



# The ASC History Newsletter

## 100th Anniversary of World War I:

### Gallipoli

This  
**MONTH** in  
military  
history ...

- 1760: Cherokee attacked Fort Prince George
- 1781: The Battle of Cowpens
- 1787: Shay's Rebellion
- 1865: Fort Fisher falls to Union Forces
- 1915: Coast Guard formed
- 1917: American forces returned to USA after failing to find Pancho Villa
- 1933: Adolf Hitler is made Chancellor
- 1942: Wannsee Conference
- 1944: Operation Panther
- 1951: Operation Thunderbolt
- 1968: Operation Coronado X began
- 1968: Battle of Khe Sanh began
- 1986: Space Shuttle Challenger exploded after take-off
- 1991: Persian Gulf War began
- 2002: Operation Enduring Freedom -Philippines (OEF-P) began
- 2003: Operation Mongoose in Afghanistan

When one considers World War I, they may think of the stalemate on the western front in the trenches, or the unyielding bloodbath on the eastern front as Russia staved off an invasion in the middle of a revolution. One might find themselves quick to forget the collapse of the last old-world empire, the Ottoman Empire. The collapse of the six hundred year old empire would result in the subsequent destabilization of western Asia.

The campaign to establish a foothold in the Dardanelles came in multiple phases, after allied forces attempted to take the Gallipoli peninsula. From February through March of 1915, Allied navies had attempted and failed to suppress the German and Ottoman positions. The British would blame inferior ships, forces of nature, and an extremely mobile Ottoman army.

This would not be the last time the Allies would work to take Gallipoli. On 25 April 1915, combined forces from Britain's colonial assets appeared off the coast of what they would call Anzac Cove in the Aegean Sea. Supported by British naval artillery, soldiers from New Zealand, Australia, India, and Ireland took to the beaches in a push to cut the Ottoman army off from the Germans.

Early in the morning, six companies from the 9th, 10th and 11th Australian Battalions, with six more companies following in pursuit, including soldiers from the 12th Battalion. Turkish forces had spotted the boats early, opening fire on them as they approached. However, the landing force pressed on despite the loss of six ships.

Before noon, three New Zealand Brigades had landed at Anzac Cove under heavy fire. 3rd Brigade had lost most of its forces by that afternoon, and the 1st Brigade had also sustained heavy losses. In spite of

this, the combined expeditionary forces continued to sweep inland at a steady pace.

The approaching Australian forces were only halted by Mustafa Kemal and his 19th Division. Kemal, who would later become the first president of Turkey, rallied Turkish forces, by declaring "I do not order you to attack, I order you to die."

By the end of the first day, both the Ottomans and the Allies had suffered major losses at Anzac Cove.

Further south at Cape Helles, the 1st Battalion of Ireland were provided cover by the guns of the Royal Navy as the main force swept inland. General Ian Hamilton, who was overseeing the Gallipoli landings, ordered that remaining forces left at V Beach move to support W Beach, ending the landings at V Beach in what was considered a failure.

W Beach was heavily mined, and lined with barbed wire and trip wires. It was flanked by two machine gun positions, making landing even more perilous. Supporting fire from the Royal Navy were lifted before the 1st British Battalion landed. These fires failed to suppress the Ottomans, and they did not even sever the trip wires hidden under the water. As a result, many soldiers drowned after sinking with their equipment.

By May, both sides had lost massive amounts of forces either attacking or counterattacking each other. Few, if any gains were made by either side outside of a few hundred yards at the expense of almost 10,000 soldiers. Fighting and death in no-mans-land became so severe, that a temporary truce was agreed to, so that the dead could be collected.

The inhospitable conditions of the summer months on the Gallipoli peninsula added to the strain on both the invading Allied forces and the occupying German and Ottoman forces.

The number of dead had increased even more, and decay led to unsanitary and vile conditions.

The fall and winter months took their tolls, as the weather continued to be inhospitable for both forces, leaving little to no reprieve from the war on the front lines.

Ultimately after 9 months of fighting on the peninsula, 200,000 were either dead or wounded. No gains were made by the Allied forces, making the invasion at Gallipoli a failure.

However, the aftermath of Gallipoli and the actions of Ottoman soldiers who shared victory with German forces led to a disharmony among the Central Powers ranks. The German General in charge Otto Von Sanders sought to leave his post, though this request was ultimately refused.

Gallipoli serves as an embodiment of some of the true horrors of war. Relentless fighting, poor conditions, morale issues, corruption, and disorganization factoring into a battle where there are no spoils. The men who fought in Gallipoli gave all for their empires. In the case of the British, that sacrifice would be for naught. For the Ottoman's it would only be a temporary security, for the collapse of their empire was still guaranteed.

