ANZAC NZ

"GUNLESS GUNNER"

A Story of Gallipoli

by

Norman M.Clark

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2/8B Norman Clark, DCM, MID

When I finished my engineering apprenticeship with the New Zealand Railways at Addington I went to sea and by August 1914 I had managed to work my way up to Second Engineer of the White Star Liner "Ionic". The minute we heard war had been declared my mind was made up and as soon as we reached England I took my discharge and rushed off to join the Navy.

Instead of a joyous welcome I ran slap into the first of my war frustrations. The Navy just weren't interested. A rather bored officer explained quite politely that the war would be finished soon and there was little point in recruiting people for a few months. It sounded fairly logical and in any case was quite final. I was a bit dashed but undaunted. If I couldn't be an Admiral I'd have to be a General but before I joined the British Army I thought I'd better go along to New Zealand House to see what our boys were doing. "Tommy" (the genial Sir Thomas) Mackenzie was our High Commissioner at the time and while there was no Navy-style rebuff the best I could get was a rather diffident suggestion that I should "come back later, we may be able to help you".

So I took up lodgings in London and waited and reported and reported and waited. Meantime official wheels were turning and in the outcome the delay proved fortunate. By an odd chance it turned out that an officer of the New Zealand Staff Corps was in London after finishing a series of courses. Faced with the demand from a mass of insistent volunteers like myself, Sir Thomas and the New Zealand Government took the obvious way out. "Form a Volunteer Section," they said. "Put this officer in charge." With that the British Section of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force was born. It was planned to be a modest unit with a maximum strength of 250 (which it never reached) and was to be trained as Infantry for service in France, later to join up there with the Expeditionary Force from New Zealand. At the time none of us realised we were straight out "political babies" and it was a few months before we found out the penalties of parentage.

I began my Army life on 21 September 1914 when I was finally attested and enlisted. I was enrolled as a full Private and my allocated service number was 8, a fact of which I was very proud, even though I knew the alphabet played a big part. Having come into being we had to be disposed of and away we went to the wide open spaces of the Salisbury Plains near Bulford to begin our training.

Somehow or other we survived. We had plenty of enthusiasm and patriotism but there wasn't much else. Across the world from our home Government was far enough to allow the coils of red tape to build up to the point where nobody could possibly make a decision about anything. We would probably have disappeared slowly into the autumn mud or died of privations if it hadn't been for our quite remarkable commander. Captain Francis Henry Lampen, accidentally put in charge of us, was one of those products of an Empire we seem to have forgotten. Born in India the son of a Regular officer, he was a prizewinner at Sandhurst, commissioned into the Indian Army and after a short period of retirement re-engaged into the New Zealand Staff Corps. With a background like that he had to be either an impossible basket or come up trumps, and we were lucky.

From somewhere, anywhere and nowhere he managed to produce whatever we had to have. We set about building permanent hutments, later to be part of Sling Camp; rifles, machine-guns, ammunition and ~~even~~ Regular instructors appeared as if by magic, and even bugles and drums. Then there was the business of uniforms. We had been issued with one only, possibly on the theory that it didn't really rain in an English Autumn. Efforts to get a second issue tangled helplessly in the red tape jungle between London and Wellington but Lampen met the emergency. A firm of military tailors appeared on the scene, measured and fitted us and delivered our second uniforms just as the matter was becoming crucial. There was only one snag. We had to PAY for second uniform. The quality was good, the price was right but the principle seemed a little odd.

All these disasters overcome did a lot to build up morale and weld us into a unit. Artists and artificers, engineers and electricians, clerks and comic-singers, we worked hard and tried hard and by December

we really believed we were fully trained and ready to go. By the trusty old Army latrine logic we worked out we would be going to France to get things organised for the Main Body, which we already knew had left New Zealand. Sure enough it wasn't long before the orders came.

Down to Southampton we went and embarked on the trooper "Dunera" with about a thousand miscellaneous Tommies of all corps and regiments to keep us company. As a seafarer I was laying down the law on where we'd land and how long the crossing would take when I spotted an old shipmate, now quite obviously Chief Engineer of the vessel. He rushed over and shook my hand. "Nobby", he said, "What the devil are you doing in that uniform?" "Somebody's got to do the fighting," I said, "But tell me something more important. Where and when do we land in France?" He looked at me in astonishment and then started to laugh. After a while he banged me on the shoulder and was so convulsed he could hardly get the words out. "France!" he gasped. "You're not going to France, chum. You're going to Egypt!"

That was the beginning of the end of our unit but the climax was much more spectacular. We had a lousy trip across the Bay of Biscay and were thoroughly fed up with playing nursemaid to hundreds of horribly sea-sick soldiers. When we did arrive at Alexandria it was on Christmas Eve of all days. We had plenty of money in our pockets, whisky was cheap then and plentiful and it wasn't long before festivities began in a lavish way. Eventually we were bundled into a train for Cairo and arrived there at 11.30 p.m. on the night of 24 December 1914. By that time we had joyously emptied numerous supplementary bottles and there probably wasn't a happier bunch of soldiers anywhere before or since. What we hadn't expected was a ceremonial welcome, and what a shambles that turned out to be!

On the bare concourse of Helmieh Station our officers and nco's made an honest effort to get us paraded but the result was hopeless from the start. At the call to attention some were sitting down, some wandering about and most of us just convivially uninterested. Then we could see a group of red-tabbed staff wallahs glaring. One of them was dressed up as a General but instead of a speech of welcome he uttered

only one sentence, and that in a rasping voice edged with ice. "Lampen," he said, "Take them away!" That was our first meeting with Sir Alexander Godley, and that was the end of the British Section, N.Z.E.F.

The next morning as a Christmas present we were split up. Our infantry training was ignored and we were divided about equally between the Engineers and Army Service Corps. Being a certificated engineer it was pretty obvious what my posting would be and sure enough I became a Driver in the A.S.C. with the rather secondhand number 5/8A. And I wasn't a bit happy about it either. I didn't mind the idea of meeting the enemy in the van of the Army but I was darned if I was going to spend the war driving a ruddy cart. As a first protest I went to the orderly room, produced my papers and asked to be transferred to sea-going service in the Navy or Merchant Navy. I never heard any more of that - maybe they're still considering it.

Later on I wandered over to the Artillery lines in the hopes of finding some of the Christchurch men I'd been with in the Volunteer days. Sure enough it wasn't long before I ran into about a dozen of the old "E" Battery boys, now with the 3rd Battery, N.Z.F.A. After I told my sad story they took me under their wings with enthusiasm, brought me along to their Captain (Vic Leeming) and made an earnest request to have me transferred. I slept a bit happier that night, pretty confident something would come out of it.

Four days later all the right wheels had turned and the right strings had been tugged. I waved farewell to the Divisional Supply Train, N.Z.A.S.C. and joined the 3rd Battery, N.Z.F.A. "supernumerary to establishment" or in other words as a spare part. My second-hand number changed itself at the same time to a third-hand 2/8B. At least I was getting variety. Three numbers, three ranks and three Corps, all in five days.

I found the next few months very satisfying. The Thirds were a grand outfit - keen, competitive and also friendly and helpful. Having a few of my old boyhood mates around also meant a lot. As time passed and reinforcements arrived our "spare parts" section began to grow until we almost formed a sort of "B" team. Everything in the only one sentence, and that in a rasping voice edged with ice. "Lumpen," he said, "Take them away!" That was our first meeting with Sir Alexander Godley, and that was the end of the British Section, N.Z.E.F.

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In the early part of April 1915 the three Batteries were called out on full-scale field manoeuvres, which was nothing out of the usual run, and away they went, lock, stock and barrel, full equipment up. In a show like that there was no room for "spare parts" and as a result there was quite a crowd of us taking life very easily in the Third Battery lines. One quiet morning I couldn't think of anything better to do so settled into a discreet corner to have forty or fifty winks.

I was rudely woken up by a loud yelling noise and the next second a huge moustache rushed into the gun park supported by the wildly gesticulating figure of Sergeant Major "Scorcher" Jones, of 1st Battery. In spite of the sideshow effects of waving arms and a sort of dancing Dervish act his message was repeated often enough and loud enough to get into my sleep-numbed head. "Everybody out! Pack up full equipment! Get a G.S. wagon ready! Move off in twenty minutes!" A bit dazed I got to my feet and wandered off to get my gear.

Everybody else was rushing about aimlessly in all directions like a lot of ants whose nest has been smashed. They all seemed to be in a tearing hurry. Nobody had time to say anything to me and I had to keep on dodging to miss getting run over. In the finish I got my gear and mooched off back to the gun park just about the time the G.S. wagon and our friendly neighbour the Sergeant Major arrived. By that time I was awake but I'd woken up a lot too late. Instead of thirty or forty blokes lined up there were exactly fourteen - including me of all people! No wonder everybody had been hurrying. By this time they must have been miles away!

It was far too late to do anything about it. To the accompaniment of a bit more yelling and dancing we reluctantly clambered into the wagon and under personal escort of the relentless Jones we arrived after a while at the Helmieh rail-head. It was just what we had imagined - rakes of empty trucks, mountains of loadable gear. With all the experience in the world I had got myself into a blasted fatigue party, and not even for my own Battery!

There was no escape, however. In spite of a lot of muttering and grumbling we were set to work and for the next hour or two put on a magnificent exhibition of incompetence and stupidity. Cases kept getting dropped, but into wrong trucks, stowed the wrong way, unloaded, reloaded and generally messed about with. The Sergeant Major was scorching, sweating and gibbering but one way and another and largely due to him the job finally got done.

When the last truck was loaded I went over to him and politely enquired if we should now report back to our lines. He looked at me in astonishment. His eyes bulged and the moustache began to quiver and jump. The yell that followed didn't need words and just about blasted me into the truck by itself. When the words came we all decided to do what the man wanted and very reluctantly clambered into the truck. In a few minutes we were chugging along the line to Alexandria, glumly resigned to having to go through the business of unloading at the other end.

We never had an inkling that things were serious until we were shunted down to the dock area alongside the Bucknell Company's "Katuna" where to our surprise and amazement we found not only the whole of First Battery but also our Brigade Headquarters being embarked. That put a different slant on things and this time we set about our job in a very much more enthusiastic manner. Possibly, we reckoned, the old "Scorcher" thought we had known all the time so we withdrew some of the prayers we had offered up for him and set to work like volunteer galley-slaves without the need of a whip. Everything had to go aboard - guns, limbers, horses and countless tons of gear - but there were plenty to help and aboard it all went at the double.

Finally the wharf was clear, and our little bunch of "Thirds" sat down for a breather, wondering where our own outfit was embarking and how to get back to them. The question stayed unanswered for many weeks because at that moment the eagle-eyed "Scorcher" spotted us. Willy nilly, protests or not, we were chased up the last gangway, which was dropped as soon as we came aboard. At 4.30 p.m. on 10 April 1915 the "Katuna" pulled away from the wharf and headed out to sea, destination unknown.

The immediate destination of our little group was equally unknow At 5.30 p.m. we joined a queue and drew some hard-earned rations but nobody seemed to know or care what else happened to us. Every time we asked about quarters we got put on to someone else who couldn't be found. In the finish the boys settled down like a bunch of orphans on the orlop deck, but I scored a minor victory and dossed in with the Second Engineer who was luckily an old acquaintance.

When morning came we didn't turn to for any duty because we didn't belong to any outfit. Nobody missed us or bothered us and the exchange seemed fair and reasonable. When we fell in for rations, however, it was a very different story and the fun really started. "Who are you? Where do you come from? What are you doing on board this ship?" For the first time in my life I began to sympathise with stowaways. We gave our numbers, names and unit and after a lot of talk behind the scenes we were eventually and rather reluctantly given breakfast and of course promptly reported.

The cross-examinations which followed seemed to go on for hours and we told our sad little story to about a dozen different people, all of whom seemed to take it with raised eyebrows and a liberal dash of salt. Finally we ended up before Major (Bat) Symon, commanding N.Z.F.A. Brigade Headquarters. After the usual raised eyebrows and asking the usual question "But surely one of your own officers gave you instructions and placed someone in charge of you?" he apparently accepted the fact as it stood and treated us most considerately. A number of others besides myself who had seagoing experience were assigned to help handle the lifeboats and landing nets with the remainder being split up among various sections. During all the questioning there was never a sign of the famous moustache and I never laid eyes on the "Scorcher" again.

For the next couple of days we chugged on uneventfully through the island-studded Aegean, practising boat drill, re-rigging the ship's gear ready for unloading and generally taking over from the Lascar crew. The end of the voyage came when we entered Mudros Harbour on the island of Lemnos, and what a sight that was! Inside the narrow entrance the

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Not that we had much time to stand and look at anything. Day after day it was relentless practice, practice, practice at boat drill and unloading. We odd "gunner-matelots" found ourselves appointed boat handlers under command of the ship's chief officer. Over would go the nets, down would go the boats and we would be at the oars as a sort of reception committee as the men came clambering down. At the beginning it was dangerously funny because they sent the chaps over with full equipment on the first try. Some lost their footing and dropped plumb into the boat with disastrous consequences; some got into difficulties and jettisoned their gear into the tide (and went on charge); a few simply fell straight into the water, gear and all, and were rescued with a great deal of splashing, floundering and language not in the training manual. By experience a new plan was quickly worked out, and after that the men worked up and down without gear, then with some gear and after they had enough confidence to tackle the job, with full equipment up. In other parts of the ship the same sort of exercises were going on in handling the horses, guns and heavy equipment on to barges and altogether there wasn't a spare moment for anybody.

Towards the end of our stay at Mudros we were called together and for the first time in my Army life I was told in advance what we were doing, where we were going and within limits what it was all about.

About midnight on the 24th of April the ship's engines started to turn over, the cables were run home and whatever might happen we knew all the doubts were over and we were finally going off to war.

There was no need for reveille on the morning of 25 April. Long before dawn the air was filled with the tremendous noise of the guns of the Fleet and the answering Turkish fire. At first light while we were creeping closer to Anzac Cove we could see the glare and hear the thunderous barrage which heralded the landing of the first Australian assault troops at Gaba Tepe.

At last we anchored, but once again all my notions of the way to run a war went wrong. Instead of helping to land the men from our own ship, at about 9 a.m. two of our boats were ordered away and taken in charge by a Navy pinnace to help disembark the "Lutzow" and "Goslar", both former enemy ships carrying Australian ~~New Zealanders~~. When we were fully loaded the commander of the pinnace, an alert teenaged midshipman by the name of Cochrane, swung us competently in to within about 300 yards of the beach and cast off. The rest was over to us.

All this time the air was thick with the whine of shells and roar of heavy guns and the water was spattered and pockmarked from shrapnel and small arms fire. We slogged on up to the beach and grounded. The men got quickly ashore but even by then two of the chaps in my boat had been wounded and there were about half a dozen hit in the other boat. We didn't waste any time hanging around and pulled out to sea just as fast as we could go. Sure enough the little midshipman picked us up and towed us away for another load. Just where we went and what troops we picked up on that trip I'll never know because by that time I don't mind saying I was completely and absolutely scared stiff. Hot stuff was flying everywhere all around us and the sea was erupting into plumes and cascades of water from the Turkish shells. Being stuck in a small boat in the middle of things like that gives a churned up feeling of being completely conspicuous and completely helpless. The midshipman was the only one who didn't seem the least concerned. He stood up conning his little craft and giving his orders as calmly and nonchalantly as if we were on a harbour cruise.

When we were fully loaded we were towed back towards the beach, cast off and began rowing madly for the shore. The other boat was ahead of us this time and landed. We were close behind and had nearly made it when

when there was a terrific crash. Solid water smashed all over us and there was a confused screaming and shouting on all sides. I found myself about sixty feet up a steep bank and would like to think I was blown there. To be fair, I reckon I just ran like hell. I went back to the boat which was lying all cock-eyed in the surf, six or seven feet of the port gunwale completely missing. Six men had been killed and a group of Aussies were busy tying up a lot more wounded. In the odd way these things happen not one of our boat-handlers suffered anything more than a few scratches and bruises. By this time (about midday) the other boat was heading back to sea and ours was a wreck. The only positive thing that had happened was that I was now a sort of castaway on Gallipoli.

Like Robinson Crusoe I had a quick stocktake, which wasn't very encouraging. Uniform, haversack, tobacco tin, water bottle, iron rations, identity disc, paybook. On the credit side some much needed toilet paper I had flogged; on the debit side my spare matches ruined by sea-water. Apart from that I was unwounded, undamaged, and all I wanted to do was to join my unit and get stuck into whatever was ahead.

Join my unit? Where was it? By this time the landing was in full swing and from the ships great masses of men and materials were pouring ashore. Everyone except me seemed to have somewhere to go, something to do. "Where's the Third Battery?" I asked and asked, and after deleting all the incidental rude remarks the answers came to the same thing, "Don't know."

In the end I came across the New Zealand Beachmaster, Captain Bill Beck, of the Ordnance Corps. In spite of all his other worries he made an honest effort to help me, failed and then said I'd better stay on his staff for a while until things settled down and got sorted out. At least this gave me a sort of home and a job, but talk about "little boy lost"! The next day, 26 April, was my birthday and I'll never forget the best birthday present of my life. I'd been chatting with one of the Naval ratings who'd come ashore, and mentioned what a blurred asterisk sort of place it was to have a birthday in. With that he fumbled in his jacket, produced a flask of purloined Navy rum and very shortly after I felt a whole lot better.

The was plenty to keep me occupied in a point where the streams of men and stores kept coming in and the streams of sick and wounded were going out, but the hoodoo that had haunted my Army life so far was still as strong. Search as I would, enquire as I could, there was never a sign, trace or even a rumour of where the Third Battery was.

On the 5th of May the New Zealand Infantry Brigade were assembled at Anzac and transferred down to Cape Helles. Captain Beck, who was still doing his best for me, thought it most likely my outfit would also have been diverted there so a couple of days later made arrangements for me to go down in a trawler. If I found my unit within 24 hours I was to get word back to him, otherwise report back myself.

We slipped off down the coast about midnight and the trawler dumped me ashore at Gully Beach (Y2). On the morning of the 8th of May I began my search again, this time with a bit more hope. Someone "thought" a New Zealand battery of 18-pounders was up to the left of the line and I set out to look for them just about the time the Battle of Krithia started. The earnest desire to find my unit was one thing, but this was something again. Wandering footloose around a live battlefield without a rifle or even so much as a pocket knife is not much good for the nerves and isn't the least bit funny. I took shelter smartly and from where I was couldn't help but see the gallant but useless charge of our boys across the "Daisy Patch" which had such disastrous results. Later I heard about 800 New Zealanders had been killed or wounded there.

It didn't take me too long to make a decision about myself. If I went ahead there was an odd chance I might find my battery, but if I went ahead I would certainly have to cross a gully down which the Turkish fire was pouring as thick or thicker than the worst I'd seen at Anzac. The chances of getting across right now were absolutely nil and also I was on a time limit and couldn't wait for the battle to end. On the other hand from where I was I could get back to the beach quite easily and get shipped off to Anzac. My decision was about the same as yours.

The next morning I reported to Captain Beck at Anzac and announced my mission was unsuccessful. He promptly found me a job, and this time

I was put in charge of six Indians and twelve mules. Our job was carrying ammunition, water and rations up to as near the front line as possible, usually bringing back a return load of the sick or less seriously injured. There were enough problems and troubles to keep me flat to the boards but I still didn't want to spend my life on this sort of job. Whenever I could I made time to report at our General Headquarters and ask if they knew where the Third Battery was. The reply was always the same "We don't know!" with the implied addition "and couldn't care less". One morning they started to care a whole lot when during the night some character painted a big "B" in front of the word "Army" in their sign "Army Headquarters".

In the latter part of May the fighting got worse and worse and the general conditions were perfect hell on earth. Getting ammunition and water up to the forward posts (Quinn's, Pope's, Walker's) became more and more difficult and we were working double shifts by sheer necessity. On the early morning delivery on 24 May one of the chaps up forward told me something special was coming up so in spite of the rain I sent the Indians back with some of the sick and reckoned I'd stay around to see the fun. What a laugh my hoodoo must have had! It turned out to be the Armistice for burial of the dead of both sides and as a reward for being curious I was handed a shovel. That was the most horrible and dreadful experience of my war. I lasted about an hour and a half before I flaked out and I was sick in the stomach and the head for days afterwards.

After the Armistice both sides went back to bloody war in full measure and my life settled back into the usual routine. Came a day in early June when Captain Beck told me I was to report myself immediately to Headquarters. He didn't actually say "under open arrest" but my conscience was busy making up the charge sheet. There'd been the matters of a few extra tins of rations now and again and one or two other odds and ends that had come my way and I was pretty despondent when I clicked my heels in the orderly room. Instead of a dressing down it was the belated birthday present I'd given up hope of ever getting. "Report back with full equipment preparatory to embarkation to join your Battery at Cape Helles".

From around Anzac they gathered up a few more "strays" like myself, bundled us on to a trawler in charge of an n.c.o. and away I went for my second trip down the coast, this time in daylight. We went right down around the Cape and landed at V Beach just near the "River Clyde", walked about a couple of hundred yards up a dry watercourse and there were the Battery's Drivers snugly camped. It was quite a reunion and started the long job of catching up with events. It appears the Thirds had left Alexandria for Mudros on the "Californian" but instead of landing at Anzac on the 25th April they had been kept hanging around for ten days off-shore, so I wasn't the only one with a few frustrations. Finally they landed at Cape Helles on 4 May and had seen plenty of action since. Apart from the bullets there was nothing to have stopped me joining them a month ago.

About dusk limbers were heading out to the gun positions with rations and ammunition and we went along with them. At 7 o'clock I reported to Colonel Standish and was home at last. This was the 10th of June and I'd been "walkabout" for almost 9 weeks!

The Battery had obviously had a lot of shooting and I was soon told about the big show the previous week. Everyone was very pleased with themselves after a special commendation from General Baikie (General Officer Commanding the Royal Artillery, Helles) for their accurate supporting fire. About four men had been lost up to that time and when I arrived things were pleasantly peaceful after Anzac. If any confirmation was needed that my hoodoo had finally quit it came about the following day when I was told to take over as Fitter on "A" gun. The previous incumbent, Fitter Bob Waite, was a very sick man but devoted to the Battery and his gun. Before he was taken away to the coast to be evacuated he insisted on giving me a run-down of the job and a good lecture on the importance of maintenance.

The country around Helles was much more open than the crammed and hilly hell of Anzac and although we were still heavily involved from time to time in a real shooting war (in July we had a dinkum pasting from the Turks and lost several men) the general conditions weren't bad. Some of that impression was due to my frame of mind - tools in my hand and a serious job to do - but another important thing was the tucker.

From around Anzac they gathered up a few more "strays" like myself, bundled us on to a trawler in charge of an n.c.o. and away I went for my second trip down the coast, this time in daylight. We went right down around the Cape and landed at V Beach just near the "River Clyde", walked about a couple of hundred yards up a dry watercourse and there were the Battery's Drivers snugly camped. It was quite a reunion and started the long job of catching up with events. It appears the Thirds had left Alexandria for Mudros on the "Californian" but instead of landing at Anzac on the 25th April they had been kept hanging around for ten days off-shore, so I wasn't the only one with a few frustrations. Finally they landed at Cape Helles on 4 May and had seen plenty of action since. Apart from the bullets there was nothing to have stopped me joining them a month ago.

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The Battery had obviously had a lot of shooting and I was soon told about the big show the previous week. Everyone was very pleased with themselves after a special commendation from General Baikie (General Officer Commanding the Royal Artillery, Helles) for their accurate supporting fire. About four men had been lost up to that time and when I arrived things were pleasantly peaceful after Anzac. If any confirmation was needed that my hoodoo had finally quit it came about the following day when I was told to take over as Fitter on "A" gun. The previous incumbent, Fitter Bob Waite, was a very sick man but devoted to the Battery and his gun. Before he was taken away to the coast to be evacuated he insisted on giving me a run-down of the job and a good lecture on the importance of maintenance.

The country around Helles was much more open than the cramped and hilly hell of Anzac and although we were still heavily involved from time to time in a real shooting war (in July we had a dinkum pasting from the Turks and lost several men) the general conditions weren't bad. Some of that impression was due to my frame of mind - tools in my hand and a serious job to do - but another important thing was the tucker.

Our beach-head base was dug into a dry nullah and purely by chance was smack alongside a huge food dump. Alongside that again was a smaller dump probably labelled "Rations, officers only for the use of". It was complete with barbed wire and sentry but a lot of our Drivers were innocent country boys who could easily get confused. As a result up at the guns we began to forget about bully beef and biscuits amid a steady stream of tinned ham, anchovies, claret, Peek Frean biscuits and such-like delicate things.

By this time I had far too much Army background not to be well aware that if things are good they'll never last long and it wasn't any real surprise when we were told in August it was time to move. Back to the coast we went and about dusk on 17 August got our guns and gear on board the "Queen Louise". The destination was Anzac and while there was room for men and guns in that desolate place somebody was humane enough to rule out horses. They had to be left behind and many of our Drivers were heart-broken at the parting. I wasn't excited, just apprehensive and quivery because I knew jolly well what sort of a place we were bound for.

Coming back up the coast we could see the flash of gunfire and/ hear the sullen roar of the battle in the hills but while well out to sea the odour of Gallipoli poured over us, the terrible stench of war, the stink of death and corruption and wounds and offal.

From the difficult time we landed (in the dark) until our gun got into final position is just a blur. My job was full-time and overtime with the gun and my gear. Our horses were soldiers, hundreds of them at times, on drag lines and the only bit of wry humour I saw about the agonising progress was that at one stage the men on the ropes were dismounted members of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, taking the place of the horses they didn't have.

First of all our guns were dragged up to prepared positions but these were quite useless for our intended target, Hill 60 (Kaiajik Aghala). We had to set to, find a suitable place and do the whole job again, complete with pits and sandbags, and then the guns had to be hauled into the new positions. On the 21st August the battery

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On the morning of the 27th we opened fire with both guns but were quickly in trouble. "A" gun was hit and the quadrant damaged and a few moments later "B" gun went cranky and refused to recoil. I was properly on the spot. I did the best I could with the quadrant but the result wasn't elegant or very accurate. However, the gun was pointing the right way and was able to start firing again. The trouble on the other gun had me properly stumped. I tried everything I knew without getting the slightest movement and by this time was working myself up into a proper stew. In the finish out of sheer temper I grabbed a hammer and belted the blasted cylinder in the ribs. There was a "whoosh" and back came the recoil as smooth as silk, and what's more gave no more trouble. A spare quadrant came up for "A" gun that night.

All this time the Turkish guns were shelling us thick and fast. Our communication trench was a miserable thing about two feet deep and the signallers were working like heroes to mend telephone wires that were continually being cut. Later in the day Sergeant Edwards and myself were taking shelter together when we were horrified to see a Turkish shell had set light to dry grass and scrub and the fire was heading straight for our main ammunition dump. The idea of going out into the open was pretty appalling but we both knew if we didn't do something pretty quickly about the fire the only alternative to going out would be going up! We grabbed what we could and got stuck

into that fire like a couple of mad devils, our energy spurred on tremendously not only by the hot stuff the Turk was throwing at us but also by the thought of the bang that would follow if we failed. In the finish we got the fire out and although neither Edwards or myself were hit we were dirty and sore and blown when we got back to shelter.

There weren't any union rules and the guns on both sides kept on the go all that night. On the 28th we weren't much more than a haggard bunch of sleep-walkers - those that were left. There had been the inevitable casualties and a lot of friends were gone. In the late afternoon the only thing that really woke us up was when the Turk lobbed a shell into our reserve ammunition pit which blew up with an appalling crash.

The battle petered out that day, which was just as well. We were told our guns were to be withdrawn and grouped with the rest of the battery near the beach. However, by this time I was very seedy with some sort of bug in the throat and a bust hand so didn't join in the fun of moving. They put me on the sick list and the next week, on the 3rd of September, I figuratively waved farewell to Gallipoli and was evacuated to Egypt on the hospital ship "Salta".

The rest of my war was not in the least bit exciting, a drab succession of hospitals and convalescent homes. They patched my first troubles up in Cairo and then my tummy went wild so they shipped me off to England on 27 October by the hospital ship "Glengorm Castle". The plumbers and drainlayers did a bit of repair work at the hospitals in Wandsworth and Walton, but after months in places like Woodcote Park, Hornchurch and Codford somebody decided I'd be better out of it. I was invalided back to New Zealand on the "Willochra" in September 1916 and discharged that December. For a long time after that I was a bit of a wreck and it wasn't till the 1920s that I got back to my life at sea.

While I was in hospital in Egypt in October 1915 I learned that both Sergeant Edwards and myself had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for our bit of fire-fighting and later on in England I was told I had been mentioned in Sir Ian Hamilton's despatches for keeping the guns in action that day. I never reckoned that last

despairing blow with the hammer would beat me out a gong! Altogether the survivors of our half-section were awarded seven decorations (from D.S.O. to M.I.D.) for the action on 27-28 August.

Years after when I was back at sea my Army life always seemed to me a succession of ludicrous blunders and pointless disasters, and not always of my making. As a mature man it became perfectly clear that being a soldier and going to war was either the height of depth of stupidity. The reasoning was sound. The logic was inescapable. At times I wonder just why I got tangled up in the Second War and had to spend three and a half years in a Japanese prison camp. Still, as the man said, that's another story.

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