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DYING LIKE FLIES IN THE SUMMER AT ANZAC



“We have just had ‘dinner’. My new mate was sick and couldn’t eat. I tried to, and would have but for the flies. I had biscuits and a tin of jam. But immediately I opened the tin the flies rushed the jam. They buzzed like swarming bees. They swarmed that jam, all fighting among themselves. I wrapped my overcoat over the tin and gouged out the flies, then spread the biscuit, held my hand over it, and drew the biscuit out of the coat. But a lot of flies flew into my mouth and beat about inside. Finally I threw the tin over the parapet. I nearly howled with rage. I feel so sulky I could chew everything to pieces. Of all the bastards of places this is the greatest bastard in the world. And a dead man’s boots in the firing posy has been dripping grease on my overcoat and the coat will stink for ever.”

Trooper Ion L Idriess, *The Desert Column*

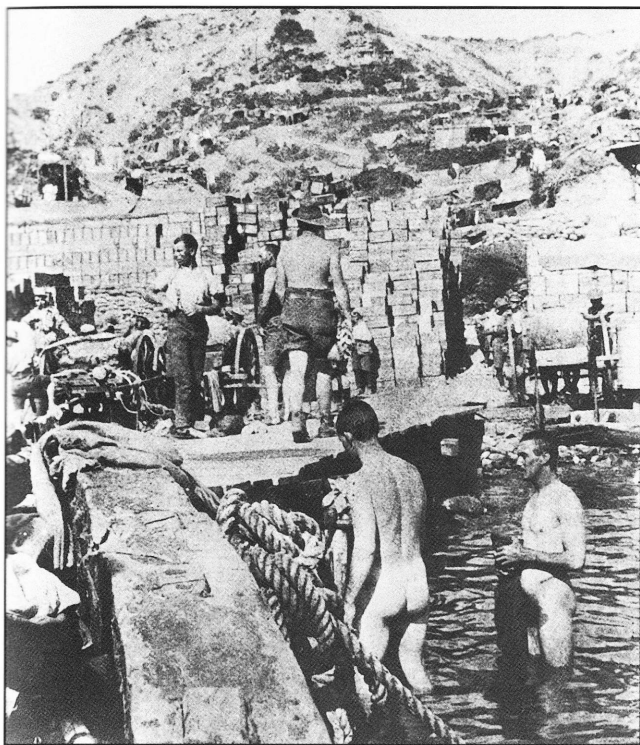


(Deans Collection, QEII Waiouru)

A stretcher party carries a wounded Turkish prisoner past men bathing in the sea.

*S*on Idriess was a member of the Australian Light Horse. They and the men of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade left their horses behind in Egypt and were sent to Gallipoli because the Anzacs were running out of men. They arrived during the heat of the Anzac summer and became part of the Anzac garrison. During June and July 1915 they dug trenches and roofed them over with timber to prevent the Turks throwing in grenades.

There was no fresh water on Gallipoli; all the water had to be brought in kerosene tins from islands off the coast. There were no fresh vegetables



(Wanganui Museum)

Anzac Cove. Men bathe in the sea while working parties stack up boxes of bully beef and biscuits.

A CUP OF TEA



A ration of tea and sugar was mixed with water in a billycan. Tea was delivered to soldiers at the front line in a kerosene tin. By the time it reached the last man it was mostly all tea leaves and dirt that had fallen from the trench walls. Each man got a mug full. They drank most of it, then used what was left in the bottom of the mug to shave themselves — or at least wipe their faces.

RATIONS



On Gallipoli men lived on bully beef, biscuits, bread, jam, fatty bacon, cheese, tea and sugar. The bully beef, now known as corned beef, and the cheese melted into an oily mess in the hot conditions. The hard, square biscuits were like rock. They were often pounded into porridge or thrown at the Turks who sometimes threw them straight back.



(Mrs J. Pyle Collection)

The daily cost to New Zealand at Anzac. Each of them has been shot through the head by a Turkish sniper.

and everyone lived off tinned beef and biscuits. No one could wash except on the occasional visit to Anzac Cove where you could bathe in the sea. Men lived for eight days in the trenches and life there was terrible. Bodies were buried everywhere and some were lying out in the open in no man's land where flies and rats fed on them. The smell made men sick. The flies and rats spread disease and soon every man had dysentery.

Men were so weak from sickness and dysentery that they could barely stand but there was no rest even then they were relieved from the trenches and went into the gullies below to rest. There they built roads up the cliffs and dug trenches, all by night to avoid being shot. It was a race against the Turks who were also digging trenches to keep the Anzacs hemmed in so that there was no way out.



(Fenwick Collection)

The dead in no man's land.

NO MAN'S LAND



In most places at Gallipoli 'no man's land' was just a thin strip of dirt which was always being watched. The bodies

of men who died there stayed until the war ended in 1918. In many cases their bones lie there still.