

Walsh/1

Anzac: N.Z. Archives

Tape 260

Mr C J Walsh

IT IS JUNE 1974 AND THIS IS MR LIDDLE OF SUNDERLAND POLYTECHNIC TALKING TO MR C J WALSH OF 19 CLIFF ROAD, AUCKLAND ABOUT HIS SERVICE IN THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN IN WHICH HE WAS A PRIVATE IN THE FIRST AUCKLAND BATTALION, FIRST NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

MR WALSH WAS BORN IN 1893 IN AUCKLAND. HIS FATHER WAS A STEVEDORE AND WHEN WAR BROKE OUT HE WAS AN ENGINEERING APPRENTICE.

But I understand Mr Walsh that you had reason to avoid doing compulsory military service and to avoid it you went to sea. What was this all about please?

Well, I wasn't going to be given orders, that is all. I was independent and cheeky probably.

But you still enlisted when war broke out immediately?

That was a different thing altogether.

How was it a different thing?

Well, I was in the volunteers before compulsory training came on and then I wasn't going to be told to go and volunteer. It was just sheer childish cheek, that is all.

Now when did you leave Auckland in the troopship convoy?

On September 24 I think.

Now this convoy, first of all it goes to Hobart and then to Albany?

No. It went up to North Cape and was chased back because of rumours of The Goeben and The Breslau.

Yes, that is right. Quite right but later on. Not The Goeben and The Breslau. Fears of The Emden?

yes!!

No, it wasn't The Emden. Scharnhorst and another ship.

Now what I would like to ask you is whether you remember your training in Egypt before you went to Lemnos?

Well, I mean you know all about us going to Hobart and Albany and joining up with the rest of the crew there and then carrying on and then we got to Cairo. Then we went down to Ismailia.

Yes, but I would like to know the nature of your training, what you remember of this training? There are stories of New Zealanders and other troops being very annoyed at having to march and run pass Godley and his wife?

That is all nonsense.

Yes. Well, I am pleased to hear you say it is nonsense but I would like to
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hear your recollections of the nature of your training in Egypt?

Well, the nature of our training in Egypt was we were taken over loose sand with about 60 pound of pack up and we had to do manoeuvres through this sand and all that sort of thing but I mean there wasn't a great deal of that anyhow, there wasn't too much of it but there was sufficient to make us probably the fittest group of men that ever pulled boots on.

What about when you got to Mudros Harbour, do you remember what you did there? Did you have embarkation and disembarkation training and practice and rowing practice?

Yes. We had 2 or 3 of those.

And when you landed into the shallows and you charged up a beach there was never any Force simulating opposition?

No.

Well then, this time without my interruption I would like you to describe for me from the night of April 24 your personal experiences of the landing?

There was not much that you do remember really. I mean you were just merely mustered there. You were put into boats going across. A small midshipman was in charge. He was about 15 years of age and we were astounded to see the sailors obey him so promptly and that sort of thing. Then we landed at Anzac Cove. It wasn't the real place where we were supposed to land but we got ashore and the hills,

What time did you get ashore Mr Walsh?

Around about 9 o'clock I should say off hand.

Not in your reading later but as a private at the time were you aware of the confusion that existed at Anzac?

No, didn't know anything about it. You see, well I mean that is the whole of a private's life. He doesn't know anything about it except what is going on in his immediate vicinity.

Yes, but you certainly were able to keep in touch with your unit?

Oh yes.

Because of course, the earlier people were all split up hopelessly with units mixed up and on the wrong side of each other. These are the Australians not the New Zealanders?

That is correct but I mean they went on regardless you see and they went a bit too far.

Yes, but coming back to you?

Yes.

You stay with your unit and so you have no recollection of any confusion

of that nature?

There wasn't any as far as we were concerned.

Now how long is it before you are pulled off and taken down to Helles and can you speak of that first day of the Anzac landing as far as you are concerned, what you had to do?

Well, I mean we landed round about 9 o'clock and we went ashore and the first dead I saw were an Australian and a sailor lying side by side. We all had a look at this as we went by and I thought, hello this is war is it and I thought no more of it. You just went on with your job. That sort of thing and went up on top of Plugge's Plateau and dug in there and that was all there was to it.

Well then, let us come to The Second Battle of Krithia in which the New Zealanders played a distinguished part. Tell me what you remember of this down at Helles?

Well, we were taken up there and we were ^{R. Dublin Fusiliers or Munster Fusiliers} marched up there. We relieved The Munster Fusiliers and The Irish Battalion and then came The Daisypatch you see and we couldn't get any further than about halfway across but we had taken the advance up quite a considerable amount over and above what had been done before you see, but it was The Daisypatch that finally stopped us. It was an open sward with daisies on it you see and of course, from Achi Baba and Krithia they had the field of fire you see and we didn't. I mean it was a mad thing to do in any case. However, we came back and an interesting note about that was and you will find that in the diary, that when we answered the roll call we had 242 left I think out of say about 600, 700 that landed and we had had 4 reinforcements. Say of about 200 each. That was another 800 say, that is 1,500 and after a fortnight's fighting we had 242 left.

What do you remember of the Armistice or truce which took place at Anzac on May 24 just after your return there?

Well, I was on Walker's Ridge then and between Walker's Ridge and the Turk lines. It was about, I will estimate it at about 4,000 dead and the smell was just too awful to describe and we had an Armistice from 8 o'clock in the morning I think until 5 o'clock at night and we went out and did what we could about burying the dead and got back again at 5 o'clock and started the war again.

You went out into the lines?

Yes, No Man's Land.

Do you remember having any fraternisation or exchange with Turks?

Well, we couldn't talk to them but we gave them cigarettes and that sort of thing you see.

And what did you get back from them?

Nothing, but I mean we had no personal animosity against the Turk you know. We used to call him good old Johnny.

Well, coming to the last 2 things about which I would like you to speak. First of all the occasion on which you got wounded and secondly your or 3 things in brief, your being wounded, your recollections of the snow and lastly the evacuation?

We were sitting on top of Rhododendron Spur and I was facing the sea and we could be fired on from 3 points of the compass. Three quarters of the compass and a shell burst right above our bivouac where we were you see and I got swept right across the shoulder like that and that gun came from there and the sea is there. The Turk trenches are at the back of me like that you see. However, 2 or 3 were killed. Jim Spence died then and we took them out you see, and I found that I was wounded and they shot me down to the hospital. They doctored me up there and put me in hospital and the next morning a fellow next to me was found dead in bed with a stray bullet and the following morning there there was a bullet in another man's pillow. So, I got up and got my clothes on and told the doctor that I was going back to the frontline. That is all.

Evacuation?

Then we got notice that something was going to happen. We didn't know but prior to the evacuation a lot of troops were taken off the peninsula at night time and then brought back by boats in the morning and they laid out their blankets and greatcoats and all that sort of thing to give the impression there were vast number of troops landing all the time. Then the evacuation really came and we set booby traps and all that sort of thing.

Do you remember setting these booby traps?

Oh Lord, yes.

Describe one that you set?

I shouldn't but we did Mills bombs and gum boots and that sort of thing you see. It was quite impersonal you know. I mean we had nothing against Johnny.

Well, for any researcher listening to this tape they should know that in the New Zealand section of our archives Mr Walsh has been kind enough to leave his original diary which would give further substantiation to his career and I would like to thank him most warmly and sincerely for this and for coming today to be tape recorded.

Alright then.