

Hodgson/1

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"QUINNS POST"

Pte  
Cpl. N.Z. Engineers

A memory of ANZAC.

There can be but few survivors of the early days at Anzac living in this country, for the positions and posts were held almost exclusively by Australian and New Zealand troops, although two Battalions of Royal Marines, composed of elderly reservists and young recruits, were employed as "working parties" on the Beach and elsewhere, after their gallant but ill fated attempt to advance from the Anzac positions about a week after The Landing.

Consequently the mention of "Quinns Post" will not have the same significance in "the Old Country" as it has "Down Under", but the writer hopes it may not come amiss to record the memory of a daring, and highly successful venture to secure a vital portion of the line of posts forming the new historic foothold on the Gallipoli Peninsula known as Anzac.

From The Landing to the Evacuation "Quinns" was ever "The Heel of Achilles" of Anzac. The Turkish attempts to destroy it, and the equally desperate defence of our Forces have been faithfully dealt with in most accounts of the Gallipoli Campaign.

The position could best be likened to a low sloping roof, strongly intrenched by the Turks down to the eaves, while our "line" consisting of a series of shallow trenches clung like swallows nests to the very edge of the eaves. The flanks on either side were secured by precipitous slopes rising sheer to a height of 50 to 60 yards, and flank attacks were impossible for friend and foe alike. Some 25 yards separated the two lines of trenches, and this stretch of ground was literally heaped with corpses, mostly Turkish, killed in the many frontal attacks on this vulnerable position.

Following the consolidation of the Posts after The Landing, the Turks commenced mining operations, and on the night of May 30th, 1915, exploded their mines and rushed Quinns, bayonetting the few survivors in the Post. This gave them full command of Shrapnel Gully, the only line of communication with The Beach, and endangered the remainder of the position at the apex of the Anzac Line.

At dawn the situation was obvious to all, and we on "Popes" looked apprehensively across to "Quinns" and wondered how long we could hold out, as withdrawal in daylight was impossible, nor was it even thought of. However, we were soon heartened by the sight of a Company of the 13th Australians with their bayonets flashing in the morning sun, emerging from terraces cut in the steep sides of the Gully. With a cheer they charged the captured Post, and after a desperate struggle "Quinns" was in our hands again.

For the next 24 hours we worked strenuously to repair the damage done by the mines, the Turks giving us no peace and showering bombs continuously, although refraining from actual attack.



In the meantime, their working parties were sapping out to a large crater made by one of their mines, which had exploded about 15 yards in front of the Post. We discovered next morning that this crater had been converted into a blockhouse with a roof composed of heavy railway timber and sandbags. Two loopholes faced our trenches, and made it impossible to continue the trench repairs, as the least movement meant a shower of bombs, while their snipers kept up a heavy fire from higher up the ridge. Our only form of retaliation was an occasional "jam tin bomb" - a very hazardous proceeding on the part of the thrower, and of little effect on the blockhouse.

It was obvious that something had to be done and quickly, as the Turks completely dominated "Quinn's" and another attack seemed imminent.

From the comparative security of a 'dug-out' on The Beach came the order that the blockhouse must be destroyed at any cost. Various schemes were suggested, but finally it was decided to attempt a demolition by stealth, rather than by a rush, which would have involved considerable loss of life.

L/Corporal Herbert Fear volunteered for the job, and chose three companions to assist him in the task. In the words of General Sir Ian Hamilton "if ever a man belied his name, L/Corporal Fear was that man".

The scheme was fairly simple; eight slabs of gun cotton were secured to a thin board, primed and detonated, with about 4 feet of fuse, the end of which was passed through the bottom of a cotton haversack to enable the fuse to be lighted inside without exposing the flame of the match to the enemy. Fortunately the night was very dark, and for Anzac things were fairly quiet.

Fear and his fellow conspirators discarded their usual headgear, and knotted handkerchiefs around their heads to give a more irregular effect against the skyline. The first, and perhaps most dangerous part of the scheme was getting out of the trench. This was done with the greatest caution - a man on each flank to cover the operation and prevent the Turks from leaving their lair, while Fear and the remaining man proceeded at an oblique angle to avoid the loopholes facing our trench.

Needless to relate the progress was very slow, literally an inch or two at a time, as only a perfectly prone position was possible. Fear pushing his deadly charge ahead of him as he wriggled slowly forward.

The Turks manning the shelter seemed uneasy and could be heard muttering in undertones, but fortunately kept to the loopholes and away from the sap leading back to their trenches.

After what seemed an eternity Fear arrived at the side of the blockhouse, and slowly raised himself until he was half lying on the mound forming the roof. Most men would have been content to fire the charge at this point, but not Fear, whose nerves must have been 100% overproof.

He had been instructed that to ensure the full effect of the charge, it must lie solid, and he commenced to scrape away the loose earth to make a bed for the gun-cotton. This was a nerve racking proceeding for at least one member of the party, as the earth could be heard trickling down the railway timbers, and the Turks inside chattering away excitedly, but



fortunately taking no steps to investigate the disturbance.

At last the charge was planted to Fear's satisfaction, and he slowly edged down from the mound to the end of the fuse in the haversack. At this point Fear paused and wriggled his heel as a signal to the man lying behind him that all was ready for the final effort. With deliberation he then "struck" the fuse inside the haversack and ignited the fuse. Instantly there was a shower of sparks, and throwing all caution to the winds, the party jumped to their feet and bounded back to the trench amid a burst of rifle fire from the blockhouse and the enemy trenches. Almost immediately came the explosion - a deafening roar and flash which lighted up the whole front, and pandemonium broke out along the Turkish line. And what an explosion, the heavy timbers were hurled in all directions, the blockhouse and it's garrison utterly destroyed, and the crater practically levelled and filled with debris making it untenable, although it was afterwards seized by our troops and formed part of the permanent trench system of Quinns Post.

The entire demolition party escaped unharmed, except for minor bruises caused by falling debris after regaining the trench, which had been cleared by it's garrison for the explosion.

Fear was promoted and awarded a well earned D.C.M. but unfortunately was killed on the Somme in 1916.

This enterprise proved too much for the Turkish nerves: Quinns Post was rapidly consolidated into as strong a position as it's natural disadvantages allowed, and was successfully held until the memorable night of The Evacuation in December, when the men of Anzac silently withdrew from their trenches and filed down Shrapnel Gully to The Beach for the last time.

[Written by 'Grandfather' (F. J. Hodgson) on  
50th anniversary of Gallipoli. He was with New  
Zealand forces.]

F. J. Hodgson

to Mr A. Lonsley