

Lt. WALTER TERTIUS MORRICE

1DRL 513

Transcription of handwritten notes of Lt. Walter Tertius Morrice, 1st Light Horse Regiment

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ON FRONT PAGE

Lt. W.T. Morrice 1st Light Horse Regiment AIF died on September 28th 1918 of wounds received in the Battle of Amman. Other details are:

Station Overseer and grazier, of Moss Vale, NSW, born Moss Vale, Educated at Lee-Pullings College Bong Bong NSW, enlisted in the AIF on 10 September 1914 as a private, served in Egypt, Gallipoli, Sinai and Palestine, was wounded (according to his mother) on four occasions; age at time of death, 38.

TEXT

Val's Notes in Gallipoli Trenches copied from original in Constance Scott-Reed's possession. His sister, Miss Gertrude Morrice also had original copy.

On May 11th about 5pm we arrived off the mouth of the Dardanelles on the troopship Devanha and had our first night of actual war. Several of the gunboats were firing shell and shrapnel in shore. From where we anchored we could see the remains of Kum Kale and Seddal Bahr and they had certainly been knocked into a cocked hat. We could also see the base of the British and French armies on the end of the peninsula. An aeroplane was floating up and an enemies gun throwing shrapnel at it, and further inland could be seen trenches and the enemies gunfire. We anchored for about an hour amongst a fleet of transports, gunboats and torpedo craft and then steamed further north up the Gulf of Saros to where the Australians and New Zealand forces were anchored. There we anchored for the first night amongst a mixed fleet of ships. At first we thought we should land overnight and everyone had to get ready but later on the landing was put off till morning. Everyone crowded on deck and wondered where our trenches were and what the morning would bring. Right in front of us was a deep valley on either side of which

was open farmland. On either side off shore was a gunboat with its search light playing up this open country and we learnt afterwards that the search lights were playing outside our position. Soon after dark a terrific rattle of rifle fire and machine guns took place on shore and caused great excitement amongst our men, at last we could smell gunpowder and tomorrow we would be under fire.

May 12th Our boat weighed anchor and moved closer into shore and a couple of torpedo boats came alongside. The troops filed into these and we cast off for the shore. About ¼ mile off we were met by small tugs with barges lashed alongside into which we got and then made a rush for an improvised jetty. All the time expecting to be shelled by the enemy, when close in shore a few bullets whistled past and one struck Eric Dowling who was sitting near me, in the mouth, cut his lip and knocked two front teeth out. This was our first casualty, we landed on a jetty made out of a punt and boards and at once were ordered along the beach and up a slight hollow on the hillside where we were told to take what shelter was available as we could expect shrapnel at any moment. One of the gunboats came in and pounded away at a headland further down. The explosion of the big Lyddite shells was very impressive to my amateur mind. All at once there was a droning whine a swish and a bang and a shower of bullets and shell fell into the water in front; it was our first shrapnel shell and most of us did not want any urging to sit close, for my part I thought the hillside very inadequate cover and wondered would the next shell burst closer. A good many more came over but did no damage. We lunched on the hillside boiling our quarts with the wood we brought with us and about 3pm we got the word to get ready to move. We loaded up our packs and swags and started to file up the valley. I will always feel sorry for a pack horse and have been wondering ever since why so many men in Australia carry their swags. On the road up the Valley we passed a lot of Royal Marines coming back. "Light Horsemen" said one "why, you'd do for heavy artillery" Another said "More mad Australians. You're the ones to fix them".

We could hear rifle shots and the swish of bullets all the way up the valley but did not know where they came from and when we were told to keep to the left of the road and be careful we wondered very much and could not realize that we were in any danger. Now that we know the danger from sniping we think how lucky we were that we had no casualties on our way up. We bivouacked in what was known as Monash Valley. During

the evening a lot of shrapnel burst overhead and all night there seemed to be an awful rattle of rifles and machine guns. S.M. Kirby, S. Paul, S.Mack self and Q.M.S. Davidson lay along a sap and the bullets kept on knocking the dirt down on us. As we did not know where the Turks trenches were we wondered could we be enfiladed and in the morning, Davidson said laughing, in his best Scotch, "Well they are fools, they've been shooting at me all night and have not hit me once". Could not sleep much for the noise. Next morning I found out there was a machine gun quite close to where we lay and it was that which drew the enemy fire. We shed all our badges about 11 o'clock hoisted our packs and started out for Pope's Hill at the head of the valley, the position we were told to hold. It was an awful chivvie up the hill to the trenches and we had to fall in at once. C. Squadron was on the left, B. in the center and A on the right. The trenches were very rough and ready and had the appearance of being constructed under fire and in a hurry. The parapets in lots of places were mainly boxes full of ammunition and dirt, instead of sandbags also wet equipment, and everywhere munitions of war, viz rifles, packs, short ammunition and equipment lay about. There were a lot of dead Turks and our chaps in front of the trenches in fact there were dead bodies to be seen everywhere on the hillside within the fire area. Directly in front of one trench was a gully except on the extreme left where it ran out into the crest of the ridge and on the other side of this gully were the Turkish trenches about on an average 200 yds away. Portions of their trench had been twice taken by our infantry and lost again by the Royal Marines who lost heavily through being enfiladed by machine guns. This position ran out into what is known as Deadmen's Ridge. Our first night in the trenches was quite a novel experience. At 8pm everyone downed their belts and bandoliers and fixed bayonets and every man was cautioned to keep alert and a sharp lookout with the periscope which are two pieces of looking glass at one each end of a stick so that the picture of the Turkish trench in the top one is reflected in the lower one. By these means one could observe the enemy without exposing oneself. Murgha Mack and I were together and then came the rest of my section viz. Langford, Macfarlane and Fletcher. There were dugouts in the front wall of the trench which afforded a little shelter from sun and shrapnel. The enemy kept up a constant fire on us all night and towards morning were noticed to be going up and down their trenches. Word at once was sent along to expect an attack and everyone to stand to arms and the

supports were brought into the firing line. We all stood up grasping our rifles at the guard and our nerves were strung up to breaking point, at least mine were, I wondered where I would get after we filled the trench with dead Turks as would assuredly have happened if ever they attacked us in dense numbers. After a few tense moments of waiting my knees got wobbly and I put down my rifle ...lighting pipe? And had a look over to see what was happening, nothing of course. We have since learnt that it is a habit of the unspeakable one to make these kind of demonstrations in the early morning in hopes we would get up and shoot at them when their machine guns and snipers would pick us off. During the night they sent up several flare lights something like rockets which lit up the space between the trenches presumably to make sure that we were not sneaking on them. The first one that went up had us guessing, it appeared as if it might fall in our trench and we in our ignorance did not know whether it was a bomb or what. After daylight three men out of each section got what sleep they were able while the others watched. At meal times we boiled our quarts just outside the trench and our meals mainly consisted of bully beef biscuits jam and cheese. We are in the firing line 24 hours, then in support trench 24 hours, then 24 hours in our dugouts on the hillside. This goes on for a week, men in support trench are allowed to sleep. After our turn of duty was up we went down the hillside and made a dugout. Mack and I shared one together and took a lot of trouble with it not knowing that we would only occupy it for several days. Mack made a great stew out of bully beef onions and biscuits, we also had potatoes and bacon so fed well and then slept most of the day. Just opposite our dugout was a pinetree up which we were told a sniper was found tied fast so he would not fall out when asleep and with food enough for a week. He had accounted for a good many of our chaps, another sniper was found in a hole where he had been over a week. He had 1000 rounds of ammunition with him. Our next time in the firing line we sustained our second casualty. Paddy Moy was shot dead at the observation post and at lunch time we were enfiladed with shrapnel from a gun we had named the tunnel gun as it appeared to fire out of a tunnel. I was outside lighting a fire and had just sent Langford in for water when the first shell burst close at hand putting dust all over one and the fire, so I left for the nearest dugout. This one also faced the way the shells were coming so I worked my way round to our trench. The first thing I saw were two broken rifles and some torn up equipment. A man named Chivers with a torn

and bleeding cheek pressing his good side hard against the wall, Langford lying on the floor of the trench with a bag over his head and the rest all huddled up good and hard into their dugouts. Mack with his 6ft 2 frame hunched up into a 3 ft hole was a sight. Langford had three pellets through him and the poor old chap's first words when I lifted him were "I spilt all your water" and when we put him on the stretcher to go away he asked Mack to be sure and put him in the same section when he came back. One of our guns on Walker's Ridge opened fire and after several shots got the range put two shells fair into the tunnel's mouth and several on top of it and silenced the Turk gun. I think the most of their guns are surmounted on wheels that after firing a few shots they are moved back to another position. Notice in an Australian paper that the enemy shells are supposed to be very bad some of them cased inside with wood and loaded with pebbles. I wish the person who wrote that lie were here, he would soon find out that the shells which come this way are all OK. On the night of 18th May everyone seemed to know something was going to happen. The Aeronaut had reported that the Turks were strongly reinforced and massed behind each position. Our troop was again in the firing line and I and two other men were in the observation post. The new firing line which as yet was not quite completed was out round our old position but about 20yds closer to the Turks was manned and the supports and reserves were brought up into the old firing line. The officers were strung up to concert pitch and kept on coming round warning us to be on the alert. The enemy kept up a constant fire on the trenches especially the observation post. Nothing happened till about 3 in the morning when a tremendous rifle fire broke out on the positions on our extreme left and gradually extended all along the line. Soon after we noticed the enemy leaving the trenches in front of our position and massing on our left. The supports and reserves were at once ordered into the firing line. Major Granville took up the position in the observation post and the word to fire was given. There appeared to be a great number of Turks on the left and they were running about in an aimless way shouting "Allah, Allah". Then one lot swooped down on our position, some more seemed to go to the left towards Walker's Ridge and the others seemed to do the cheering. Our chaps had the time of their lives, only about two Turks got as far as our trenches and I don't think a great many got back to their own. We sustained a few casualties most of them after the attack was over as our chaps would persist in looking

over the trenches for more Turks to shoot and got picked off by snipers. It was most exciting while the attack was on and I enjoyed must as much if not more than watching the finish of a race in which I am an interested. Over at Quinn's Post and Courtneys the enemy attacked several times after daylight. We got some good shooting at long range about 800 yds from the observation post at reinforcements going over there. We noticed them going up a narrow gully and got fair onto them. I reckoned they were fine shooting though a bit shy and was surprised what satisfaction it gave me to see my man go down. Whilst potting at these I had a pretty close call and what was rather an annoying accident. Had my only pipe broken clean in two by a bullet whilst smoking. It filled my eyes and mouth full of tobacco and smoke and gave me a great shock at first I thought my own rifle had exploded. Was without a pipe for several days and had to smoke cigarettes made out of newspaper which were not satisfactory. However, eventually I got another pipe from a dead man. Before coming here I hated the idea of looking at a corpse but now I find them rather interesting and they have no effect whatever on one. After the attack was over the spaces between the Trenches were covered with heaps of dead Turks they are supposed to have lost well over 3000 dead besides wounded. In some places the dead bodies were as thick as melons in a melon patch. Our week in the trenches finished the morning of the attack and we were relieved by the 3rd Regiment. The 2nd Regiment during this time had been in O... Post and had lost heavily in an attack on one of the Turkish trenches. On being relieved we filed down the valley to what we thought was to be a rest bivouac but we soon found out that our rest mainly consisted of sapping and fatigue parties. I have done more pick and shovel work here than I ever dreamt of doing. The entrance to our bivouac was at the 2nd barricade along the road and the danger zone. These barricades are built mostly of sandbags and jut out across the road at intervals and at corners in the danger zone to give some shelter against snipers from a Turkish trench at the head of the valley. It is a peculiar position we hold here, on sunken valley between two hills or plateaux which rise almost sheer from the sea. There being only a narrow shingle beach between the water and the hills.

In some places the ends of the Valley are very steep but at others are just sloping spaces and small ravines, mostly wooded with a thick undergrowth of shrubs mostly of the kind one sees cultivated in Australian gardens and intertwined with flowering honeysuckles.

The only trees are pines but they are very occasional. Our bivouacs are all in the ravine as they are mostly hidden from the Turkish trenches and give some shelter from shell and shrapnel. A good road has been made up the Valley from the beach and the foot of Pope's Hill where the supply depot is. Here the Valley is split into two by Pope's which is an island position as the Turk trenches extend beyond ours on either side. One Valley runs up to the right between Quinn's and Pope's and ends abruptly. The Turks trench runs right along the edge of the Valley and is known as the Razorback. It is from this trench where all the sniping down the road is done, it overlooks almost the whole of the valley. The other branch of the Valley runs up to the left between Walker's Ridge and Popes and also has a Turkish trench at the head of it. In fact the enemy trenches turn right around our position in a semi-circle the only places they have not quite hemmed us in is at the seashore as the fire from the gunboats keeps them some distance out. The country beyond the Turk trenches seems to be open farming land and is pretty as it is mostly wooded with orchards and olive groves dotted over with farm houses. We got a good view of it from Walker's Ridge and on a clear day can catch a glimpse of the water in the straits through a gap in the hills which appear to run right through the peninsula. Beyond these hills we can see still higher ones over into Asia Minor.

Whilst in our rest bivouac we lost several men through snipers in fact one morning whilst at the supply depot drawing rations 5 men were hit. This sniping danger has now practically been done away with. A sap or trench has been dug winding in and out around the hill sides right through the danger zone. Also men (snipers) are above our position behind the bivouacs firing into the enemies loopholes. We got a lot of amusement out of any new arrivals in the evenings at our bivouacs, when any came along we would tell them to double round the corners as a man had just been sniped there. They would jam their hats down and go round as if starting for a race and probably the same thing would happen to them all the way up the Valley. The supplies are all brought up the Valley from the depot at the Beach after dark by an Indian Transport Corps using mules and mountain carts. I am told these Indians are great stalkers, one got sniped and two of his mates disappeared for two days when they came back with the snipers head, would like to have seen them stalking him. From this supply depot the fatigue parties headed by the quarter master from the various regiments draw their rations at 5pm every day and carry them to

the post and bivouacs. It is an awful climb to the top of Pope's Hill about 450 ft above sea level with a 70 lb case of biscuits or bully beef. Our rations consist of biscuits, bully beef, bacon, jam cheese, onions, potatoes, tea and sugar. Sometimes we get preserved vegetables, rice or flour and tinned stew. Every second day we get bread instead of biscuits. The bread is baked over on the island of Lemnos. Most of our water comes from shallow wells which have been sunk in the bed of the valley. Some is brought in hulks from Malta. Water for washing purposes is not available but when not on duty we can do down to the beach for a swim and to wash our clothes. This is rather exciting as often just as one is enjoying a swim the enemy shell the beach or water with shrapnel and there is a rush for shelter. The pictures in the Australian papers of soldiers bathing amongst bursting shells are on a par with most tales of the war. When shrapnel comes everyone ducks and seeks the nearest shelter. Quinn's Post is a pretty lively place, the trenches there are very close together from 5 to 80 yards and bomb throwing much indulged in. One night whilst some of our chaps were up there sapping the Turks blew up a mine and then charged with bombs. Macfarlane a boy from our section gave me a first hand account. He was in the sap unarmed carrying out sandbags from a mine when the explosion occurred. The first thing he knew after the explosion was a big Turk jumping over the trench. Mac ran and did not look back. The Turks bombed our fellows out of a portion of the firing line and support Trench but paid dearly for it. When our chaps got the word to counter attack they went in with a shower of bombs and then fell on the Turks like dogs worrying killed near all that were in the Trench. Tony Bone got shot through the head and Linde Smith met with injuries from a bomb which afterwards resulted in death. I arrived on the scene when the fun was over and saw them clearing the Trench of dead. One big infantry man came out with a Turkish hind leg, calling for the Quartermaster. Then there was a shout of "gangway" and out they came dragging dead Turks by the arms and legs just as they would dead sheep, but our own dead were carried out carefully.

At first we got quite a decent rum allowance issued every day. Mack and I used to get enough to make us feel quite happy for the moment, but now we only get rum occasionally. And those arch fiends the quartermasters adulterate it with stuff that runs under bridges. Tobacco also is supplied in awful quality and limited quantity and matches

are very scarce. If only they would supply one with plenty of rum tobacco and matches of decent quality and the weather keeps dry, life would be fairly tolerable. Wood also is scarce and we risk bullets after it on the hillsides. One of these days I expect to see ... of hell or rather the floor of their trench lighted for the Turks as the engineers have tunneled under and are ruining most of their trenches. After our week in the bivouac our squadron went into a position on the extreme right of Pope's Post a very monotonous position as it was low down where one could not watch the effect of any of the bombardment and was not near any Turk trenches. Its main work was to watch the loopholes in the Razorback and keep down sniping. After a week here we went on up the hill to the rest position. Whilst shifting young Macfarlane met with an accident, he fell carrying an ammunition box and badly burnt his arm. Major Vernon remarked in passing "What a very foolish thing to do". About this time the news of the sinking of the Triumph came along, also the Majestic. Had rather an uneventful week in the trenches, lost one man out of our troop got shot through the head looking over the parapet. Name was Hailstone, he imagined he could see the Turks doing something with a light in the gully in front.

Our next bivouac was in a gully between Pope's and Walker's and we spent most of the time digging a new sap up the Walker Ridge and doing outpost duty. Our next position in the trenches was in the center and a bad place for shrapnel whenever the Turks opened fire all the men except the officers(?) had to go out of the firing line and the support trenches into the communication trenches as the former could be enfiladed. On one occasion when Mack and I remained in the casing of one shell went clean through his water bottle hanging up alongside us. Our next bivouac was down in the first gully we camped and we lost two men through snipers the first morning. It rained twice at night time and as most of our dugouts were below the ground level things were not t all pleasant. I had to bale mine with a tin. Mack went away sick. Our reinforcements arrived one morning unexpectedly and caused quite a stir. The boys greeting them rather reminded me of a lot of ewes and lambs baaing. It was "Oh look at Old Bill – etc. etc." Our next turn in the trenches was right on the left end and also quite uneventful except for the fact that I got sniped in the shoulder, was looking over the parapet of the Trench during the afternoon trying to locate a machine gun in front of our position and foolishly remained standing upright talking to another man, forgetting for the moment that my

head and shoulders were fully exposed to the enemy. There was a Turk up on the left who I have no doubt was very annoyed with me as I had amused myself during the morning with shooting his sandbag loophole to pieces. He must have been a bad shot as although only 200yds way he nearly missed me. The bullet just went in on top of and behind the left shoulder and out again without touching any bone. I thought some ass in the support trench behind had hit me with a stone till the blood started trickling down my back. Dr. Fiaschi let me stop with the regiment for a week as I did not want to go back to Egypt and the wound was a very slight one but unfortunately he went away and the next Dr. bundled me out at once, was too lazy I think to dress it for me. Was sent on board the hospital ship for a night then down to Lemnos where they kept me for three days and eventually back here in Luna Park where there are about 1200 sick and wounded. The awfulness of this place has got on my nerves and I will be glad to get away from it again. It hurts me more to see the effects of the wounds here than to see them when they are first done. Up at the front when one sees a wounded man one thinks he will live or die, but here one sees them on crutches and probably crippled for ever. My wound is nearly quite healed up and I expect to leave here in a few days and hope soon to be on my way back to get the unspeakable one who sniped me or if he is gone, some of his relations will do.

Helouan Convalescent Home

At Luna Park we were in big open wards and on bare two frame beds, but here there are eight in a room a large one and we have mattresses on the floor, no furniture. At Luna Park our clothes were taken away and we were issued Pyjamas and slippers, mine did not match the coat was blue the trousers pink, here we kept our clothes. At Luna Park we were not allowed out, here we can get leave to visit Helouan from 2pm till 9pm. All the way over from Mudros the only consolation I had for leaving the boys at the front was that I might sometime eat a decent meal and Shepherds and sit in a shady and quiet garden and eat cool rock melon and grapes and drink cool beers. Think how angry I was when I found myself a prisoner in Luna Park with about 1200 noisy grumbling wounded and sick soldiers. At Luna Park the food was bad and badly served, out bread and butter and bread and jam appeared on the table ready cut up and spread by the black waiters. Here the food is much better and well served beside one's plate is a crisp roll of bread

and the butter is on dishes with pieces of ice and the jam is Cross and Blackwells in glass jars and there is plenty of ices water. It is a fine cool building and has nice gardens and grounds. The terrace where I am writing commands a view of the Nile which is just a ribbon of silver covered with white winged barges, stretching from the north to the south with a band of green palm groves and farms on either side and beyond that the desert dances in a shimmering heat dance till it melts into the horizon. On the Western side of the river are the pyramids of Saqqara which I once visited. I liked Helouan when I was here on a bivouack it seemed such a nice clean place and there were no soldiers here except our own brigade and no Backsheesh clamourers and there were lots of cool gardens where cool drinks were to be brought and there is the Café San Giacomina on the Nile where I intend to go one of these afternoons. In fact I expect to be able to do there what I dreamt about on my way over from Mudros. Talking of Mudros it is a funny old place. Only one decent building and that a church. The inhabitants mostly Greeks must have a strenuous time. Their windows are all bared with iron and their doors built strongly evidently by their neighbours the Turks were in the habit of visiting and robbing them. When our troops first landed all the women and children ran away and hid but now the children come about the camps looking for scraps. The males are picturesque looking ruffians in the pantaloons straw hats and goatskin leggings.

Transcribed 2014 pmdonkin@gmail.com