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THE BATTLE FOR CHUNUK BAIR, 6-10 AUGUST 1915



“... the way men died on Chunuk is shaping the deeds yet to be done by generations still unborn ... When the August fighting died down there was no longer any question but that the New Zealanders had commenced to realise themselves as a nation.”

Ormond Burton, New Zealand Field Ambulance



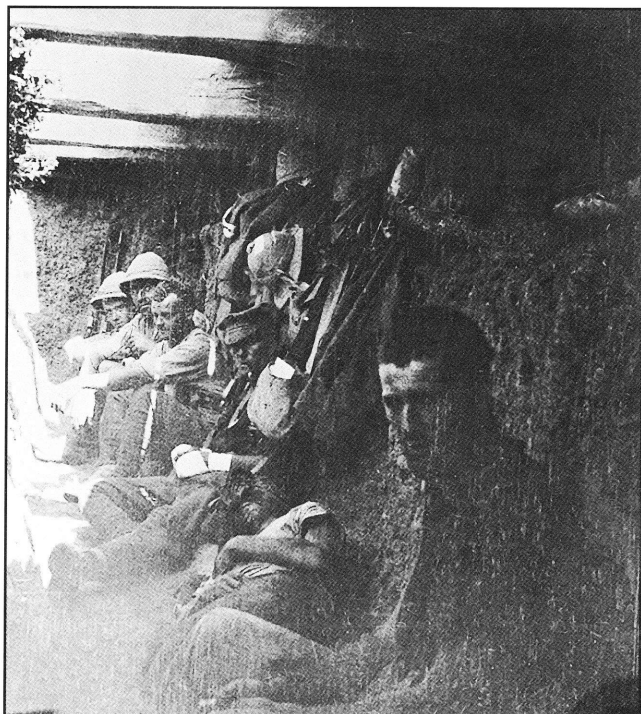
(Te Awamutu and District Museum)

Looking up Rhododendron Ridge to the crest of Chunuk Bair. This was the route taken by New Zealanders on the nights 6/7 and 7/8 August 1915.

The Anzacs looked for a way out and New Zealand scouts found a way through the foothills leading to the high ground overlooking the coast at Chunuk Bair. If this hill was taken it would bypass the Turkish defences and allow the Anzacs to advance. The British, Indian and Anzac soldiers prepared for the big attack. Although the soldiers were worn out after months on Gallipoli they were determined to fight. They knew it was their last chance to seize the peninsula.

It started on the night of 6 August and by dawn the next day the New Zealanders were about 500 metres from the crest of Chunuk Bair. They were exhausted and scattered, but the opportunity was there to take the hill as its Turkish defenders had abandoned it during the night. However, the New Zealand commander lost his nerve and would not make the decision. Finally when ordered to attack it was too late. The Turks had reinforced and when the Auckland Battalion attacked it was shot to pieces.

The next morning before dawn the Wellington Battalion under their colonel William Malone attacked and took Chunuk Bair. As dawn broke



(Athol Williams Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library)

Exhausted New Zealand Mounteds in the captured Turkish trenches.

they could see the Narrows of the Dardanelles and the New Zealanders held the most important ground on the coastal range. If they could hold it, the battle would be won.

VICTORIA CROSS

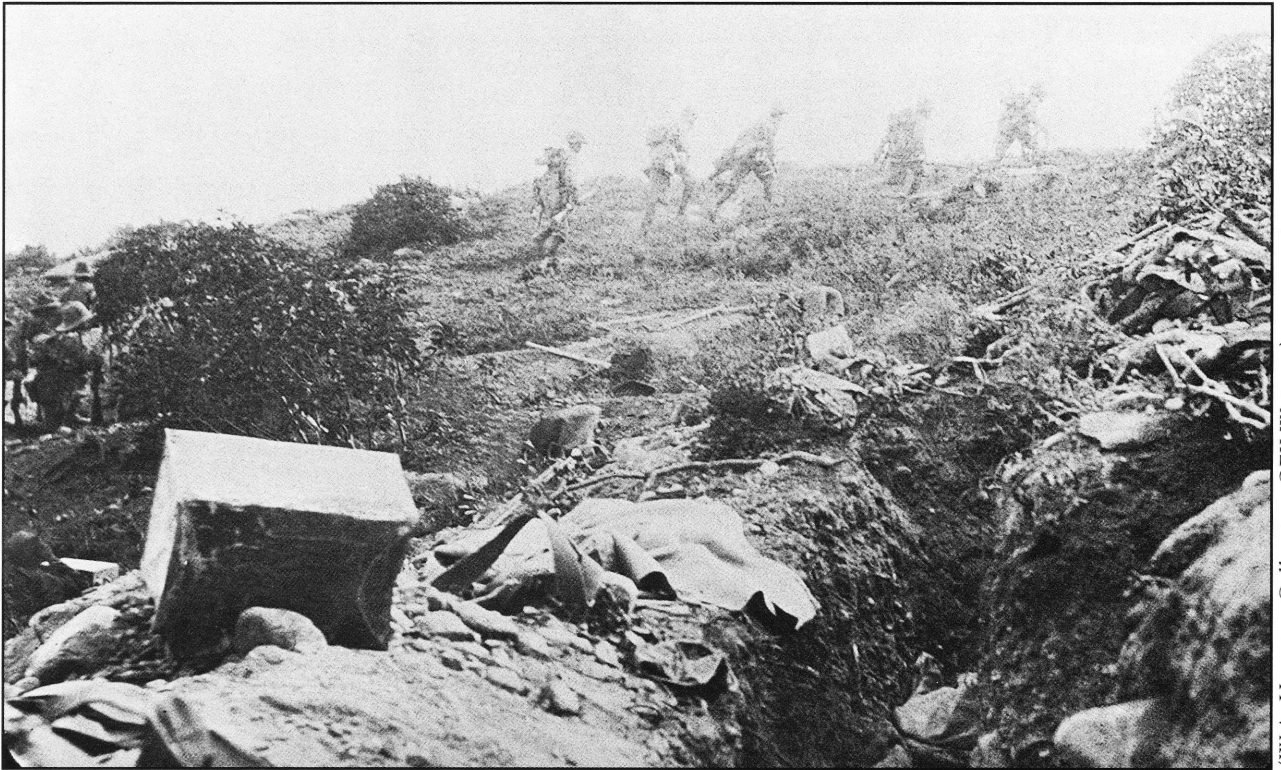


Many acts of courage went unnoticed and unrewarded at Gallipoli. Corporal Cyril Bassett was the only New Zealander awarded a Victoria Cross — the highest British decoration for

bravery in battle. He received the medal for his action as a signaller — maintaining communications under fire during the battle for Chunuk Bair in August 1915.

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HOLDING CHUNUK BAIR, 8-10 AUGUST 1915



(W.A. Hampton Collection, QEII Waioaru)

Soldiers advancing towards Chunuk Bair, 8 August 1915.

“The rifle fire was just intense. It was just a sheet of bullets going over almost at ground level, and our field of fire was a man coming up the hill here, and his head is the first thing that comes into view ... and our first targets were heads and there seemed to be thousands of them and the targets got bigger as the Turks came up the hill, and by the time they were fully in sight ... they were within 20 feet [six metres].”

Harvey Johns, Wellington Infantry Battalion



(D.G.W. Malone)

*Lieutenant-Colonel William Malone of the Wellington Infantry Battalion,
one of the heroes of Chunuk Bair.*

Twenty-three-year-old Harvey Johns was a carpenter and also a crack shot. He was a sniper on Gallipoli and was badly wounded in the fight for Chunuk Bair. The Turks knew it was important to recapture it and attacked it again and again all through 8 August 1915. The 760-strong Wellington Battalion fought alone as the two British battalions sent with it broke and ran. During the day the Wellingtons were reinforced by the Auckland Mounted Rifles, but by nightfall only 50 or so men were left to man the trenches. The rest were dead and wounded. Those left had been driven off the top of the hill which became no man's land and they clung on just below the crest. The Wellingtons

fought and died with their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Malone, and by nightfall he too was dead, killed by New Zealand artillery fire.

Under the 50-year-old commanding officer Lieutenant-Colonel William Meldrum, a solicitor/farmer from Hunterville, more New Zealanders from the Otago Battalion and the Wellington Mounted Rifles held on to their trenches on Chunuk Bair all day on 9 August 1915. Finally that night the New Zealanders were exhausted and had no more men to give. They were replaced by two newly arrived British battalions and the next morning on 10 August the Turks recaptured the hill. The battle was lost and the Gallipoli Campaign a failure.