

NOTES FOR THE 6th BATTALION YORKSHIRE REGIMENT (green Howard's)

When we had a week at Lemnos the battalion was suddenly ordered to move to Imbros, it was understood that the Brigade was proceeding there. This turned out to be a mistake, and our battalion was left for some days alone.

The remainder of the Brigade came three or four days later. Major Roberts was left, suffering from Dysentery, and I joined from hospital the evening of the day the battalion had departed, so proceeded with the West Yorks when they moved. We were taken up in Destroyers, or rather on Destroyers, as the men were packed like herrings on deck. We passed fairly close to cape Helles end of Gallipoli, and could see all that was happening around Achi Baba. The run took 3½ hours. We landed in the new type of lighter, which has a little bridge that lets down at the bow, worked by chains. They draw exceedingly little and ground very easily on the beach. I am not certain in how many they are meant to hold, but we packed three double Companies on one when we eventually moved to Gallipoli. We were several weeks at Imbros, bivouacked on a sandy plain, very plain and exceedingly sandy, no shelter of any kind, about two miles from the Kephalos harbour.

There were a great many troops there, rest camps for the Indians and Australians, also territorials from Gallipoli. We rested there several weeks, being very hard worked in the interim, getting on parade at 5-45 am. We started doing constant practices of night attacks, including night landings from lighters, which night start at 7 or 8 pm. And end at any time up to 3 am. During this period inoculation for cholera took place, two injections at a week's interval. We also were inspected by General Sir Ian Hamilton, who was very complimentary in his remarks, and said he expected great things from the divisions. We were supplied with maps of the district round Smyrna and the coast of Asia Minor. Suddenly about 10.30 on the morning of the 6th Company commanders were told that the move was coming that day.

We had the usual parade at 5.45 am.

There was an officer's conference at 2.30 and maps were supplied us of Suvla Bay district, and the Colonel issued orders for the battalion's section. A, B & C. Cos., under Major Roberts, second in command, were to land at the beach south of the Salt Lake, proceed up the beach about 200 yards., and form line with flank platoons in fours, then wheel half left., which would bring us north east and attack the hill Lala Baba. The orders were, no loading, bayonet only. D. Co, were to be in a separate lighter with headquarters, and were to picket the south end of the Salt Lake. The orders for the Brigade were to move north east of Lala Baba along the spit of land by the sea, move east round Salt Lake to a certain point, then turn south to Ali Bey Chee-sun. It was not known if the Salt Lake contained water at this time of the year. The men carried 2 days iron rations, which were told would have to last 4, 2 empty sand-bags, and of course full water bottles, these being filled half an hour before we moved out. Instructions were given that it was unknown when they could be renewed; therefore no water was to be used during the night. The men also carried 220 rounds of ammunition. We travelled exceedingly light, leaving our packs, and wearing a haversack on the shoulders. Everyone had a white patch sewn on the of his haversack, and two white arm bands, also a little triangular piece of tin cut from a biscuit box, tied onto the corner of the haversack. This has been found very effective in a line of infantry attacking hills, as it shoes up clearly like a heliograph, and enables the gunners to support an attack very close to the enemy. We marched out at quarter to four, and we loaded on two lighters which were towed by destroyers, the destroyers also being packed with troops. We were towed from the bow of the destroyer, steering ourselves. The lighter too has a little engine of its own which can do about 6 miles an hour. It was an exceedingly dark night, almost pitch black. As we neared the peninsula we travelled slower and slower, creeping along eventually. There were search-lights moving from the direction Achi Baba, two of them seemed to pick us up. We had

been told by the Colonel that the Brigade was covering the landings, and the 6th Yorkshire was covering the Brigade, so that the Yorkshire Brigade in that respect had been honoured by selection. As we neared the shore under our own engines we were greeted with a burst of rifle fire. C. Co. had received certain separate instructions. They were on the left flank of the line, the companies being disposed, A. centre, B. right flank and C. left. C. company was responsible for taking the small hill, marked as 20 on the map, near the Cape opposite the Salt Lake, also for the duty of clearing that little Cape of the enemy, it being expected that there would be a signal post situated there. (*About 20 men bayoneted*). Owing to the landing being effected under fire we did not act altogether according to the programme.

This is not unknown in connection with night attacks. We could only get the men off the lighter in file, mostly in single file. The officers sitting on the base of the bridge landed first and marshalled the men as they came off. As they moved forward from the sea shore they were immediately engulfed in darkness of the night, it being impossible to see a body of troops at a few yards distance. When almost 25 men of C. Co had disembarked Lieut. Lambert came back and said that they were ready to move off. I said I had not yet got the men off the lighter belonging to my company. He returned to his company and did not see him again. (*Killed Lala Baba*). The two companies must have moved off without waiting for us, and it seemed to me that they may have been drawn by the fire which was slightly to our right when we moved north. When our company had disembarked, and had been formed in line facing north with flanked platoons in fours, we moved north, the left flank having instructions keep in touch with sea. We came to hill 20, a low ridge but very rocky and very steep, and the part that I climbed necessitated it been done with the aid of ones hands, as well as ones feet. We found a good Turkish trench on this which we occupied without trouble. I then moved up and down the company, firing going on all the time on our right flank, and spoke to the officers; also Co. Sergeant Major Simpson, No 10 platoon, was on the left flank, as I had given them orders to clear the little Cape. (*They bayoneted 18 Turks*) I also saw Lieut. Appleyard (*Killed a few days later*) marshal his platoon and proceed to his allotted work. There were two little rises marked on the map down to the Cape. I ordered him to rush them both, bayonet everybody he found there, as I did not want any prisoners at that time of the night, and smash up the signalling apparatus, if any, cut the wires &c. and rejoin me on hill 20. We then waited a short while, during which I received a message from Lieut. Appleyard that he was at the bottom of the first hill, and asking for No 11 platoon. As I had not expected there would be more than a score of men at the signalling post I sent orders to carry it out with No 10 platoon alone. Just then I heard a heavy burst of rifle fire to our front, and saw a red flare burning on the crest of Lala Baba. This crest showed up clearly against the sky line, it being the only thing one could distinguish. I heard a faint cheer also, but did not hear any indication of complete success (*clearing Nibrunesi point*). I therefore ordered the company, less 1 platoon, to advance. We halted before we got to the base of the hill, and I gave instructions to Lieut. Worsley (*Wounded in attack*) to take our right flank, and endeavour to keep the line complete. Lieut. Wilson (*killed*) was on the left flank, and moved about the centre. Capt. A C White had been left in Imbros, sick. Lieut. Eadon, (*Killed*) also sick, and Lieut. Dawney reserve Machine-gun Officer, as 1st. reinforcement, with 160 odd men. On arriving at the base of Lala Baba I ordered a charge and ran up the hill. About three quarters of the way up we came upon a Turkish trench, very narrow and flush with the ground. We ran over this, and they fired into our rear, firing going on at this time from several directions. I shouted out that the Yorkshire regiment was coming in order to avoid running into our own people. We ran on, and about 12 paces further on, so far as I can judge, came to another trench, which we also crossed. We were again fired into from the rear. I ordered the Company to jump back into the second trench and we got into this, which was so narrow that wherever you were you had to stop, it being quite impossible for one man to pass another, or even to walk up it, unless you moved sideways. Another difficulty was that if there were any wounded or dead men in the bottom of the trench it was impossible to avoid treading on them in passing. There was a little communication trench running from right to left behind me, and whenever I shouted an order, a Turk, who appeared to be in this trench, fired at me, from a distance apparently 5 or 10 yards. One of our men on my left was sitting on a prisoner, and there were four wounded or dead men just in the bottom of the trench near me I chucked out several Turkish rifles, in case Turks were shamming, and took a clip from of them, which I brought home as my sole trophy. I had some

difficulty in getting anybody to fire down the communication trench in order to quiet the enterprising Turk who was endeavouring to pot me with great regularity, but eventually got him (bayoneted). We had at this time not picked up any of the remainder of the battalion, so far as I could ascertain. I therefore ordered another charge over the crest of the hill which was just in front of us. We ran on, shouting that the Yorkshires were coming. A little down the reverse slope we came across groups of men, (*Own men scattered thru' loss of officers*) several of whom were just lying about apparently awaiting orders, and one group on the left was scrapping with some Turks in a trench a few yards distant from them. In response to shouting I got calls from two directions and picked up 2nd Lieut. Whitworth and 2nd Lieut. Simpson. These were all the officers present then. I formed such of the battalion as could be picked up into line facing north east that was the further base of the hill in the direction our orders were to proceed, and ordered another charge down to the base of the hill facing a further beach which was afterwards known as A. Beach, where another brigade was to land – the 34th. I expected to find a Turkish trench commanding this beach, and gave orders to occupy it when we came across it, which they duly did, and I instructed Lieut. Whitworth with his platoon, to mop up round the crest of the hill generally, and clear out any Turks who might be still lurking there, it being so dark as to be impossible to see whether the ground were clear or not, and the Turks having the advantage of knowing the ground, would of course slip about out of our way. I heard Lieut. Whitworth encouraging his men round the crest of the hill. Simpson was very lame, having fallen down a 10-ft. trench or redoubt, and hurt his back, and could only hobble along. I heard later that Major Roberts was wounded (*and Died of wounds*) and that the Colonel was killed. I sent back a message at 12 o'clock (*midnight*) (*Written*) to the Brigadier, to say that the Yorkshire regiment had taken Lala Baba and occupied the trenches on the base of North side commanding the further beach, and that we had lost practically all of our officers. Our casualties amongst officers were Col. Chapman, Major Roberts, Capt. Peel, the Adjutant, Lieut. Adcock, Medical Officer, Capt. Morgan, Capt. W. Chapman, Lieut. Bruce, Lieut. Lambert, Capt. Heron, Capt. Randerson, 2/Lieut. Frank and 2/Lieut White, Lieut. Worsley, Lieut. Wilson and 2/Lieut. Simpson badly hurt, also the Battn, Sgt Major. A little later we heard a battalion coming up the crest of the hill. There was some firing, not much, and orders shouted. We waited for them to join us at the base of the hill, but they did not do so. I went half way up the hill and found it was the West Yorks, and shouted to them to come down as the Yorkshire Regiment were at the base of the hill. We could not get them down for a little while. Later they came up and I directed them on our left flank when they fell in between ourselves and the Salt Lake. I heard afterwards from wounded men on Hospital ships that they were fired into from one flank and that Capt. Hore, one of their Company Commanders, was shot, and that they received orders to dig in. Some while after this another battalion came up the hill, which they charged, and proceeded reorganise on the crest and charge down to the bottom. We had difficulty in stopping their doing this. At about 12.15 or 2.30 am. The Brigadier arrived with the remaining battalion belonging to the brigade, and they lay down close to our rear, I reported to the brigadier, and asked him if he had received the written message I had sent back by an orderly, to which he replied "No". I heard afterwards the man was bayoneted by the Turks, found with message next day in his hand and retained there as an orderly.

I acquainted the Brigadier with the fact that we were only 2½ officers, and that we were unable to continue in advance of the Brigade. At this time I had no idea of what losses we had suffered in the ranks, but so far as my own company was concerned I had no officers, no quarter-master Sergeant, and no company Sergeant Major. (*Both Killed*) I later learnt that Lieut. Wilson was bayoneted and Lieut. Worsley shot through the lungs. We received orders to follow in support of the Brigade, (*as we had lost heavily*) which advanced about 2.30 or 2.45am. North along the sandy spit. Previous to this, and before anyone joined up with us I heard that there was an attack on our right flank, but on going to see what was the matter discovered Major Bates of the Manchester's, who had come with his Company to settle the sniping from Lala Baba. I knew Major Bates very well, having gone through a signalling Course at Aldershot with him 16 years ago. I told him that the Yorkshire Regiment were in possession of Lala Baba and that we did not intend to share it with the Manchester's or anybody else. I pointed out that there must be lots of hills stiff with Turks not very far away, of which they could have their choice, also that we were at that time engaged in clearing up the Turkish snipers, all of which he took in good-naturedly,

and went away, exchanging mutual wishes for good luck. He was killed not long afterwards I heard, the Manchester's having done very well indeed.

As the brigade moved north we were with portions of the 34th Brigade, whose lighters had grounded before they reached the shore, those getting ashore had therefore to wade, the lighters being unable to return and bring the rest off the Destroyers. The 32nd Brigade therefore received orders to halt, lie down, and let the 34th Brigade get clear. This never occurred, as portions of them kept landing in boats belonging to the ships. While we were all waiting, as the battalion seemed somewhat small, we went back to see if we had got them all up from the Lala Baba trenches. It was naturally very difficult to handle the men with only Whitworth and myself able to run about. We got more men up. I forgot to say that while we were waiting at the foot of Lala Baba for other units to join up, high explosive shell was coming over us intended for the beaches where the landing was taken place. We found one telephone wire in our final trench at Lala Baba cut it, and we also sent back a few prisoners, but not very many. I heard later that quite a few surrendered as it became light, who had been lying "perdu" meanwhile. When we had got what was left of the battalion together I found that the Brigade had gone on, and we seemed to be with the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Lancashire Fusiliers. I heard that they (the bdl. 327) had crossed the Salt Lake, so started off in that direction. We moved in a line of platoons in fours. The enemy were using shrapnel. The Salt Lake was more or less dry. You could walk across it, and we came to the bank on the east side which would be its boundary when full. There was a disposition on the part of the troops here to occupy this bank, so as we were very short of officers, and I thought it would be difficult to get a move on if we once halted, I ran up the bank and called to the battalion to advance. It was still fairly dark at this time. Just over the crest of the bank troops were grouped in an irregular line forming clumps of men; in fact the units seemed to be very much mixed. I moved on towards Chocolate Hills thinking that the battalion was following. I noticed that men were very prone to lie down for no particular reason, this applies generally. The country was plain with scrub patches and occasional trees. The hills east seemed to be about a couple of miles distant, and those to the north about half or three-quarters of a mile. I tried to get the men in my vicinity to keep the advance going, as although there was fairly heavy rifle fire, like most night firing, much of it was high and the shrapnel was badly timed, and was bursting high. The high explosive was generally carrying on to the beaches. I saw Capt. Dutton here of the West Yorks, (*severely wounded in the attack*), and got quite a move on at this time, occasionally getting a steady double, but there was not sufficient order. The unit appeared to be mixed and the advance dried up of itself in a little (*men lying down*).

A fairly heavy enfilade fire was coming from the hills north east. I moved along the left flank, thinking that if we could get up the nearer hills first we could sweep along those and stop the enfilade fire, and bring the left flank forward and charge in a sort of half moon. I found the left flank a thin line of men with some N.C.O's but the line was ragged I pushed them up level, and walked down to the extreme left flank I found Capt. Lupton of the West Yorks, (*Killed in the attack*), and ordered him to advance in section rushes from the left, he leading the first section, and I would push the rest up after him. It was necessary to tick the men off, as if on practice, by saying "from here to the left rush". In this manner we get quite close to the foot of the hills, about 150 to 200 yds I should judge, but then had become separated from the main body I therefore told Capt. Lupton to hold the men there, as he had a number of west Yorks with him. There were some 50 to 70 men there mixed units, and I told him I would go back and bring up some more men before we charged the hills, as I knew there were a number of men, who during the darkness of the advance, had not come forward. On walking back about 500 yds. I picked up, in various groups, some 50 men, and placed them in line facing the enemy under some N.C.O's. I told them to wait while I brought a group of 5 men in, I saw on the right, lying down behind a bush. On going over to this group, while I was ordering them to join, I was hit by soft lead round bullet smashing the upper part of my left arm completely. I got one of the men there – Private J. Cole, 11873 Y. Co. 8th Duke of Wellington's Regiment to put on my field dressing, and made him fix up a tourniquet with the handle of his entrenching instrument. There were no stretchers or ambulances working at this time, which was somewhere about 6 a.m. On Saturday morning, so I thought I would make a push to get down to the beach before my strength went. I started to walk in with my right arm round his shoulders, he holding my left hand and the handle of the entrenching instrument. As we walked back across the enemy's front, rifle fire suddenly

became very much more intense, a very rapid fire suddenly breaking out, and I saw that our line generally was falling back, and I heard afterwards that they had waited below the bank of the Salt Lake until reorganised and advanced at 5 p.m. taking Chocolate Hills, so that our operations, which were intended to take place on Friday night and early on Saturday morning, actually took place on Saturday evening. This must have given the Turks time to bring up considerable reinforcements. Six hours in a dressing station, absolutely unsheltered from sun or shrapnel, where the medical officer of the Northumberland Fusiliers, tied me up very successfully & a stretcher journey of about 3½ hours in the afternoon, 2½ hours in a row-boat on a stretcher, where I got wet to the skin in a tropical rainstorm, which left me a legacy of 5 inches of water in the stretcher, and arriving just too late to get on to the "Soudan" Hospital Ship, a further journey to the "Valdavia" brought me at about 6.45 p.m. on deck, where I arrived with a very healthy attack of ague amongst other ills. And that is all I know personally about the attack of Lala Baba and the battle of Suvla Bay, both of which cost the 6th Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment very heavily indeed, our only consolation being that we carried out the most difficult task assigned to us, unaided, and have not let down the reputation gained by the regiment gained in France. Lala Baba itself was exemplification of:-

"Better far, one crowded hour of glorious life than a cycle of Cathay"

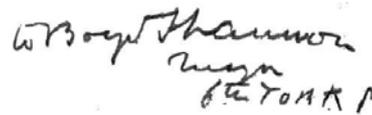
To the relatives of those who have fallen I take this opportunity of tendering my sincere sympathy. It is only possible to say:-

"How can a man die better than facing fearful odds; for the ashes of his fathers and the alters of his gods"

Where all behaved so well it is difficult to single out individuals. But 2/Lieut. Simpson merits special mention, as he accounted for half a dozen Turks with the bayonet, and three with his revolver at Lala Baba.

Lieut. Whitworth was of the greatest assistance to me when all the other officers had fallen, and exposed himself freely when there were Turkish snipers all around us, in assisting to rally the battalion and commanding his platoon.

W Boyd Shannon
Major
6th Yorks



Post script

Lieut. Worsley, when going back down southern slope of hill to rally and bring up men, was shot thru' lungs. Captain Dutton, West Yorks, who came to find out where we were in advance of his Regiment, after 12 which midnight, found him. & Lieut. Worsley gave him all information he could, telling him, we had gone over hill north east.

He lay all night there, without aid, & in morning insisted on men he thought less severely wounded being taken up by stretcher bearers first.

He came out of Hospital, Imbros, having had a severe attack of Dysentery, just before we left for the attack .