

Tape 240

Mr C J Claridge

IT IS JUNE 1974 AND THIS IS MR LIDDLE OF SUNDERLAND POLYTECHNIC TALKING TO MR C J CLARIDGE OF FLAT 2, 619 BEACH ROAD, AUCKLAND 10 ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND IN PARTICULAR IN EGYPT AND GALLIPOLI DURING 1914 AND 1915 DURING WHICH TIME HE WAS A PRIVATE IN THE THIRD AUCKLAND REGIMENT, FIRST NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

MR CLARIDGE WAS BORN IN 1890. HIS FATHER WAS A JOURNALIST AND HE HIMSELF BECAME A JOURNALIST. HE WAS JUST SLIGHTLY BY ONE MONTH TOO OLD TO BE INVOLVED IN THE TERRITORIAL FORCE WHICH WAS INSTITUTED AFTER KITCHENER'S VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA IN WHICH HE COMMENTED ADVERSELY ON THE DOMINIONS STATE OF READINESS FOR HOME DEFENCE.

Now Mr Claridge would you tell me please exactly how you came to volunteer in 1914?

Well, I was living in this town and there seemed to be a fairly big proportion of young fellows about the same age. Where I lived was a prosperous place and there were businesses growing which involved employing young males mostly like bank clerks and people in The Post Office and the railways and all those sort of places. We were a very close knit community. In fact, of all the places I ever lived in I think that the people of that town and those about my age, we were all round about from 20 to 25 I suppose. I don't mind admitting that of all the times in my life that was the best time I ever had and nearly all these young chaps were the same but anyone who was under, as I said I was just over age but every single one of them that was under age they went into the Territorial system straight away you see or as soon as they could get in. I was left behind put it that way and I thought I better do something about this. I went through to Auckland. I went to see an uncle of mine who was an ex permanent soldier in the New Zealand Forces.

And he told where to recruit?

He took me straight to the head man and that was Colonel Plugge who was a personal friend of my uncle. He had been a Regimental Sergeant Major.

After how much training did you leave and which camp?

I went into camp. I think the diary says I went to camp at the end of August after they had established the camp. We trained all over those hills to big areas. We did our rifle training here in Auckland. We marched down to the wharf when we were ready to go but we couldn't get away because of the warning about The Emden and other raiders that were about which was quite true of course. We got as far as The North Cape and we all turned in after a lot of confusion and what have you. We woke up and we were gazing out at the ferry boats in Auckland Harbour. That was the next morning. We were here for about a month I suppose.

When did you arrive in Egypt?

December 5, it says in my diary.

Which camp were you at?

Ziatoun.

I am told that there was the burning down of a cinema there by troops but was that at Christmas or at the time of the Good Friday Battle of The Was~~se~~ Bazaar?

No, that is quite wrong. It was nothing to do with Christmas. It was on Good Friday afternoon.

Fine. Well, we will come to that later. I would like to know if you have any recollection at all of disturbances over Christmas with regard to drunkenness or anything else? The what?

I will explain why because then you will understand the context of my question. I read in Canberra a letter from Birdwood to Bridges seriously concerned about the behaviour of his troops over Christmas in Cairo and I wonder whether you have any recollections of either disciplinary parades or of the disturbances themselves at Christmas not the First Battle of The Was~~se~~?

No, not at Christmas at all.

Right fine. What about training? You had some very extensive and wearing desert marches I believe?

Every bit of that is in detail in that book. Every bit of those long marches. One of the most serious we had was that we got out on a long planned route march which got us up at half past 4 in the morning and we went 18 miles out and then having exercise and come back and which brought us back at half past 7 at night which was a long day in any man's language.

But I seem to remember reading a cutting quoting you in which you refuted the charge of Godley's unpopularity and the famous supposed alleged remark that his wife had made to him about making them run?

That is right and she did make it too.

She did make it?

She did definitely make it because I was one of the people that got involved in it the next morning.

How are you so sure Mr Claridge that she did make it?

Because I heard her.

You were actually near enough to hear her say it?

Yes, definitely.

Could you describe the circumstances, the actual location of the remark as you remember it?

Straight outside the main camp. We had a huge drill parade out there when it wasn't convenient to go out any distance we used that place. This particular morning it was advance and fire. Now this was live shells, advance and fire, form up. Advance and this went on all the morning and then we had

fixed bayonets and we had this charge at the imaginary enemy and when we formed up again here are all these people just as if they were lined over there. Mostly on horse back. All the VIPs as we call them nowadays were on horse back and they had a few cars there. They didn't have many cars there in those days and she was. Of course, you know that Lady Godley went out to look after Godley's sick stomach. That is the only reason she went out. You know that?

I have read this.

He should never have been there at all. This was so thrilling all this business that we happened. It was just a conjunction. Our Sergeant Major who was a sod of a man in any shape or form and we formed up again. This word came along and I suppose that the Lady Godley party would only ^{be} about from here to that corner away from our line.

And she was not on a little stand, she was on horse back?

She was on horse back as far as that time. We had 3 of these go's altogether but of course, all this retelling and telling it has merged the whole lot into one you see and people who were never there tell things about it.

Yes, but stick to your story.

It so happened that the words she said were make them do it again Alec. She had other people fluttering around her too and her lady in waiting and all this sort of business and we never at any time even dared to look at.

Alright, let us come to the harbour at Lemnos. Oh no, you were involved in the action against the Turks on the canal weren't you?

That was the most interesting thing that happened to us at any time. We got a couple of hours notice to go down on the canal because the Turks were coming across in those ridiculous tin boats that they had. They caused great excitement. In fact, we welcomed it because it broke the boredom. We went down on my birthday we travelled down there, January 29 1915 and when we got down to Ismailia. We went in a troop train but then we had to transfer into a light train along the canal bank and they had no springs at all. They just had solid bottoms on the chasms and my gosh was that a trip along there.

We then went to one of the canal posts where we got off and we had to scramble through the sand for about a mile to the bank where we dug in and we were quite comfortable there and we were quite happy to stay there as long as they liked to leave us there. We were there for, altogether we were down on the canal for just exactly a month. In that time we were never attacked but we went back to Ismailia. Then we were moved down the opposite way and we stayed down there. In the process, one evening one of the Sergeants came along and he said, I want a couple of you chaps. He wasn't a bad chap but he had just been dragged up from somewhere or other whatever his authority was. I want a couple of you chaps to come along and escort a Turkish prisoner. I said, that will do us. It spoilt our tea, we never got any tea that night. We went along and they were ~~interrogating~~ a Turkish machine gunner who had been picked up by the Gurkas. The Gurkas had been on patrol. This was after this attempt to get across the canal in these tin boats and they brought this poor beggar along. He was tied up. You wouldn't believe what a job the Gurkas had made of tying those chaps up.

This fellow, he had a nice clean uniform on and quite a good looking man. He was a machine gunner and those chaps we found out were treated a bit better than the, well they got more consideration than the common private. He hadn't fired his rifle. They made a good job of questioning him and then they took him away and we had a bit of a diversion that wouldn't interest you. So they said that they wanted us to escort him. There was a Corporal and myself and another chap whose name is in the diary there. So the next morning we went back and got hold of him and they had untied the poor beggar to let him get around a bit. We went to Ismailia and handed him over and we conveniently missed the train back and we spent the rest of the day and night in Ismailia. It was just a bonus for us on our own.

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Anzac: N.Z.: archive

Tape 246

Mr Claridge

THIS IS THE CONTINUATION OF A TAPE MADE BY MR LIDDLE WITH MR CLARIDGE OF AUCKLAND 10 ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN AND ON THE PREVIOUS TAPE HE HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT EGYPT.

I would like to ask you now Mr Claridge if you remember anything of your training in Mudros Harbour for the landing which would take place on April 25? Did you ever do disembarkation training, did you ever do racing up on to a beach from boats as if you were at the landing?

Yes, of course, we did. Any amount of it at Lemnos Island.

I would like you now to tell me about the evening of April 24? Your departure from Mudros, what you were able to see and hear as you steamed up past Helles towards Anzac, if you have clear recollection and I know there may be some documentation of this in your diary but if you have any clear recollection of any briefing or inspiring address you were given about New Zealand's honour and your state of apprehension or elation before the landing?

The whole thing was laid out as much as you could get New Zealanders to lay out anything. You must remember that you are dealing with an entirely different type of people when you start dealing with these New Zealand characters. You probably realise that by now?

Yes, do go on.

They read us a dispatch which you have probably had quoted to you before. I don't know whether you have?

From Hamilton?

No. From the other man who had come on board and he picked this up off the notice board. He started to read it and he was not allowed to. I don't know who it was and I don't think any of the others knew who it was but he might have been anybody but anyhow we forgot all about him. It has just come to my memory now but this was a dispatch that said when we moved in we would find the peasants. We would get a certain amount of opposition. I don't know whether you have heard this quotation before, have you? You have. Well, it is no good.

Yes, go on?

And we would find the inhabitants fairly friendly disposed and we would have not much opposition as we got on the road to Constantinople. That is what the dispatch was which to us proved that they knew as much about it as we did.

Well, the landing itself?

The landing itself. There were 3 types of landing. There was the pinnaces.

You yourself? Your own landing, not your unit?

Alright, I will give you that but I have to explain that so far as I

personally was concerned. There is a photo in there of us marching out of our camp and so just the exact positions where we were and our Company was The First Auckland Company. There was the Colonel, there was Major Dawson, there was 4 Lieutenants, there was 2 Sergeant Majors. Then there was the rank and file. Myself, I would be about from the front man to where I was, I would be in about the sixth row. So we were pretty close to the front and that is how we landed. We landed exactly in that position.

At what time of the day?

About 9 o'clock in the morning.

Were you actually under fire on the approach to the beach?

The first 2 people that were hit were a big Infantry man and a sailor. The first 2 dead men were just right alongside when we landed on the beach were an Australian and a sailor and they wouldn't be more than about from here to that chair away just lapping half in and half out of the water.

What are your most vivid recollections today of the first day and the first few days of the fighting as far as you yourself were concerned?

I got on the beach and an Australian Lieutenant came along and he said, can some of you chaps come along with me. They are having a pretty tough time. These were the Australians who had landed at least 2 hours earlier. Our Lieutenant, he was virtually in charge of our particular gang of about 20 I suppose and we were just getting along under the protection of a bank about as high as those boxes over there and we were staying there and he said no, you can't take any of these chaps. We have got orders to go straight along the beach and go as fast as we can. Anyhow, we were full packs up which included a greatcoat and they were getting pretty heavy.

Did you have a bundle of wood as well?

No, we never had a scrap of wood and we had a bottle of water. That is all. We didn't have any necessity for any wood.

Well, a lot of the Australians had to carry a small bundle of wood for kindling?

Oh yes.

Right. Let us come on to because of the shortage of time to May 19. Were you in the attack in defending against the Turkish counter attack on May 19?

No, I wasn't there on May 19. I was in hospital.

On what day were you wounded then Mr Claridge?

On May 8.

Would you tell me about this please?

Well, we had gone down from our original position in some trawlers. There were quite a few of them there. We had been taken off the beach at dark because we couldn't move during the daytime. We were on a sloping area like

that. The Australians had been chased out the night before. Some of them were left dead there. The dugout we got into, a chap named MacFarlane and me. MacFarlane was afterwards killed and we just fell into this and we fell straight on top of 2 Australians. So the first thing we did before we could get in was to tip them out and we just tipped them straight down the bank like that. There was a drop which would be about as high as that wall there.

Nine feet.

And we didn't like dropping after them. So we thought we would stay here for the night. The next morning at daylight, it was a beautiful morning and there was hardly a movement about so MacFarlane and another chap went out. They thought we will try and cook something. They must have managed with bits of paper or anything or dry twigs or that sort of thing because we certainly never had any wood at any part of it. So, they got a fire going and it looked to be protected by one of them had opened the tin of bully beef and chucked the tin aside and a sniper from some where or other had got a line on this and he must just have concentrated. They were clever those fellows. Well, our fellows were clever too if it comes to that.

Mr Claridge I would like in conclusion because of the shortage of time to know just about the manner in which you were wounded?

Well, you have heard about the Daisypatch, have you got any stories of the Daisypatch.

Yes. This is at Helles?

Well, the afternoon before after we had landed off The River Clyde. We landed off The River Clyde from the trawler and we made our way up towards the French lines. They had some French 75s there and incidentally we saw one of them blow up. Just simply blow up like that.

So you are in The Second Battle of Krithia in which the Australians and New Zealanders considerably distinguished themselves and were you in the attack across the Daisypatch when you were hit?

No. I got across the Daisypatch quite safely but it was far and away more intense than ever the landing was.

Yes, thank you very much.