

AUGUST 1915

GALLIPOLI TAKES ITS TOLL

In the unbearably hot summer on the Gallipoli peninsular it was decided to launch a fresh amphibious assault on 7th August at Sulva Bay. There 20,000 men were landed in an attempt to gain another bridgehead and link up with the ANZACS further south. Mustapha Kemal, however, now in charge of the Turkish northern section, rushed in reinforcements determined to pen us down close to the sea. By the 9th he had succeeded and no further ground was gained. The town lost 5 men here this month, but the best insight may be gained from looking at the experience of a local survivor of this shallow static enclave.

William Bain Gilchrist, born on 17th June 1893 in Old Deer Aberdeen, lived with his father Duncan, mother Christine, 3 sisters and a brother in Beech Lane Wilmslow. He was first a messenger boy in a telephone office and later a “bleacher” at James Brooks in Handforth. A member of the TA since 1912, he joined the 1/7th battalion Cheshire Regiment (1368 and later 290088), 159th brigade, 53rd (Welsh) division. Sailing from Devonport, via Alexandria, Port Said, the troops in the so-called Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, had no idea where they were going. When the Cheshires landed on the 8th August – exactly one year after the company marched out of Wilmslow to join the battalion for mobilisation - the military position begged description: the previous day’s assault had been severely mauled; the men had no ammunition except what they carried, no transport and no artillery support. Precise orders were either unclear or non-existent. Medical supplies were confined to the contents of doctors’ haversacks and there was “no food, no tools, little water, nothing except what they stood up in”.





Landing at Gallipoli



William Owen & William West are both remembered on this plaque.

The men tried to advance over salt lakes steadily uphill over often burning scrubland. The Cheshire battalions (1/4th, 1/6th and 1/7th) showed incredible bravery in spite of the hopeless nightmare of indecision that surrounded them. William, himself, was bayoneted in the leg on 10th August and was eventually moved to Malta. He was later discharged as “physically unfit but of very good conduct”. He suffered from vertigo as well and was awarded a gratuity of £37.10 in 1917. He had 3 medals and was awarded the Silver War Badge back home to avoid the “white feather treatment”. He had no disability pension and in later life lived in Oak Villas, Water Lane and worked in the Victoria Factory of Brunner Mond in Northwich. He died in 1965. His son, Phillip, formerly of Capesthorne Road now resides in Bollington with his wife Susan.

On the same day that William was wounded a **fellow member of the 1/7th** was killed – **William George Owen** (1226) aged 25. He was born in Bangor in 1889 and in 1911 was living in Church Street with his father Samuel, mother Mary, 6 younger brothers and a sister. He was a lamplighter by trade. He later married Annie and they lived at Booth Terrace, South Oak Lane. He is remembered on Helles Memorial, in St Bart’s, on the civic memorial and in the Methodist Church. His nephew, David, now lives in Oerlinghausen, Germany with his wife, Annaliese, whom he first met when doing National Service in Germany 50 years ago. After National Service he became a regular soldier and served for nearly 38 years in first The Rifle Brigade and then the Royal Green Jackets. For his contribution to Anglo German relations he was made a Freeman of the City of London in 2009. His father Llewellyn (William’s brother) was also in the Cheshire’s and part of the Rhineland army of occupation in 1919 and actually got a steel tooth made for him by a German dentist!



Another member of the 1/7th **Cheshires** to die was **Sergeant William West** (1016) who died of wounds on 22nd and is buried at Hill 10 Cemetery Gallipoli along with 548 others. Commemorated on the civic memorial and in the Methodist Church (Mission Memorial), he was the son of John and Eliza West of The Lodge, Holly Road and the husband of Mary of Pexhill, Henbury.

Other regiments had local casualties too. On the 9th August **Arthur Wood** (17117) of the 6th **battalion East Lancashires** died aged 20. He too is remembered in the Wilmslow Methodist Church as well as in St Bartholomew's, on the town memorial and at Helles. He lived at Hill Top, Manchester Road with his father Samuel, mother Anna and sister Martha and had worked as a calico printer before the war.

Arthur's battalion was New Army alongside other Lancashire battalions in the 38th brigade. **Frederick Howard Morrell** (15142) was part of this group and he sadly perished aged 26, with the **Loyal North Lancashire 6th** further south alongside the ANZACS on the 11th August. Before the war, he had lived on Moor Lane with his widowed mother, Jane and cousins Frederick and George. By 1915 he had married Adeline Hulme and lived at 26 Lowthorpe Street, Moss Side. The third member of Wilmslow Methodist to die this month (this time the Hawthorn Street church located where Chapel Court is now) he is also remembered in St Bart's and on the civic memorial. He is interred in Embarkation Pier Cemetery, Gallipoli along with 281 others.



Arthur Wood is remembered on this Plaque.

The last August fatality was **Alfred Sprowson** (18256). The family grave of the Sprowson family in Wilmslow Cemetery reads "Alfred Sprowson ... beloved son of Robert and Ellen Sprowson of Styal ...died of wounds August 29th 1915 aged 27 years at the Dardanelles". He was part of the 29th division, 1st battalion



Border Regiment and was a regular soldier serving as a Lance Corporal in Burma before the war. He had landed at Cape Helles on 25th April and is buried in Cairo War Memorial Cemetery. In 1911 he was residing at 30 Oak Cottages, Styal with his father Robert and mother Ellen. He and his brother Frank both worked as weavers in the cotton mill. Alfred's name can be found on the Styal memorial.

The August toll in Gallipoli was not limited to our fatalities as the local paper revealed:

Captain Rigby, commander of the Wilmslow Company (H) of the battalion was hit in the chest.

Private Albert Goldstraw initially stated as missing but was wounded and in hospital in Lemnos.

Private S Renshaw of Styal invalided home with shock. He was blown yards in the air by a mine and his clothes were torn to shreds, but escaped serious physical injury.

Arthur Sant, William Gilchrist and Bertie Taylor all wounded and in hospital in Malta.

Private John Livesey of Bollin Walk shot in the left hand and wrote to his parents he thought he would lose a finger.

John Garner of Church Street wounded.

Private Percy Renshaw of Styal sent to a Liverpool Hospital.

Private Brown of Handforth in a Manchester Hospital.

James Barrow shot in the leg.

Sgt Colin Goodall shot in the shoulder.

Sydney Lea wounded in the thigh.

Lt WD Kenyon reported missing.

This costly ill-fated Dardanelles campaign drifted on until we finally withdrew in January 1916.

Jon Armstrong and Alan Cooper, Wilmslow Historical Society
with contributions from Phillip Gilchrist (Bollington) and
David Owen (Oerlinghausen, North Rhine Westphalia, Germany)

