

3 HANGING ON



“It was a matter of just a disorganised crowd of those fine brave fellows not knowing where to go, no one in charge, no orders, no possibility of officers taking control, because they were all scattered in the scrub.”

Tony Fagan, Auckland Infantry Battalion

Tony Fagan was one of the first New Zealanders ashore. Only nineteen years old he had been teaching primary school in North Auckland but like everyone else rushed to join the Expeditionary Force to go overseas. Now he was one of the many frightened soldiers trying to see who was shooting at him in the scrub on the hills above Anzac Cove. The Anzacs were keen and enthusiastic amateurs facing professional Turkish soldiers, who although outnumbered by the Australians and New Zealanders kept them pinned down until Turkish reinforcements arrived.

By nightfall the Anzacs were holding on to 400 acres of Turkish land, a tiny foothold no bigger than

a dairy farm in size but a tangle of ridges and valleys covered in scrub just like the hills around Wellington.

Turk and Anzac were mixed up together in the dark not knowing who was who.

Tony Fagan was wounded on Anzac Day. He was one of many soldiers carried down to the beach and then towed on barges out to the transport ships. No one had expected so many wounded and, there-

fore, no preparations had been made to cope with them. With no doctors or nurses men were crowded onto the ships lying on the decks or in the holds. It was not until they got to Egypt three or four days later that their wounds and dressings were looked at.



(Charters Collection, QEII Waitouru)

Some of the first New Zealand wounded to arrive back in Egypt.



(Australian War Memorial PS1659)

Wounded on the beach at Anzac Cove, 25 April 1915.

“We arrived at this Japanese boat, the Seeangbee, and my stretcher was lifted up by the ship’s winch and I was lowered through the forward hatch which had no cover over it, onto the deck below which had been a Mess Room. There were two doctors for, I was told, 600 wounded men on that boat, two doctors, no nurses, no medical orderlies and there we lay. I wasn’t even touched all the way to Alexandria. I don’t know how long it was, it may have been four nights, it may have been five ...”

Tony Fagan, Auckland Infantry Battalion