

The Gallipoli Campaign - from April 2015

The ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign was conceived largely by Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. He felt that by landing in Turkey, forces could travel through the Dardanelle Straits, knock Turkey (the Ottoman Empire), a German ally, out of the war whilst establishing a supply line to Russia.

Sadly, weeks before the landings, the Royal Navy had tried to force a passage through the Dardanelles alone. This failed emphatically but alerted the Turks to the possibility of invasion and gave time to build defences. Surprise was lost.

The landings began at first light on 25 April. Most of the beaches were opposed by Turkish units and fighting was bloody with allied troops caught in the open in wire and other obstacles. The 2nd Battalion, Hampshire Regiment landed from SS River Clyde but this attack failed until at nightfall they could fight their way ashore. Many Hampshiremen died that day.

On X beach in the west, British troops landed unopposed but failed to exploit this advantage by not moving inland to cut off the forward Turkish troops. British soldiers had just finished training with no experience of battle. Leadership was also poor through lack of experience. There was, however, no lack of courage that day with many Victoria Crosses won.

Mobile fighting soon gave way to static trench warfare with neither side being able to break through. Troops had to endure blazing sun, flies, poor food, boredom, disease and constant harrying fire from the enemy.

A second landing was made in August but this failed to penetrate inland and the deadlock continued.

The peninsular was finally evacuated in January 1916; ironically, in a text-book withdrawal with no battle casualties and to



the complete surprise of the Turks. The failed campaign had lasted 8 months and resulted in 115,000 dead on the allied side and more on the Turkish.

A number of Buriton men were involved at Gallipoli – some with fatal consequences: Charles Pink of Bones Lane was seriously wounded on board HMS Prince of Wales and died later; Joseph Marriner was one of the early attackers, wounded on 29 April; Ernest Rean of the High Street was also wounded and subsequently died of enteric fever; George Henry Harding of Weston survived but sadly lost his life later in the war; Buriton's popular postman, John Bridle, was injured; and Thomas Aldred, from Weston, was in the Royal Marines who replaced other troops as part of the withdrawal.

If you have any information about Buriton and the First World War, please email heritage@buriton.org.uk