all Australian Forces.



Examples of Private Purchase .455" Revolvers for Officers.
Webley Green **Webley Mk IV**
Webley New Army Express **Webley RIC**

Arms of the ANZACs. From 1901 New Zealand had been importing Magazine Lee Enfield .303 rifles (MLE Mk I* or Long Tom) and Pattern 1888 bayonets to equip its Military Forces. By 1913 16,398 MLE Mk I* were on issue to Territorial Infantry and Senior Cadets. In 1914 a further 15,000 second hand MLE were imported from Canada (marked C14) and 15,000 new or refurbished MLE from England (marked E 14). It was this later batch that the NZEF Infantry took overseas, while the Canadian rifles remained at home with the Territorial and Cadet Force for

training. The Short Magazine Lee Enfield Mk III (SMLE) with Pattern 1907 bayonet first arrived in New Zealand in 1909 and by 1912 sufficient was available to equip the Artillery, Territorial Field Artillery, Garrison Artillery, Engineers and Mounted Rifles. The ANZAC Artillery, Engineers and Mounted Rifles were therefore armed with SMLE Mk III sighted for Mk VI ammunition, since until 1917 the Mk VII round of higher velocity was not manufactured in NZ. Officers carried private purchase revolvers such as the Webley Mk IV and the Webley Green and



.303" Maxim Machine Gun on Mk IV Tripod



Maxim gunners at Anzac



Maxim crew training at Zeitoun Camp, Egypt

RIC, chambered for the .455 service round but were also known to pick up a rifle and bayonet.

In addition to their rifles the NZ battalions were armed with Maxim .303 machine guns, the first 6 purchased in 1896 followed by 29 more in 1901 and a further 36 arriving in 1913. They were issued two to a Battalion. Under the direction of the Machine Gun Officer Captain J A Wallingford MC these few Maxims often played a critical part in the NZ defence.

At this time there were no grenades available to the Anzacs and so they improvised by making bombs in jam tins filled with spent cartridges and charged with gelignite or gun cotton.



Living quarters at Anzac



Jam Tin Bombs



Making Bombs at Anzac



18 Pounder QF Field Gun



Australian gunners in action at Anzac

Australia War Memorial



4.5 inch Howitzer



A New Zealand 4.5-inch Howitzer in action at Anzac.

Four New Zealand Field Artillery batteries served on Gallipoli. Three batteries — the 1st, 2nd and 3rd — were equipped with 18-pounder field guns, and one — the 4th — with 4.5-inch howitzers. Although not as destructive as the 18-pounder, the howitzer's range (6300 metres) and ability to fire at a high angle was invaluable amidst the hilly terrain at Anzac. *Alexanda Turnbull Library*

At the time of the initial invasion the ANACs were supported by naval gunfire from battleships and destroyers and a few mountain guns ashore, as there was insufficient space to deploy the Artillery. A drawback of the naval gunfire was that its flat trajectory only allowed targets in the line of sight to be engaged and those hidden behind hills in the many gullies were immune. The day after the landing two NZ Howitzers were brought ashore and on the next day the 2nd Battery of NZFA landed. Later when the situation had stabilised more batteries of 18 pounder field guns and howitzers were landed and hauled up the slopes.

Acknowledgements: Alexander Turbull Library, Australia War Memorial, Gallipoli-The New Zealand Story by C Pugsley.