

THE AUGUST BATTLE FOR CHUNUK BAIR
AS SEEN BY A SUBALTERN.

My first experience of war was at Helles early in May, a bloody affair but not to be compared with the battle for Chunuk Bair - a night attack over impossible terrain and made by troops weakened by weeks of poor rations, lack of water and riddled with dysentery and fever.

After darkness on the 6th. August the Otago Battalion moved up to Chailak Dere. Immediately my company commander was killed and I assumed command of the 8th. company. I was then ordered to attack Table Top from the rear, a most hazardous operation in the dark as it entailed a final assault up an almost vertical cliff. When we reached the top the Turks actually helped us up and some of my men were even kissed by them. We did not know at the time that we had cut off their retreat, as they had been driven back by the New Zealand Mounted Infantry. We took about 50 prisoners. Then Major Statham, our second in command, a most gallant and able soldier, ordered me to push on up Rhododendron Spur. It was now getting light, and collecting what men I could, we charged up the Spur and fought our way to the slopes of Chunuk Bair. The enemy was absolutely demoralised and fleeing in all directions. We did not have a shot fired at us. Unfortunately only about 15 men were with me. Major Statham again appeared and ordered me to dig in while he went back to bring up the Battalion. I never saw him again as he was killed. Later we learned that the Battalion was unable to join us as by this time the Turks had rallied and covered the Rhododendron Ridge with intense machine gun fire. This was a fatal blow as with reinforcements, and before they had become reorganised, we might have gone right through to the Straits.

About mid day we were joined by an officer and a section of the 10th. Gurkhas, who got the credit for capturing the forward position - an honour which should have gone to the Otago Battalion ?

We had a wonderful view of the battle below and could see the 4th. Australian Brigade struggling up the Asmak Dere and we actually saw the Turks withdrawing from Suvla Bay. Later on they returned when they found that the raw British

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THE AUGUST BATTLE FOR CHUMK LAI

AS TOLD BY A SOLDIER

My first experience of war was at Chumk Lai in May, a bloody attack and not to be compared with the battle for Chumk Lai - a night attack over impossible terrain and made by troops weakened by weeks of poor rations, lack of water and riddled with dysentery and fever.

After darkness on the 6th, against the Otago Battalion moved up to Chumk Lai. Immediately my company commander was killed and I assumed command of the 6th company. I was then ordered to attack Table Top from the rear, a most hazardous operation in the dark as it entailed a final assault up an almost vertical cliff. When we reached the top the Turks actually helped us up and some of my men were even kissed by them. We did not know at the time that we had cut off their retreat, as they had been driven back by the New Zealand Mounted Infantry. We took about 50 prisoners. Then Major Statham, our second in command, a most gallant and able soldier, ordered us to push on up the mountain spur. It was now getting light, and collecting what we could, we changed up the spur and fought our way to the slopes of Chumk Lai. The enemy was completely demoralised and fleeing in all directions. We did not have a shot fired at us. Unfortunately only about 15 men were with me. Major Statham again appeared and ordered me to dig in while he went back to bring up the Battalion. I never saw him again as he was killed. Later we learned that the Battalion was unable to join us as by this time the Turks had retailed and covered the mountain. Edge with intense machine gun fire. This was a fatal blow as with reinforcements, and before they had become reorganised, we might have gone right through to the summit.

About this day we were joined by an officer and a section of the 10th Battalion, who got the credit for capturing the forward position - an honour which should have gone to the Otago Battalion?

We had a wonderful view of the battle below and could see the 4th Australian Brigade struggling up the main line and we actually saw the Turks withdrawing from Davis Bay. Later on they returned when they found that the New Zealand

troops made no attempt to push on from the Beaches. Later on we were ordered to rejoin the Battalion.

On the 8th. August we took part in the struggle to hold our position on Chunuk Bair. My Battalion advanced from the Apex after dark on the 8th.. We found conditions just below the crest impossible. All we could do was to dig in. We could hear the Turks collecting on the other side and realized they would be attacking at dawn. It was unfortunate that our trench line was sited below the crest, and in my opinion a great mistake. The Navy started shelling and several H.E.'s dropped short, which was very demoralising.

However, we were relieved about 2 a.m. on the 10th. by the 9th. North Lancs.. Very few of us had survived, and as a subaltern I found myself in command of the Battalion.

After reporting to Brigade H.Q. I collapsed, physically and mentally exhausted. When I came to, many hours later, I found I was lying in an old Turkish latrine with dead bodies lying around me. The Turks had attacked at dawn, captured the position we had just left and swamped the Apex before being pushed back. The fighting had taken place over my body but I was "Down & out" - perhaps this was fortunate for me.

Two days later I was evacuated with acute dysentery and a small wound in my leg, about 30 lbs. lighter than when I landed.

Looking back, I think "Security" was carried too far. Although I was 2nd. in command my company all I knew about the August attack was that we had to make a night attack up the Chailak Dere. The advance was to be made in total silence, with bayonets fixed but no bullet in the breech. When my company commander was killed I knew nothing and wasted time finding Battalion H.Q. in the dark and getting orders.

No details of the attack were given to anyone below the rank of company commander.

The Otago Battalion was fortunate in not going astray. Our sister battalion, Canterbury Regiment was absolutely lost and at daybreak found themselves back on the Beach.

LT.COL. GIBSON BISHOP.

troops made an attempt to push on from the beach. Later on we were ordered to retreat the Battalion.

On the 23rd August we took part in the struggle to hold our position on Omaha Beach. My Battalion advanced from the beach on the 23rd. We found conditions just below the crest impossible. All we could do was to dig in. We could hear the tanks collecting on the other side and realized they would be attacking at dawn. It was unfortunate that our trench line was sited below the crest, and in my opinion a great mistake. The Navy started shelling and several R.E.'s dropped bombs, which was very demoralizing.

However, we were relieved about 2 a.m. on the 24th by the 9th North Lancs. Very few of us had survived, and as a subaltern I found myself in command of the Battalion.

After reporting to Brigade R.G. I collapsed, physically and mentally exhausted. When I came to, many hours later, I found I was lying in an old Turkish latrine with dead bodies lying around me. The tanks had attacked at dawn, captured the position we had just left and swamped the beach before being pushed back. The fighting had taken place over my body but I was "down & out" - perhaps this was fortunate for me.

Two days later I was evacuated with acute dysentery and a small wound in my leg, about 30 lbs. lighter than when I landed.

Looking back, I think "Security" was carried too far. Although I was Sub. in command my company all I knew about the August attack was that we had to make a night attack up the Chalk Dore. The advance was to be made in total silence, with bayonets fixed but no bullet in the breach. When my company commander was killed I knew nothing and wanted this finding Battalion R.G. in the dark and getting orders.

No details of the attack were given to anyone below the rank of company commander.

The 2nd Battalion was fortunate in not going ashore. Our sister Battalion, Canterbury Regiment was absolutely lost and at daybreak found themselves back on the beach.

MR. COL. GIBSON BISHOP
