

Gustav Heinrich Drabsch

Photo and copy of interview with thanks to Mark McCulloch, grandson of Heinrich Drabsch.

Heinrich Drabsch, identified as 'Yep', was interviewed for the *Sunday Mail* on 24 April, 1965. The following is a snippet from that interview...



... Yes, it was a long way from Mount Pleasant and old Mrs. Charles Bax, who, at our farewell, had hung bags of camphor around our necks to keep away all manner of ills.

And it was a long way from Mannum and the presentation ceremony just before the coach left for Birdwood, on that day in early September, 1914. The townspeople had presented me with a watch. I carried that watch right through. And you know a funny thing about it – it never worked....

... What got me a baker, on this ship, heading for who knows what?

Well, I had always had a hankering for the Army, you know.

I tried to get into the Light Horse as soon as recruiting started. But you had to provide your own horse and I didn't have one.

Mr Lachlan McBean, of Mount Pleasant, gave horses to my boyhood

friends, Murray and Alex Bax, so they could join....

... (arriving at Gallipoli) It was calm, just at dawn, Sunday, but I don't remember thinking then of the time or the date.

No one was worried about that.

The sea was calm, but the rope ladder swung and bashed me against the ship's side.

I was glad to get into the small boat.

But it wasn't comfortable. We were crammed in, and our gear kept us in whatever position we happened to have landed from the ladder.

Dawn was breaking now, and the Turks could see us. They were reaching out a long way with their big guns.

They were really peppering us a long way out.

A lot of poor beggars never reached the beach.

I was really very glad when I got there.

And I was lucky. I was in the bow, with only a couple of feet of water to jump into.

Those at the stern of the boat had deeper water. For some it was too deep, and you didn't stand a chance to swim in all that gear.

Then I was on the beach, and it was damned frightening. Things were whizzing around everywhere.

We had had a lot of reading and lectures about this moment, but it was so different from the books.

It was all so terrible and confused.

I didn't know where Johnny Turk was. I just didn't know which direction to go.

Suddenly the greatest ambition was to get somewhere you could get behind.

There was cover there, but the Turks had it.

There were many clefts in the rocks, but you had to be sure before you got into them that you could get out again.

At one spot we were climbing up a slope and found that the other side was black with Turks.

It was hard to believe for a moment.

Then we just had to hurtle into them, and they into us.

Mind you, we had a bit of an advantage, being on the ridge.

I solved a problem on that beach that had troubled me right through training.

How, I used to wonder, would I ever shoot a man?

It was just instinctive, I found, I didn't think about how easy it became.

It was three days and three nights after the landing before we came back to the beach ... a long time; long and loud and terrible.

We sent some Johnny Turk prisoners back, and I rather got the impression they weren't sorry to be going back, either.

Shrapnel Gully was our highway. We went up it to the line and down it to some sort of rest.

I saw a chap with the donkey. I didn't know he was Simpson then.

I did wonder now and then how a man could break away from his unit and work alone. Where did he get his rations and who answered at roll call?

But it was every man for himself and if he wanted to do it that way, it wasn't my worry.

I passed him one day on my way up Shrapnel Gully, coming down with a man on his donk.

I didn't really give him a second glance.

Further up I met Murray Bax. He was one of the Lost Horse then, as the Light Horsemen who had to leave their mounts in Alexandria called themselves.

"Did you see Alec?" he asked. "He went down on the donkey. He got knocked."

I could not go to the dressing station to see my old friend. I was on my way up to supports that night. Alec died....

...["Yep" left Gallipoli after three months because the Turks lifted a barrage one day just long enough for the Australians to get on a ridge.

When the Barrage came down again "Yep" was shattered by schrapnel.

He walks today though not easily, because a British hospital ship happened to be in the bay. Prompt surgery spared him amputation of a leg.]