



Army

Edition 1360

September 24, 2015

The soldiers' newspaper

Smn Daniel Graham, of HMAS Stuart, and Pte Trent Clark, of 2RAR, prepare 81mm mortar rounds for firing at Beecroft Weapons Range during Exercise Joint Strike.

Photo by Cpl David Cotton



SWIFT STRIKE

Soldiers and sailors of the Amphibious Task Group share skills on Exercise Joint Strike

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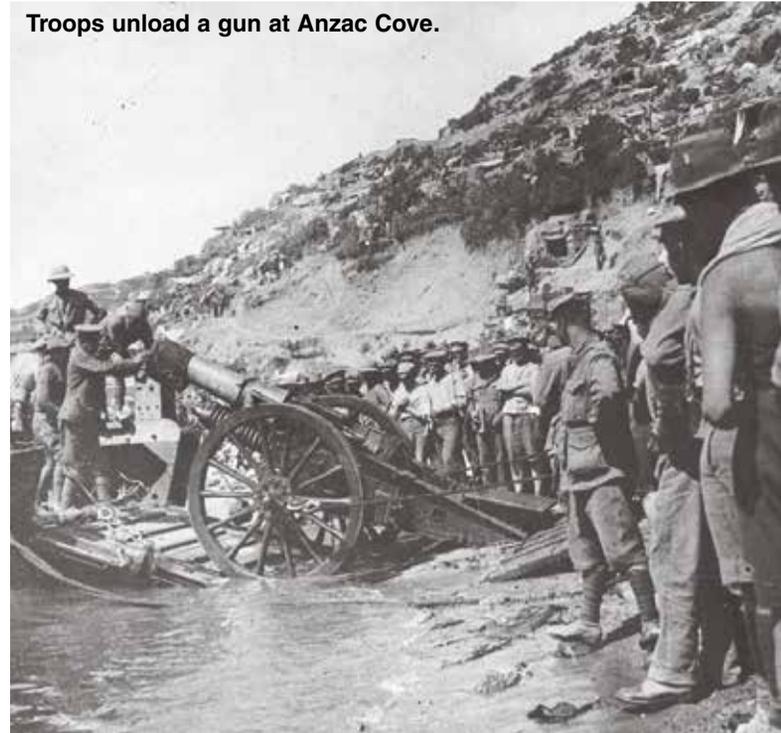
EX KOWARI SUCCESS - P2-3

AACAP - Special Liftout

An Ottoman artillery crew with a camouflaged gun at Gallipoli.
Photo courtesy AWM



Troops unload a gun at Anzac Cove.



Lessons to be learnt

Artillery throughout the ages is still shaping the warfare we experience today, Sgt Dave Morley reports.

THE second instalment of the RAA Historical Company's (RAAHC) firepower seminars took place at ADFA on August 26.

A panel of artillery and military history experts shared their intricate knowledge before a large audience.

ANU Research Fellow Dr Rhys Crawley spoke on 'Combined Arms or Not - Artillery and the 1915 Approach to War' and 'Artillery Logistics over the Shore'.

He said Gallipoli offered some unique lessons, including the command system in joint and combined operations, the state of naval gunfire support and the peculiarities of sustainment in an expeditionary operation.

"In 1915, British doctrine and operational theory viewed artillery as an accessory, and subsidiary, to the infantry, rather than an autonomous arm," he said.

"At Gallipoli, plans developed without due consideration of the firepower situation and irrespective of the opinions of artillery experts.

"Then they secretly kept details of the artillery requirements from the brigades, leaving planners with no time for ammunition stockpiling or registration of fire."

The enduring lesson here is the importance for commanders to strike the best balance between maintaining

operational security and ensuring timely passage of information.

On the topic of logistics, Dr Crawley said one of the principal tests a commander in amphibious warfare faced was the problem of logistics over the shore - a test that remained equally relevant today.

"Because of a lack of facilities closer to the front, most ships bound for Gallipoli had to be disembarked, re-sorted, re-packed into ration sizes rather than bulk and reloaded at Alexandria before being forwarded to the intermediate base at Mudros Harbour on Lemnos Island," he said.

"This was a timely process and caused considerable delay to the logistic system."

Dr Crawley said, as is the case in most amphibious campaigns, the real difficulties were faced in getting the stores and supplies ashore, organising the beach maintenance area and then distributing them to the troops.

Still today, sufficient terminal support capabilities are crucial to a mission's success.

"Further adding to the logistics delay was the confusion surrounding who was responsible for disembarking the items - add to this the confusion of enemy fire and the threat of bad weather," he said.

Maj-Gen Paul Stevens (retd), who served as a lieutenant in 1 Fd Regt RAA in South Vietnam from February 1969

to February 1970, addressed the gathering on the commanders at Anzac and their use of artillery.

According to Maj-Gen Stevens, the gunners at Gallipoli faced many challenges, including that the flat trajectory field and naval guns were ill-suited to the broken terrain.

"To make matters worse, because of the trouble in finding gun positions at Anzac, theatre commander Gen Ian Hamilton redeployed five field batteries to Helles, leaving Lt-Gen William Birdwood with about a third of a normal corps' artillery," he said.

"In practice, ships and ammunition were limited, the guns could not hit defiladed positions and the available sea charts and land maps used to determine firing data did not align.

"When Lt-Gen Birdwood divided Anzac in defensive sectors, he created a problem because often the guns covering a particular area were located in a different sector under someone else's command.

"So to facilitate getting fire from guns in another sector, they set up a corps artillery telephone."

The importance of effective coordination and liaison between adjoining sectors remains a fundamental factor in effective land operations.

Maj Paul Harris, of AHQ, spoke about the relatively new concept of counter-battery fire at Gallipoli.

He said what was seen at Gallipoli

was a watershed moment for field artillery transitioning from being an infantry support weapon designed to smash infantry tactics, such as squares, columns and linear frontal assaults, or thwart cavalry as seen in the previous century, into a battlefield operating system in its own right.

"Counter-battery fire, as we as modern-day gunners understand and practise it, did not exist as such in 1915," he said.

"When we compare the artillery of 1914-15 to that of late-1916 onwards, we see an incredible difference and no more so than in counter-battery operations."

Maj Harris said by the end of WWI the Royal Artillery, numbering more than one million men, was larger than the Royal Navy, the pre-war balance of power dominant super-weapon, and artillery was thought by some to have inflicted as much as 90 per cent of all casualties.

University of NSW Professor Mesut Uyar, a former Turkish Army officer with operational service in Afghanistan, told the story of the Ottoman artillery at Anzac.

He said as a result of reforms during the late-18th century, the Ottoman artillery corps became the best trained and armed branch of the Army and remained so until the final collapse in 1918. "It was a general policy to man the artillery units with selected officer

candidates and recruits," he said. "The Ottoman Military Engineering School in Istanbul provided high-quality engineering education to officer candidates according to the French model, whereas NCOs and recruits passed through intense German-style training.

"At the beginning of the war, one of the most significant problems confronting the artillery corps was lack of modern guns and shortage of ammunition."

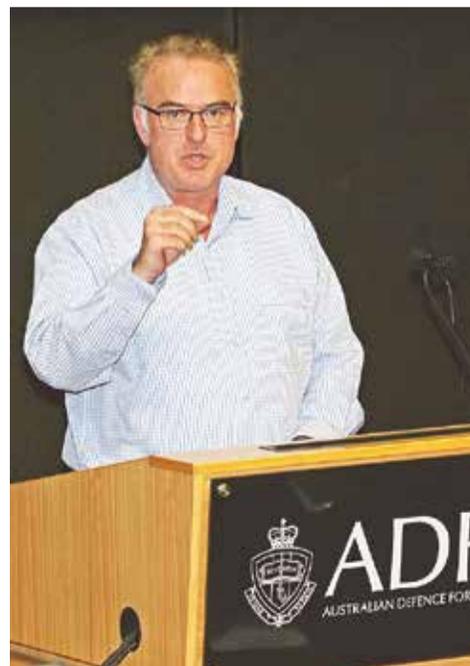
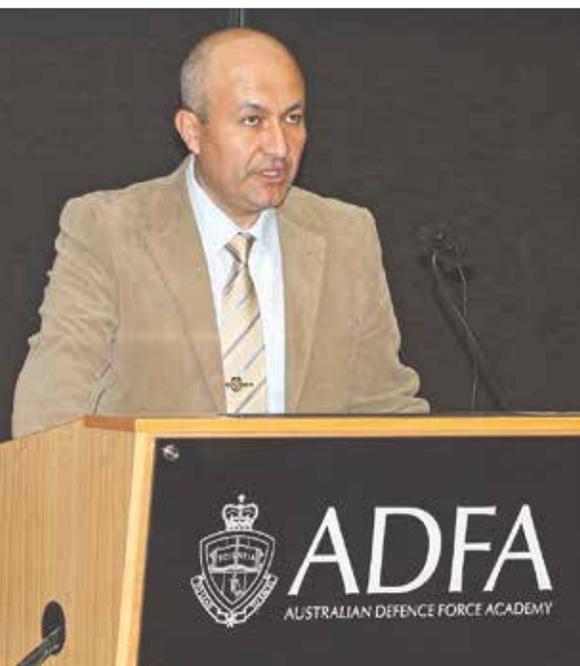
Importantly, the Ottoman high command took serious and careful stock of these setbacks, and conducted an open and honest full review of its artillery arm to ensure lessons were learned and understood by the organisation as a whole.

The review and reforms that followed had highly effective results that paid off in the Great War that was to come.

Prof Uyar said the Dardanelles Straits and Gallipoli peninsula had always been part of an organised fortress command.

"In fact, almost every artillery officer, particularly the heavy artillery branch, served at least one term in the Dardanelles Fortified Zone Command prior to 1914," he said.

The next RAAHC seminar will be held in May 2016 with the topic of discussion being the massive expansion of the Australian Field Artillery and the arrival of the AIF on the Western Front for the 1916 offensives.



University of NSW Professor Mesut Uyar, a former Turkish Army officer, left, and Maj Paul Harris, of AHQ, speak at the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company's Gallipoli firepower seminar.

Photos by Sgt Dave Morley

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