

CHAPTER XVII

THE PREPARATORY DEMONSTRATIONS— LEANE'S TRENCH

THE staffs of the New Army brigades were about to reach Anzac; the accompanying portion of their artillery had already landed; the torpedo-boat destroyers had just entered upon the final week's programme in their nightly bombardments, when General Birdwood was asked by Sir Ian Hamilton to make some further pretence of an intention to break out southwards from Anzac. It chanced that, a week previously, Brigadier-General MacLagan, commanding in the sector southernmost but one, had asked leave to drive the Turks out of an inconvenient position in which they had newly established themselves in front of Tasmania Post. This suggestion was now seized upon by Birdwood as offering an opportunity for a suitable demonstration.

It will be remembered that, before Tasmania Post was dug, there had been some controversy¹ as to whether it should be sited on the edge of the almost precipitous Valley of Despair, or some forty yards farther back on the summit of the ridge. The post had eventually been dug on the summit, with the result that its garrison commanded a short field of fire extending to the edge of the slope, but could not see into the steep gully beyond. To the north of the post lay the Wheatfield, covered with a deep ripe crop and still open to the enemy, although saps were now being pushed forward in order to form a firing line level with that of the post. Two hundred yards to the south of Tasmania Post the 7th Light Horse had established Ryrrie's, and the two were now being joined by a sap.

From the moment when Tasmania Post was completed, the fact that the enemy could move troops unseen up the valley to within forty yards of it became a constant source of anxiety. Turks could be heard nightly on the edge, but the low bushes and the crop hid them from view. Colonel Hilmer Smith of the 12th had caused a number of short

¹ See p. 271

tunnels to be driven forward from Tasmania Post, ending in "bombing-holes"—small openings to the surface—in which sentries could be stationed, and from which a weak barbed-wire entanglement was put out. From these openings bombs were occasionally thrown if the enemy were heard dangerously close to the post; groups of men were also sent nightly into the scrub to act as listening-posts.

On a night in June, in order to test these and other measures for the safety of the post, Colonel Smith himself, guided by Captain Rafferty,² crept out over the crest to a shelf dug by the enemy on its edge, from which a Turkish sniper occasionally shot up the valley towards Silt Spur. As they reached the spot it was seen that a few feet of new trench had been cut into the edge of the hill.³

As hand-grenades and trench-mortar bombs flung in that direction did not prevent the enemy from extending this trench, it was raided by the 12th Battalion on the night of July 18th, one Turk being bayoneted and others escaping. This method also being ineffectual, Colonel Smith on July 21st applied for leave to capture the Turkish work before it became inconveniently strong. He pointed out that two of the bomb-hole tunnels had been prolonged beneath the enemy's trench,⁴ so that mines could be exploded, if it were so desired, and the tunnels afterwards used for communication trenches. MacLagan supported Smith's suggestion, urging that, if the attack were deferred until the Turks had completed their work, it might involve severe loss. But leave was refused in consequence of the supposed imminence of a general attack by the enemy.⁵ As a temporary precaution, however, Colonel Smith ordered the scrub in front of Tasmania Post and part of the wheat crop to be cleared by

² With them were Maj. Whitlam and Cpl. G. H. C. Hart (afterwards Lieutenant; of Broome, W. Aust.), who died of wounds received at Meteren, Apr., 1918.

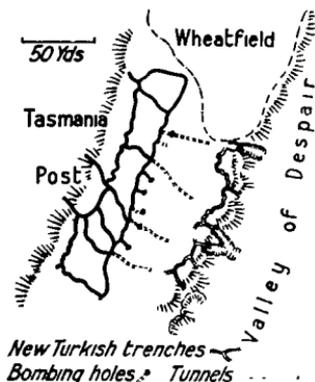
³ The patrols of the 12th used to go out before dark in order to reach their positions before a Turkish patrol which moved nightly up the valley. On this occasion a Turk was already sitting in the scooped-out recess. Col. Smith, not perceiving him, spoke aloud. The Turk at once plunged down the hillside and rejoined his patrol, which opened fire and chanced to catch the men of the listening-posts going out later than usual. Cpl. W. A. Gillam (of Launceston, Tas.) was killed.

⁴ The mining was easy, inasmuch as the enemy had not yet attempted to counter-mine.

⁵ See p. 323.

burning, and this operation was carried out on July 23rd by Rafferty and Private H. V. Weighill.⁶

After this fire had cleared some of the ground, it was observed that—as had been anticipated—the enemy was rapidly joining up several short trenches, so as to construct along the edge of the valley an earth-work over a hundred yards in length, of which the sandbagged parapet was now clearly visible. He was also obviously endeavouring to extend this trench northwards into the Wheatfield, in order to overlap the northern end of Tasmania Post. To meet this, the post was extended northwards, and the saps in the Wheatfield were pushed ahead. At the same time two more bomb-hole tunnels were prolonged to undermine the enemy's trench, which was also occasionally bombarded.



As a matter of fact the completion of this trench was one of the measures taken by the 16th Turkish Division, when warned on July 27th to prepare for the coming British offensive, of which news had arrived from Germany.⁷ Such was the position when, on July 29th, Hamilton's desire for a further demonstration on the southern flank was made known to the commander of the 1st Division, to whom Birdwood suggested that the new Turkish works opposite Tasmania Post might be attacked that night.

As, however, the capture of the post and not a mere raid was intended, MacLagan asked for two further days in which to have the tunnelling completed.⁸ The attack was accordingly

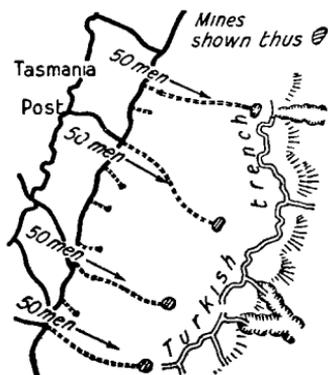
⁶ These two crawled to the eastern edge of the Wheatfield, and, after setting light to it, came back, closely followed by the flames, to one of the forward bombing-holes. A characteristic incident is recorded. As Rafferty slid safely into this bomb-hole, a big man scrambled out past him and went out thirty or forty yards through the lively rifle-fire evoked by the conflagration. It was Pte Weighill; he had observed some Turkish cricket-ball bombs lying out near the edge of the blaze—some of them were exploding in it. He accordingly went out and brought in a bomb, explaining that he "wanted to have a look at it."

⁷ See pp 485-6. Rushdi Bey, commanding the 16th Div., ordered the 48th Regt. to "use every means to complete and fortify the trenches begun . . . on Holly Ridge" (the Turkish is "Yeshil" or "Green" Ridge)

⁸ The tunnels were to be used for communication with the trench when captured

fixed for moonrise⁹ on the night of July 31st, and was to be delivered by the 11th Battalion, which had then relieved the 12th in Tasmania Post. The operation was carefully planned. A portion of Snipers' Ridge, where there were known to be at least two machine-guns and a trench-mortar bearing on the position, was to be bombarded during the afternoon by the newly-landed howitzers of the 13th (British) Division,¹⁰ with forty rounds of high-explosive shell. During the actual fight other enemy machine-guns in the northern bastion of Snipers' Ridge were to be smothered with shrapnel, while the whole semicircle of surrounding positions would be kept as far as possible under shrapnel from the artillery¹¹ and intense rifle-fire from the Australian trenches on that flank. At the hour of the assault mines were to be fired by the 3rd Field Company in each of the four tunnels, one under either end of the enemy's trench and the others at even distances between. The assault was then immediately to be made by four parties of the 11th¹² under the command of Captain Leane—the same who on May 4th had led the raid upon Gaba Tepe. The signal for the attack was to be the lighting of a red flare on the parapet of the old firing line.

Early in the night of July 31st there was a violent outbreak of firing on the left of Anzac. It died down and left an almost unbroken quiet. As the moon began to rise, a single red light appeared on the black hillside behind Tasmania Post. Twenty seconds later, close in front of the post, a shower of red sparks, caused by the explosion of one of the mines, was projected twenty feet into the air, followed almost immediately by a second flash near by.



⁹ At 10.16

¹⁰ 69th Bde., R.F.A.

¹¹ The right-flank ship (on this night a monitor) would also shell the Twin Trenches.

¹² Each consisting of fifty men under an officer. In each party there were to be four bomb-throwers (each carrying eight percussion stick-bombs), twenty-six riflemen; and twenty men with sandbags and entrenching tools—but also carrying arms—who were to follow immediately behind the others and act as a working party.

Several rifles were fired from the position attacked, and the sparkle of distant rifle-fire quickly ran along the surrounding ridges from Echelon Trenches to the Pine.

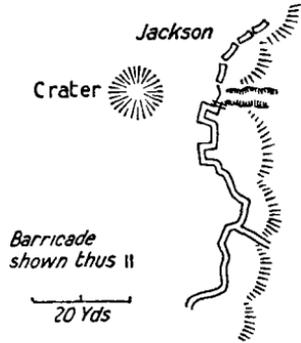
When the red light appeared, Captain Leane, whose four parties were lining the parapet of Tasmania Post, each opposite its allotted mine, had given the signal for the firing of the mines and for the attack. But there followed only two explosions, one at either end of the enemy's trench. It was impossible to judge whether the other mines had altogether failed or whether their explosion was merely delayed, in which case there would be extreme danger for the centre parties. But there was only one wise course to pursue: Leane instantly led out the attack. As it reached the trench, the southern of the two central mines, which—like the northern—was a few yards short of the trench, exploded, burying one or more Turks and at least one Australian, who was already in the trench.¹³ The fourth did not explode.

With the débris still raining from the air upon some of them, the parties reached the Turkish trench. The bombers, as they approached it, flung percussion bombs both into it and down the steep slope beyond. The trench proved to have a parapet of sandbags with large sand-bricks on its nearer side, behind which, jabbering and scrambling, and staring up in an amazed manner, was a line of Turks. The Australians stood firing down at it until spaces were cleared and they were able to jump in, the Turks rushing to the rear through the communication trenches. The central portion of the fire-trench was easily captured, and Leane thereupon turned his attention first to his left flank and then to his right.

The left party, under Captain Jackson, which had to traverse about sixty yards of No-Man's Land, had found that the northern part of the trench "petered out" into the head of a washaway, which served the enemy as a communication trench. Beyond was the Wheatfield, in which were only some unfinished excavations. Some of the Western Australians dropped into the end of the trench; but Jackson and ten men found themselves in the cornfield north of the washaway. His men chased a few Turks down this gutter.

¹³ According to one account, however, these men were buried subsequently by a shell

and, after killing several, returned. As one of the enemy's machine-guns was playing in this direction, the open end of the trench was forthwith blocked with sandbags, while Jackson and his ten followers dug rifle-pits in the Wheatfield north of the washaway. His working party had not reached him,¹⁴ but Lance-Corporal L. B. Taylor, twice going to the captured trench, brought thence a dozen men.¹⁵ Tools and sandbags were also thrown from the trench into the washaway, whence Jackson's men fetched them. The head of the washaway was then filled and protected with a breastwork, this labour continuing during the night.



The mine in front of Lieutenant Franklyn's¹⁶ party, which started south of Jackson's, failed to explode, but the enemy, on being attacked, ran off through a short communication trench into the Valley of Despair. Leane at once ordered Sergeant Louch to block this exit with sandbags. Then, seeing that the left was safe, he turned to ascertain the situation on his right.

As he proceeded southward, he observed that several men who were endeavouring to cut fire-steps in the wall of the trench fell shot from the rear. In order to solve this puzzle he sent his "observer," Lance-Corporal F. Smith,¹⁷ to get touch with the party on that flank. Smith presently reported that a strong party of the enemy intervened.¹⁸

The right central party, under Lieutenant Puckle,¹⁹ had been unable to clear its sector of the trench. The mine on its front was that which exploded late, burying one or more

¹⁴ According to some accounts they were caught in one of the mine explosions.

¹⁵ Taylor was of Gympie, Q'land. Sgt. M. C. Bullen (of Perth, W. Aust.), who was with these, was shot dead as they left the trench.

¹⁶ Lieut. J. W. Franklyn; 11th Bn. Draper; of Subiaco, W. Aust.; b. 1897. Died of wounds, 6 Aug., 1915.

¹⁷ Capt. F. Smith, M.C.; 51st Bn. Barman; of Mullewa, W. Aust.; b. Mullewa, 1891. Killed in action, 25th Apr., 1918.

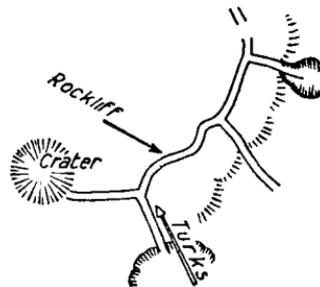
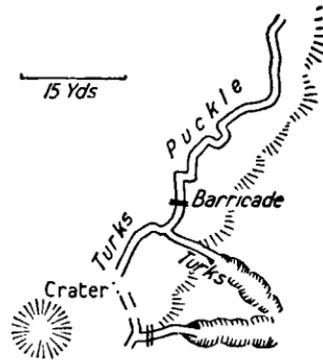
¹⁸ This was confirmed by a report from Lieut. Croker, an engineer of the 3rd Fld Coy., who, when inspecting the mine-craters in the old No-Man's Land, observed some of the enemy's supports advancing up a washaway and communication trench towards the bay held by their comrades. Croker shot three of them.

¹⁹ Lieut. C. E. M. Puckle; 11th Bn. Farmer; of Mullewa, W. Aust.; b. Toorak, Vic. 19 Feb., 1887. Killed in action, 31 July, 1915.

of its men. Most of them, however, leapt into the trench some distance north of it, the Turks at the same time recoiling southward. Some of these withdrew into a Y-shaped washaway on the valley-side, and others into a trench-bay which projected sharply towards the Australian line. Puckle endeavoured to seize the opening to the washaway and thus cut off the enemy in the bay, but he and several of his men were killed. A barricade was therefore hurriedly raised across the trench, the enemy remaining in the bay south of it, from which he fired continually towards Tasmania Post.

The southernmost party of the 11th was under Captain Rockliff. Of its fortune Leane knew nothing, except that, by the sound, it was still fighting. As a matter of fact it had been engaged from the first in a severe struggle. As it reached the trench, the enemy at that end had been hurrying away down three short saps into the Valley of Despair. Rockliff's men, who had reached the trench without a casualty, instantly began to tear down the sandbags of the Turkish parapet, and to throw them, together with the sand-bricks and any other available material, across the mouth of the communication saps, in order to block the exits. In the southernmost sap a number of the enemy appeared to wait in anticipation of further explosions, and the barricades were only a foot or two in height when these Turks began to creep forward again and throw bombs.

Rockliff's four bombers had carried between them thirty-two percussion bombs, but many of these had been used, and the remainder were now soon thrown. A box of jam-tin



grenades was to have been brought across, but its bearer could not be found.²⁰ The supply was thus exhausted. A machine-gun under Sergeant Hallahan, which had accompanied the party, was set up on the edge of the trench, but was at once put out of action. When calls for ammunition were sent along the trench, no reply came back. On the contrary, amid the din of bombs, rifles, and shells were heard shouts: "There are Turks on the left!" But so critical was the position that Rockliff could pay little attention to this cry. From the open communication trench the enemy was bombing with impunity, and, though the Australians were throwing back some of the Turkish grenades,²¹ this situation could not have lasted long. Just then Rockliff, looking out from the back of the trench, saw lying in the open what appeared to be a box of ammunition. It was fetched in by one of the men, and was found to contain the missing jam-tin bombs. Clumsy though they were, their effect was decisive. The Australians threw one after another, the dust and smoke



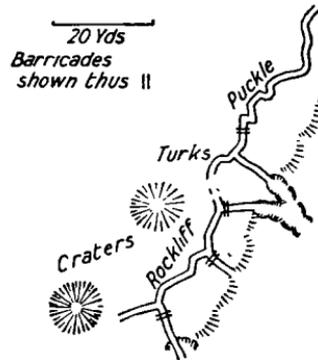
Sketch (made in 1919) of Leane's position, viewed from the Turkish rear, showing washaways held by the Turks. (*From the diary of the Official War Correspondent.*)

²⁰ Both the lad who carried the bombs and an ammunition carrier for the machine-gun had been wounded in the rush across. The machine-gunner was seen wandering dazed and aimlessly past the right flank of the Turkish trench to the communication trench, where he now lay dead. The wounded bomb-carrier got back to Tasmania Post.

²¹ Pte W J Luckie (of Wellington, N.Z.) threw back six of the enemy's grenades.

becoming so thick that there was some anxiety lest the enemy might creep round under cover of it and attack the trench from the rear. But the Turks had been driven far along their trench. The work of barricading the exits was resumed, Rockliff preventing his men from firing, as there were no visible targets.

It soon became clear that the party was not connected with the one on its left. Corporal McNamara,²² in charge of the working party for Rockliff's sector, had entered the trench alone farther north and found Turks in it immediately north of him. He had then turned southwards to join his own party,²³ but found his way blocked by what he at first believed to be a fall of earth from the nearest mine. Clambering out of the trench and round this obstacle, he came on his men in a continuation of the trench five yards away. He set them to clear the trench and then discovered that it had never been fully dug through, but merely spitlocked. He reported this to Rockliff, who, looking northwards, could see the



flashes of the enemy's rifles, firing over the rear of the trench, and occasionally the Turkish uniforms lit up by the flashes; farther north the Australian rifles fired in the opposite direction. Corporal McOmish, creeping out to within three yards of the portion held by the Turks, confirmed their presence there.²⁴

Messengers from both Rockliff and Leane independently brought news of this discovery to the 11th Battalion headquarters. But in the meantime Leane made an immediate effort to oust the Turks. Their position was clearly marked by the flashes of their rifles and the burst of an occasional bomb. Upon Leane's instruction, therefore, Lieutenant Franklyn and a dozen men attempted to charge over the open in rear of the trench towards these flashes.

²² Cpl. T. W. McNamara (No. 1593, 11th Bn.). Hairdresser, of Colhe, W. Aust.; b Chesterfield, Derby, Eng., 23 Sept., 1890.

²³ He here came upon a man named Prentice, badly wounded, dressed his wounds, and directed him to the rear. (Prentice, who was totally blinded, belonged to Perth, W. Aust., and Melbourne.)

²⁴ Sgt. W. McOmish, M.M. (No. 962, 51st Bn.). Miner; of Leederville, W. Aust.; b Glasgow, Scotland, 1883. (Apparently both McOmish and McNamara, and also a man named Miller, were sent by Rockliff to battalion headquarters with this news. Miller was shot.)

The position, however, was confused, since some of Rockliff's men, apprehensive of attack from the rear, were intermittently firing in that direction. As the Turks were also opening with rifles and bombs, Franklyn's party was driven back.

Shortly afterwards, however, the commander of the 11th, acting on Rockliff's report, ordered Lieutenant Potter²⁵ with a reserve platoon from Tasmania Post to charge the section held by the enemy. The trenches of the post were at this moment blocked with the passage

of wounded men to the rear, which caused a difficulty in launching all the men simultaneously, and Potter himself was wounded as the attack started. But both he and Sergeant M. Ringwood, an old South African soldier, led small parties straight for the enemy, a stunted pine-tree, which was burning immediately behind the



Turks, serving as a guiding mark. They were met by heavy fire, eight of the fifteen with Ringwood being hit before the trench was reached. It was not captured, although several Australians were killed in it.²⁶ A further batch of Potter's men dashed forward soon after, losing heavily, but some reaching Leane's position. Eventually a supply of grenades reached Leane and, as the Turks refused to surrender, they were attacked with these and shot down in the trench or when attempting to leave it. The outlet to the Y-shaped washaway was then hurriedly barricaded with their corpses and with sandbags pulled from the parapet, and the trench thus finally secured.

Meanwhile the four mine-tunnels were being opened for communication, Lieutenant Croker of the engineers having reconnoitred the craters²⁷ and repeatedly crossed the open

²⁵ Lieut G Potter; 11th Bn Farmer; of Claremont, W. Aust; b Linlithgowshire, Scotland, 17 Sept, 1884.

²⁶ Ringwood himself fought a bayonet duel with one of the enemy, who unsuccessfully endeavoured to parry Ringwood's thrusts by moving his own point in a circle. Ringwood (afterwards Lieut.) belonged to Perth.

²⁷ The southern craters were also reconnoitred by Spr H. E Townsend (afterwards Capt.; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.), 3rd Fld. Coy.

with his men, who with parties of infantry were opening the passages from both ends. The air in the tunnels being pure,²⁸ three of them had within an hour been sufficiently cleared to allow sandbags and other material to be handed through the holes in the craters. But the regular passage of men was not possible till early morning, and during the night they traversed the open.

By 1.30 the gap between Rockliff and the main trench had been cut through²⁹ by a shallow trench, which by 3.20 was "passable and defensible." Along the rest of the position, by dint of heavy labour, the Turkish parapet was before daylight transferred to the eastern side, overlooking the valley, and in some places had been doubled in thickness; traverses had been made against enfilade, with well-recessed fire-bays between; in each bay fire-steps had been cut, loop-holes made, and the trench deepened. By the small hours three of the tunnels were open for communication. The northern flank was now protected by several low sandbag breastworks or sangars, standing isolated above the trampled yellow corn.

Both during the attack and afterwards the covering fire of the Anzac artillery hampered the Turkish machine-guns,³⁰ and the counter-attacks of the Turkish infantry, when once Rockliff had driven them back on the right, were feeble.³¹ One or two weak efforts were made to bomb up the southern communication trench, but were easily defeated by the throwing of a few jam-tin bombs. On the northern flank, shortly after midnight, signs of enemy movement in the Wheatfield were quickly suppressed by the fire of the 9th and 11th and of a machine-gun emplaced at one of the sap-heads. Later, near the centre of the position, the observers perceived about twenty of the enemy clinging to the hillside close below them, but these were quickly dispersed with a few jam-tin and Lotbinière grenades.

²⁸ Since the gases of the explosion had escaped through the craters.

²⁹ Capt. E. T. Brennan, medical officer of the 11th, at great risk to his life, crawled through this shallow trench to attend the wounded who were crowding the bottom of the fire trench.

³⁰ A machine-gun of the 33rd Turkish M.G. Coy. had been turned upon Holly Ridge, but was hampered by shell-fire, which damaged the trench on the southern slope of Lone Pine, whence the gun was shooting. "The enemy's fire was accurate and well aimed at our machine-guns," wrote the company commander. Nevertheless his guns fired throughout the night.

³¹ It was subsequently stated by prisoners that both the commander of the 48th (holding the post) and the commander of the supports failed in their duty.

Had this sharp action occurred three years later in an Australian sector in France, the regimental quartermaster would have had his settled part in it, and, whatever the conditions of weather or fighting, the troops would have been served with a hot drink, if not a hot meal, before daylight. But the importance of the commissariat in a fight was not yet realised. Water for the attacking troops had, it is true, been specially stored in Tasmania Post; but it does not appear to have been conveyed to them, probably in consequence of the difficulty of passing through the congested communication tunnels. For the same reason the dead of both sides had been left in the bottom of the trench, where they lay trampled on by the workers. The men were worn out with strain, absence of sleep, and heavy labour; when at dawn the Olive Grove batteries opened strongly upon the post with high-explosive, they were subjected to a severe trial of their nerve. Again and again the parapet was blown down. Part of the garrison was accordingly withdrawn into the tunnels, and most of the Wheatfield party was brought into the trench.³² Leane and many others were wounded.³³ But at 5.30, when the bombardment ceased, no attack followed.

In the evening a company of the 12th relieved the 11th in the captured position (henceforth known as "Leane's Trench"), and garrisoned it during that and the succeeding night. The fight, which had been a trying one, cost the 11th Battalion 36 killed and 73 wounded.³⁴ On the Turkish side the loss was greater.³⁵ The attack had cleared the enemy from a position from which he might subsequently have harassed the flank of the troops attacking Lone Pine. Its value as a demonstration must be judged in the light of later events.

During the week following this action four brigades of the New Army and the 29th Indian Brigade reached Anzac.

³² A small post under Sgt. R. L. Richardson (of Onslow, W. Aust.) was left in the breastworks.

³³ During this bombardment the men occupied themselves in repairing the parapet wherever it was destroyed. Leane was speaking to an observer when the latter's head was blown away by a shell, Leane himself being wounded in the head, but remaining at his post. Among those wounded at this time were Capt. Jackson and Sgt. Hallahan.

³⁴ A few casualties occurred in other units, Lieut.-Col. Harris of the 5th L.H. Regt. being killed during the general fusillade.

³⁵ Of the company of the 48th which had garrisoned the trench, only 90 men are said to have answered to their names next day. Some 30 of the enemy were lying dead in or around the trench; others were killed in the Wheatfield.

On the night of August 2nd there arrived Major-General Shaw,³⁶ commanding the 13th Division, together with some of his staff and the brigadiers and staffs of the 39th and 40th Infantry Brigades. On the following night there were disembarked 6,000 men of the 13th Division—comprising the whole of the 39th Brigade and two battalions of the 40th. At 5.45 a German aeroplane came over Anzac; but by that time the 39th was in Rest Gully and the 40th in White's Valley, having been guided thither quietly and quickly during the night. The whole process had been completed before daylight, and the enemy airmen flew away without perceiving any important change. On the night of August 4th the two remaining battalions of the 40th Brigade were landed and guided to Russell's Top and Monash Valley; the 38th Brigade was taken to Victoria Gully and Bridges' Road; the pioneer battalion of the 13th Division and divisional headquarters were also brought ashore. On the night of August 5th the 29th (New Army) and 29th Indian Brigades were to be disembarked. The British troops were duly put ashore and guided to Bridges' Road, but the Indians were still landing when day broke. A fairly heavy shell-fire was opened upon the Beach, and, although disembarkation was continued after daylight, it had eventually to be abandoned, some 200 of the 14th Sikhs being taken back to Imbros, to be returned to Anzac after dark that night. The rest of the brigade, however, was duly ashore, and bivouacked in Reserve Gully. Between August 2nd and 6th there had also been landed drafts of Australian and New Zealand troops amounting to over 3,900, including about 2,250 reinforcements.³⁷ Within the limits of Anzac there were now 37,000 troops and 72 guns.³⁸

By this time Liman von Sanders, as has been stated, had become aware that a new offensive was imminent. But he had not as yet detected any sure signs to indicate where the stroke would fall. On July 16th a report had reached him from Salonica that 50,000 to 60,000 men and 140 ships were

³⁶ Lieut.-Gen Rt Hon. Sir F. C. Shaw, K.C.B. Chief of Gen Staff, Home Force, 1916/18. Officer of British Regular Army; b. 31 July, 1861.

³⁷ Early on August 6 there arrived among the reinforcements 2 officers and 131 men for the 18th and 19th Battalions, belonging properly to the newly-formed 2nd Australian Division, then in Egypt. They were allotted to the 2nd Infantry Brigade, and were at Anzac throughout the offensive. On August 9 there arrived also 139 for the 20th Battalion.

³⁸ See foot-note 63 on p. 523.

at Lemnos,³⁹ and other rumours placed the numbers even higher. A letter of July 22nd from General von Falkenhayn, Chief of the General Staff of the German G.H.Q. in France, also warned him of the apparent probability that at the beginning of August an attempt, heavier than ever before, would be made against the Dardanelles, possibly accompanied by a landing in the Gulf of Saros, or south of the straits. Von Sanders himself suspected that the British reinforcements would be employed in making a new landing rather than in launching further futile efforts from Anzac or Helles. His observing aeroplanes were consequently sent out almost daily in spite of retaliatory raids by numbers of French aeroplanes upon the Turkish aerodrome at Chanak. On July 29th, 30th, and 31st, and August 2nd and 4th, German aeroplanes flew over Anzac, for the most part shortly before dawn; but they appear to have observed no important changes. At times during the nights of August 3rd, 4th, and 5th it seemed to listeners at Anzac that the rattle of anchor chains, and the shouts of naval officers directing incoming tows to the landing stages, must afford dangerously obvious signs of the move that was in process. It is true also that at day-break on August 4th an observer of the 47th Turkish Regiment on Lone Pine reported that a "loud noise" had been heard during the night on the enemy's pier. But the Turk was accustomed to these nightly sounds;⁴⁰ and, though he was evidently nervous, though he fired at night upon little provocation, though his artillery was active and rear areas were more frequently shelled, and though there existed that general tension which constantly precedes a great battle, nevertheless during the first few days and nights of August, crowded as they were with preparation on the Anzac side, no suspicion of that preparation reached the enemy.

During these days General Birdwood, realising that the Turkish leaders would gather some general information concerning the coming offensive, but trusting that his various demonstrations had drawn their attention to his southern flank, was anxious to keep it riveted there by a further feint. A suitable objective for this purpose seemed to be a post

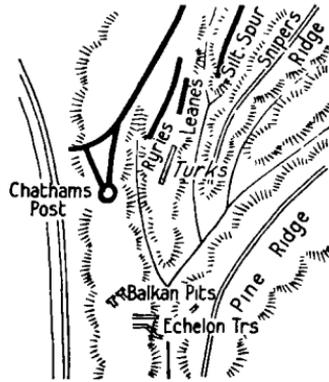
³⁹ *Fünf Jahre Türkei*, by Gen. Liman von Sanders, p. 104 et seq

⁴⁰ In the quiet of No 2 Outpost the N.Z. sentries could sometimes hear the Turks, far up on the ranges, mimicking the sounds of the Beach officers.

recently established by the enemy in front of Ryrie's, much as Leane's Trench had been dug by them in front of Tasmania Post. He had from the first been anxious to oust the Turks from this position, which had been occupied by them as part of their new policy of shutting in his southern flank.⁴¹ He now ordered the 1st Division to attack the place.

Both General Walker and Colonel White had shown themselves strongly opposed to the undertaking, realising it to be more difficult than the capture of Leane's Trench; but, definite orders being eventually given, they passed them to the commander of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, Brigadier-General Ryrie. Ryrie at once referred them to Major Clogstoun, commanding the 3rd Field Company, who had taken a great part in planning the defences on the southern flank, and who would be charged with tunnelling to the new post in accordance with the same plan as that previously employed at Leane's. Clogstoun, however, pointed out that the task was very different, since the enemy appeared to have protected this post by mining.⁴² Moreover, even if the enemy had no mine galleries, and the Australian tunnels were immediately driven forward, it was improbable that they could reach the Turkish trench by the night proposed for the attack. If the position were captured, it was improbable that full communication with it could be opened in less than eighteen hours; and, as the place was difficult to cover with Australian fire and would be swept by Turkish enfilade, it was doubtful if the attacking party could hold out so long.

Ryrie's 2nd Light Horse Brigade had not yet been engaged in any important assault, a circumstance which often laid upon



⁴¹ The trench was reconnoitred by a patrol under Sgt. Walker of the 7th Light Horse. At dawn one morning this party jumped out of the Australian trench and ran across the thirty yards to the Turkish position. After shooting down among the scared enemy in the trench, the light horsemen returned without a casualty. Undoubtedly the enemy's new policy of shutting in the southern flank of Anzac was a result of Birdwood's activity in that direction.

⁴² A Turkish mine had already been harmlessly fired there, apparently in panic, during the fighting at Leane's.

a new commander a strong temptation to grasp any opportunity of showing the mettle of his troops without paying sufficient attention to the difficulties. It might have been suspected that Ryrie, in particular, would have been anxious to impress his superiors by carrying out their plans. If, however, he did not pretend to be a highly skilled or learned soldier, he was a man of sure sense and long accustomed to take responsibilities and make decisions. The divisional staff had already more than once been impressed by his prudent advice. Feeling himself charged with the lives of his men, he carefully weighed the chances of the attack, and then supported Clogstoun's objections, forwarding them under cover of a wise letter from himself. The result was that, on August 5th, the very day on which it was to have taken place, the operation was indefinitely postponed. Instead, Birdwood ordered that the 2nd Light Horse Brigade should on the same night attack a far easier objective, the Balkan Gun Pits south of Anzac. A raid was accordingly prepared, again postponed, and eventually fixed for the night of August 6th. Before then, however, events had occurred which caused the project to be abandoned.

The night of August 5th was a somewhat disturbed one. Preceding as it did the opening day of the offensive, it was, on the Anzac side, a time of anxious preparation. While part of the infantry was obtaining its last sleep before the battle, the 29th Indian and 29th British Brigades were being landed on the Beach. The last loads of stores were being hurried to advanced dumps close behind the points of attack. In the secret underground galleries in front of the Pimple, from which the first line of the attack on Lone Pine was to be launched, engineers and infantry were toiling by candle-light, taking out the packing of sandbags which had been temporarily left in the recesses, and preparing to break down the roof and make the openings from which that line would emerge. The minds of officers and men were full of excited anticipation of open warfare, a move to Midos and the Narrows, and possibly to Constantinople. The previous week's attack upon Leane's Trench had been almost forgotten.

But, though the Australians did not realise it, the enemy had regarded the loss of Leane's as a serious reverse. Not only was it against his settled principle to yield any ground, but Birdwood's policy had succeeded in drawing his attention to the south of Anzac, and special orders had been given to the Turks to fortify that flank against the possibility of an outbreak of the Anzac force. The loss of Leane's at this juncture was taken deeply to heart. The two company commanders of the 48th Regiment who were held responsible are said to have been court-martialled, and one of them sentenced to death, while a third appears to have volunteered to retake the trench and to have expressed his willingness, in the event of failure, to allow the Turkish machine-guns to be turned upon himself and his men. Whether or not these statements, subsequently made by prisoners, are true, orders were given for the counter-attack. It was to be covered by artillery and by the machine-guns of the 47th Regiment on Lone Pine and Snipers' Ridge; "if the Turkish troops . . . failed to stand firm . . . or ran away," these machine-guns were to fire upon them.⁴⁸ The trench was to be destroyed by artillery overnight and attacked at dawn on August 6th.

At 6 p.m. on August 5th the Turkish artillery on Gun Ridge opened upon Leane's Trench, then occupied by part of a company of the 11th under Captain Rockliff. The bombardment was one of the fiercest experienced at Anzac, but the trajectory of most of the shells was too flat for them to be dangerous, their high-explosive merely blowing down the sandbag parapet. The Olive Grove battery, far more effective because it was firing in enfilade, opened also, but not so heavily. At 7 o'clock the bombardment ceased, only two men having been wounded.

Half the garrison of the trench consisted of reinforcements who had been poured in from Egypt in anticipation of the coming offensive. Rockliff went along the trench distributing the men alternately—old soldier—reinforcement—old soldier—

⁴⁸ A copy of the order by Rushdi Bey (commander of the 16th Div.) to this effect was captured. The 77th and part of the 48th Regts., in the sector from Pine Ridge to Gaba Tepe, were also to cover the attack by firing upon the trenches opposite them. The 3/13th, part of the 5th Turkish Div., then acting as reserve for the Anzac zone, was to move to Pine Ridge to the position vacated by the attacking companies of the 48th

reinforcement. No assault followed, but the bombardment had been so sharp that it seemed probable that one was impending. Yet five yards from the edge of the trench the valley fell so abruptly that it was impossible to see into it; the only means of detecting an enemy moving in the gully was therefore by sound. But the picks which were then busily at work, preparing the trench for the delivery of a fusillade the next day, prevented hearing. Rockliff explained this at battalion headquarters, but was told that the work, being connected with the next day's offensive, must proceed. Nevertheless, on returning to the trench, he stopped it. At midnight, when his company commander, Captain Boyd Aarons,⁴⁴ relieved him on duty, it was recommenced.

About dawn someone in the trench heard an order given by a Turkish officer close beneath in the valley. Some of the 11th fired and threw bombs in the direction of the sound. A few minutes later a hail of machine-gun fire burst upon the parapet; shells began to explode around it; heavy rifle-fire was poured upon the whole front; and a volley of Turkish bombs burst in the southern end of the trench. The enemy had crept unperceived up his old communication trenches and the Y-shaped washaway and was fiercely attacking.

One of the Turkish machine-gunners has recorded that they could see their men on the slope below Leane's harassed by a fierce bomb-fire, which at first appeared to prevent them from climbing over the parapet. Possibly also the Turkish artillery, which seems to have been shelling the southern end of the trench, at first kept the Turks back. But presently this fire lifted. A shell, or a volley of bombs, had killed or wounded almost every Australian at that end of the trench, and about thirty of the enemy scrambled over the parapet. One of the surviving Australians, by name Smith,⁴⁵ ran back through the southernmost communication tunnel to Tasmania Post to bring supports; but, when returning through the tunnel, he heard in front of him the click of a rifle-bolt. Realising that the enemy was in the passage, he stationed himself with several comrades at a bend of the tunnel, preventing further

⁴⁴ Maj Julian Boyd; Permanent President of Courts Martial, A.I.F. Dépôts in the United Kingdom, 1917/19. Mine manager; of Boulder, W. Aust.; b. Melbourne, 26 Apr., 1876.

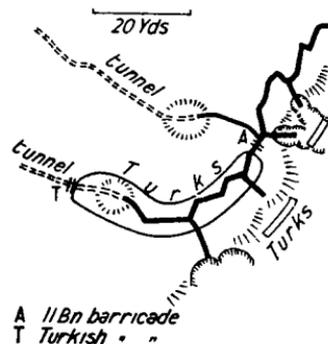
⁴⁵ Pte. W. R. Smith (No. 232, 11th Bn.). Stockman; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Bendigo, 1881.

penetration. Meanwhile all the men who could be spared from Tasmania Post were rushed forward into Leane's through a tunnel farther north, led by Lieutenant Robertson,⁴⁶ one of the newly-arrived reinforcements.

These supports found Leane's Trench a shambles. The southern end of it was paved with killed and wounded. The bags on the parapet had been cut to ribbons by machine-gun fire, and the sand and gravel poured into the trench. To show a head above the parapet was almost certain death. Meanwhile, though the Turks had only entered its southern end, another force of them was so close to its central sector that their bayonets could be seen above the parapet, and also their hands as they flung bombs. The Australians in the trench had at this juncture only eight jam-tin grenades and no matches with which to light the fuses. An automatic cigarette-lighter was, however, obtained from Captain Boyd Aarons, and, as the last of the bombs was flung, a further supply came to hand.

The Australians, who by shooting into the trench-wall at a bend had been preventing the enemy from working northwards, now began throwing bombs over the angle, while Sergeant Wallish⁴⁷ hastily piled across the trench a barricade over which the bomb-fighting continued.⁴⁸ Robertson was killed. Wallish, though wounded, continued to fight on until his leg was shattered. Boyd Aarons, endeavouring to smother a Turkish bomb by covering it with a blanket and sandbag, was wounded in the knee.

About 6 o'clock, the Turks still being in the southern end of the trench, the officer

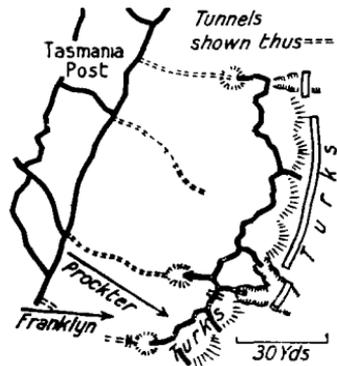


⁴⁶ Lieut. A. J. Robertson; 11th Bn. Mining engineer and geologist; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Bundalaguah, Vic., 4 Jan., 1887. Killed in action, 6 Aug., 1915.

⁴⁷ Sgt. A. J. E. Wallish, D.C.M. (No. 1186, 11th Bn.). Miner; of Sandstone, W. Aust.; b. Apsley, Vic., 3 Apr., 1890.

⁴⁸ Pte. H. Whitbread (of Port Pirie, S. Aust.) and others threw back numbers of the enemy's bombs.

commanding the 11th informed his brigadier, MacLagan, that the enemy could not be driven out. MacLagan ordered him to prepare a counter-attack, and, the matter seeming urgent, himself proceeded to Tasmania Post, where he took charge of the arrangements. Two parties, each of about twenty-five men, had been already organised under Lieutenants Prockter⁴⁹ and Franklyn. MacLagan directed that Prockter's party should dash across the open from the southern end of Tasmania Post, while Franklyn's stood ready instantly to support it. The charge was at once made. Prockter's men, who were largely reinforcements, had no more than forty yards to traverse, but were met by heavy fire. Part of them, missing the trench, ran south of it into the gully, and were killed by the enemy's machine-guns. About half the party—mostly wounded and too few to assault the trench successfully—reached the parados and flung themselves down behind it. Two newly-arrived reinforcements, named Johns⁵⁰ and Morrison,⁵¹ could be seen coolly rising and firing rapidly into the trench or the gully and then sheltering again. A third, named Roper,⁵² was near them, firing from a kneeling position and then turning to those in Tasmania Post and giving the signal to reinforce.⁵³



As the first rush had failed, MacLagan ordered Franklyn to charge. This party was met with even heavier fire than the first, but most of it reached the parados and stood for a

⁴⁹ Lieut. C. H. Prockter; 11th Bn. Station manager; of Kalamunda, W. Aust., b. Hawthorn, Vic., 24 Dec., 1891. Killed in action, 6 Aug., 1915.

⁵⁰ Pte. B. D. Johns (No. 2153, 11th Bn.). Farmer; of Kojonup, W. Aust.; b. Pembrokehire, Wales, 1888. Killed in action, 6 Aug., 1915.

⁵¹ Pte. J. M. Morrison (No. 2172, 11th Bn.). Telegraphist; of Midland Junction, W. Aust.; b. Flemington, Vic., 1890. Killed in action, 6 Aug., 1915.

⁵² Pte. D. Roper (No. 2437, 11th Bn.). Labourer; of Subiaco, W. Aust.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1893.

⁵³ He shortly afterwards ran back to the post to report the situation, being severely wounded on the way.

moment firing down. Then, as the enemy fell or spread, the survivors of both parties jumped into the trench. All the enemy in it were killed, but six were captured in the tunnel. Of the parties which made this gallant counter-attack, both had suffered heavily. Both officers were mortally wounded.⁵⁴ In Prockter's party of 26, 8 were killed and 18 wounded, the gallant Johns and Morrison both losing their lives.

Thus by about 7 o'clock the trench had been cleared of the enemy, but Turks were still clinging to the slope below its centre and northern end, although they had not yet made any rush over the crest. Their position was, in fact, one of extreme difficulty, since shortly after daylight the 10th Battalion on Silt Spur, which enfiladed the valley, had been ordered to maintain rifle-fire down the gully in rear of them, and at 5.30 some of the Anzac batteries also had been turned upon it. The Turks sheltered from this fire in the washaways close beneath the parapet of Leane's, but were not in a favourable position to continue the assault. Meanwhile two men of the 11th, Privates Cocking⁵⁵ and Moran,⁵⁶ who had found loop-holes from which they could see into parts of the washaways through certain breaks in their banks, were steadily shooting every man who passed. It was also observed that, when the Turks attempted to break back in twos and threes to the valley, their own machine-guns from the rear were cutting them down.⁵⁷

Nevertheless the existence of the enemy in force so close beneath the trench caused some anxiety. If reinforced, it seemed likely that he would attempt to rush the trench, in which case the field of fire, only five yards in width, gave little room for repelling him. Moreover the sound of picking, heard at about 8 o'clock from one of the tunnels, suggested

⁵⁴ By shell-fire on the edge of the trench. Prockter died in the aid-post; Franklyn on the hospital ship.

⁵⁵ Pte. D. Cocking (No. 980, 11th Bn.). Prospector, of Ballarat East, Vic; b Ballarat, 1885. Killed in action, 30 May, 1916.

⁵⁶ Pte. P. F. Moran (No. 810, 11th Bn.). Labourer; of Seven Hills, S Aust; b Wilmington, S. Aust., 1893. Killed in action, 30 May, 1916.

⁵⁷ MacLagan, who with Peck, his staff-captain, went forward into Leane's, himself remarked that the machine-guns shooting these men appeared to be those of their own side, stationed one on Knife Edge, one on Snipers' Ridge, and two on the southern bastion of Lone Pine—duly posted that is to say, where Rushdi Bey had ordered.

that the Turks were driving a mine into the hillside. Major Clogstoun of the engineers was sent for, and endeavoured to discover what the Turks were about. In doing so he daringly leant over the parapet⁵⁸ and was at once shot through the windpipe. MacLagan, who on hearing the same report had again gone forward to Leane's, could find no evidence of mining; but he saw that it was difficult to dislodge the enemy, since the jam-tin bombs thrown by the 11th rolled down the hill and burst out of range. "Throw some gun-cotton at them," he said to Boyd Aarons, who, though wounded, was still in charge. A small box of this explosive, prepared for use as a bomb, was accordingly rolled over the parapet. It exploded, killing some half-dozen of the enemy, and the threat of attack ended.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, however, the commander of the 11th had ordered another step to be taken to oust the digging Turks. This was a charge over the open north of Tasmania Post by twenty-five men under a reinforcement officer, Lieutenant Hall.⁶⁰ This party accordingly dashed forward⁶¹ through the Wheatfield. The morning was advanced. The whole area was on the alert. As they reached the edge of the slope the machine-guns on Snipers' Ridge and the Knife Edge, and shrapnel-fire from a Turkish battery, were turned upon them. Hall was struck, and pitched headlong down the slope. A number of his men charged or stumbled down it, ten of their bodies being afterwards found near its foot. A body of the enemy, which they surprised, fled on their appearance, and, as it recoiled, the



⁵⁸ If a periscope was put up, it was instantly broken.

⁵⁹ According to one account an ineffective mine-explosion subsequently occurred where the Turks had been digging. But it seems possible that the explosion of the gun-cotton was mistaken for that of an enemy mine.

⁶⁰ Lieut S G L Hall; 11th Bn. Bank clerk; of Kadina, S. Aust; b. Lucindale, S. Aust., 22 July, 1891. Killed in action, 6 Aug., 1915.

⁶¹ From the "Oratunga" fire-trench, a northerly continuation of Tasmania Post.

crackle of the Turkish machine-guns swelled into a deafening uproar. But of Hall's party only three wounded men managed to return to the northern end of Leane's.⁶²

In case the enemy might rally, the fire of howitzers was now directed upon the lower part of the Valley of Despair. A few bombs continued to be thrown by some of the enemy lingering beneath the trench.⁶³ The action died out about 10.30. It had cost the Australians 55 killed and 100 wounded. The enemy's losses were probably equal.⁶⁴

Urgent steps were at once taken to put Leane's Trench into such a condition that its garrison could that afternoon take their allotted part in helping to cover with rifle-fire the attack upon Lone Pine. The artillery was already carrying out the third and last day's programme of slow bombardment of the Pine and other positions. Since the previous night the 1st Infantry Brigade had been resting in its support line, the 2nd Brigade having been extended so as to take over its entire front. The 2nd Field Company, which for the past week had been cutting a new sap to the Pimple, widening the old ones, and deepening and preparing the tunnels,⁶⁵ was now in full force breaking open the roof of the underground firing line opposite the Pine. Water and supplies had been stored in Brown's Dip, immediately in rear of the Pimple. The men of the 1st Brigade had crammed their belongings into their packs and stacked these in convenient dépôts behind the lines. Bayonets had been sharpened; broad white patches of calico had been sewn by all troops round the sleeves and on the backs of tunics to serve as distinguishing marks by night. The plans had been explained by the officers to the men. At 2 p.m. the 2nd Field Company finished the opening of the underground line. At 2.30 p.m. the portion of the 2nd Brigade which had been garrisoning the Pimple was withdrawn to the flanks, and the 1st moved in to take up its allotted position for the attack

⁶² Men in Leane's observed through a periscope that one of Hall's party, lying on the edge of the valley, was moving his limbs. A medical orderly of the 11th named Winzar (of Boulder City, W. Aust.) thereupon crawled out at 11 a.m. and, after dressing his wound, attached to him a rope by which he was dragged into the trench. The man, who was a reinforcement and had been wounded in the leg, subsequently recovered.

⁶³ By one of the last bombs Capt. Rockliff was wounded.

⁶⁴ Forty Turkish dead lay within view.

⁶⁵ Working with infantry fatigue parties.

upon Lone Pine. Meanwhile the 7th Battalion was held ready to launch, at short notice, an attack upon Johnston's Jolly, this provision being insisted on by General Birdwood, although General Walker was adverse. The powerful influence of Colonel White had been exercised, as on numerous occasions later in the war, for cutting-down any part of the plan which he considered tactically impracticable or beyond the power of the available troops. The opposition of himself, Walker, and Ryrie, maintained till the commencement of the offensive, undoubtedly caused a curtailment of the projected feint, which would otherwise have included both a prior assault on Holly Ridge and an attack on the Jolly simultaneous with that upon the Pine.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Whether this opposition was justified by the reasons given for it at the time (*see pp 454 and 487-8*), and by the actual consequences, can only be judged in the light of the events themselves.