

# THE DARDANELLES DISPATCH

**Issue 1**

**November 2017**

## **Message from Rag Bill**

*Greetings Brothers and Sisters,*

*After much patient prodding from the Top table, and with considerable embarrassment, I present the first Dispatch. This is a short one, mainly to check that my computer is not corrupting the page. I thought it would be interesting to look at the Dardanelles Campaign from where we get our name.*

*Let me know what you would like to see in future newsletters.*

*Raggedy*

## **The resurrection of Dardanelles Shellhole**

Late in 2015, Warrior Old Bill, Moth Kevin Graddige approached Moths Ken and Obie with a serious proposition: the Dardanelles shellhole was in trouble with a declining membership, to the point that under the rules of our constitution the whole district was threatened.

A rescue operation was required and it was decided to make the operation an MMA project. Accordingly MMA members of the Warrior Shellhole were asked if they would volunteer to transfer to Dardanelles and make it viable again.

Moths Ken, Obie, James ,Tiny, Dave and Raggedy heeded the call and transferred across.

A new top table was voted in, Michelle took over the finances and when province was satisfied, the Shellhole was taken off administration. Under Moth Ken's enthusiastic leadership the Shellhole became a happy and optimistic group of friends. May we go from strength to strength.

### **The Dardanelles campaign, 1915**

The Dardanelles is a narrow waterway connecting the Black sea with the Mediterranean. It is bounded on both sides by Turkey.

In 1915 the First World War trenches had solidified into a line from the English Channel to the Swiss border, stifling communications between the British and French, and their allies, the Russians. Turkey had aligned itself with Germany and closed the Dardanelles narrows, the only access to southern Russia, to allied shipping. The Turks then started raiding the Russian Black sea fleet, prompting Winston Churchill, who was then First Lord of the Admiralty to propose that the Dardanelles straits be secured by the allies. This would assist the Russians and divert German attention from the Western front.

The proposal was not popular: the cabinet felt it would take valuable resources away from the Western front; however Winston won the day and put together a fleet of six British and four French battleships and a number of smaller vessels, minesweepers and submarines. In March 1915 they sailed up the straits.

In such a confined passage, the obvious defense was mines, and the Turks made a fine job of it. The Allied minesweepers were ineffective and three battleships were sunk and two more were badly damaged. The fleet was withdrawn back to the Mediterranean, and the allies paused to re-think the operation.

It was decided to launch a combined naval and land force campaign to again secure the straits. Five divisions of troops were assembled in Egypt, consisting of the ANZACs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) and British and French soldiers, along with a number of smaller allied units. The troops were embarked for a landing on the Gallipoli peninsular, but organisational delays held them up in Greece for four weeks.

In those four weeks, the Turks, helped by the Germans, managed to strengthen their defenses, and this ensured the failure of the Allied operation.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> April the landings started, to be met with strong opposition from the Turks. Both sides had heavy losses, but the Turks were too few to prevent beach heads being established. However, the Allied forces, a bit shocked at the ferocity of the Turk reaction, failed to exploit the landings, and the attack bogged down close to the beaches. This delay enabled the Turks to bring up reinforcements and the campaign turned into a battle of attrition.

In the hot, rugged terrain both side suffered terribly, not least from dysentery and typhoid, and in December of 1915 and January 1916 all the surviving Allied troops were evacuated.

Ultimately, 57000 Allied soldiers were killed, and 87000 Turks. Amongst the Allies, the Australians and the New Zealanders were proportionately the hardest hit, and those two countries still celebrate ANZAC day on the 25<sup>th</sup> April.

A total of thirty six Victoria's Cross medals were won by Allied forces. The campaign is still studied at Military colleges, mainly for lessons on how not to mount an invasion, and the lessons learnt were applied at the Normandy landings of the Second World War.

