

# A DIARY FROM THE DARDANELLES

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*An article published in the Darwen Advertiser and News, Wednesday November 3, 1982.*

*TODAY WE publish the lucid and vivid diary of a Darwen man who volunteered for the Fourth East Lancashire Regiment<sup>1</sup> during the First World War.*

*Mrs Nellie Garner unearthed her late husband Albert's diary of his time in the Dardanelles while looking through some old papers. Mr Garner died in May 1968 when he was 72 and his widow is now 86. The couple have four children, Raymond who lives in Darwen, Tom who lives in Cleveleys, Joan who is in America, and Connie, now living in Pudsey.*

*Said Connie: "My mother doesn't see too well and she showed them to me. I was astonished, it is the first time we have seen them and unfortunately he doesn't use any dates, but they are so clear and vivid and a fascinating document."*

*Said Mrs Garner: "Albert Joined up in October 1914 and went to the Dardanelles. He came home with dysentery and afterwards he was sent to France where he was injured in the foot. He came back to England and was at Heaton Park for a long time and when the war was over he was training new recruits in Rhyl. He was a private and became a corporal."*

*Part of Mr Garner's story has been lost, which is why this account ends so abruptly. But there is a sheaf of notes about his journey to France, but that is another story.*



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<sup>1</sup> The British **42nd (East Lancashire) Division** was a [Territorial Force division](#). Originally called the 'East Lancashire Division', it was redesignated as the 42nd Division on [May 25, 1915](#).<sup>[1]</sup> It was the first Territorial division to be sent overseas during the [First World War](#). The division fought at [Gallipoli](#), in the [Sinai](#) desert and on the [Western Front](#) in [France](#) and [Belgium](#).

“WELL, first of all we set sail on the transport ship *Ionian*<sup>2</sup> on the second of July<sup>3</sup>. We were packed like herrings in a box for the boat was nothing but an old battle boat and as for rats, it was full of them.

We could not sleep at night for them. We slept in hammocks slung up besides each other. Well I did not sleep down in the bottom more than three times during the whole of the voyage for the first night I could not sleep for the rats, for they were running about and so making a squeaking noise. Bear in mind they were not above a foot over our heads all among the rafters where we had hung our packs and our rifles.



Figure 1 Albert Garner - 1915 (aged 19)

The second night I was sleeping near the port hole as that would be a little fresher, but I don't think I had been asleep more than an hour when bang — I went up against the side of the boat with my head, for the boat was tossing about from side to side and of course our hammocks were swinging also. I was the one nearest to the side so that I could not help myself.

Anyway I was determined that I would not sleep there anymore, so the next night I got in the centre, but I could not sleep for I was beginning to feel that sickness which often comes over you when sailing.

Well, by the morning I could stand it no longer and I started to be sick for three days and nights. I was doing nothing but vomiting and I could not eat anything. We were expecting reaching Gibraltar the next day and as I was picking up I was picked that day for the guard on the officers' deck and it was here that my eyes were opened.

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#### 2 IONIAN 1901

was built by Workman Clark & Co Ltd, Belfast in 1901 for the Allan Line of Liverpool. Her details were - 8,268 gross tons, length 470ft x beam 57.5ft, one funnel, four masts, twin screw and a speed of 14 knots. There was accommodation for 132-1st, 160-2nd and 800-3rd class passengers. In 1909 she was converted to carry 325-2nd and 800-3rd class passengers and started her first London - Quebec - Montreal voyage on 25/4/1912. Her last run on this service started on 30/7/1914 and she then went onto trooping duties to Bombay via Suez. [North Atlantic Seaway by N.R.P.Bonsor, vol.1,p.322]

*There is a photograph taken 1/03/1915. Stores ready to be loaded onto the transport ship *Ionian* at Alexandria docks for transport to Gallipoli. Horses are pulling cart loads of wood. Behind the wood pile are bales and boxes and an organ can also be seen. Flat bed railway wagons are in the background and a life buoy is hanging from the light post in the right foreground.*



<sup>3</sup> 1915

For the officers were living on the best of food and they had stewards to wait on them while we in the bottom were being treated like dogs.

We came in sight of land about four in the afternoon, but the boat went slower then, and we passed through Gibraltar at the dead of night. I could just see the rock looming up through the darkness on the right of the boat and I was disappointed for I had looked forward to seeing the place that is known as the key to the Mediterranean.

After this, there was nothing to trouble about, for it was like a lake and the boat made good progress. After about two days sailing we sighted the coast of Africa and then we sailed along all the way up the coast. I don't think we were above two or three miles from the coast all the time.

Well, after leaving the coast of Africa, we did not see land again until we came in sight of Malta. Here we stayed about a day at Malta while some guns that were in the hold were unloaded and it was the sight of a lifetime to see the harbour and its fortifications, and beside we saw some of the French Navy's boats and about three submarines.

When we were leaving Malta for Alexandria all the French battleships and their bands struck up with the God Save the King and their national anthem, the Marseillaise, amid great enthusiasm, while we gave cheer after cheer.

After leaving Malta a very sad thing occurred by the death of one of our lads who had been bad all the voyage. He was buried at sea the following morning with full military honours.

We landed at Alexandria safely and we expected being able to leave the boat, but we were only allowed to take our kit-bags off and then we had to go back again on board. Here some of the Yeomanry troops disembarked to join their regiment that was stationed in Cairo.

We stayed in harbour about a day and it was here that we saw the natives and they were treated like dogs with the policemen there. For they would get them by the scruff of the neck and kick them as hard as they could and then they hurled them away from them as if in disgust at having to handle them.

Well, we were told later by a sergeant of our regiment who was in hospital there, and who came on board to speak to us, that they had to keep them under or else they would take advantage.

It was here that we heard how our battalion had fared, and we began to realise that we were in for a rough time. Then we sailed for the Dardanelles.

After about three days we came to Mudros<sup>4</sup>, it was here that I saw the Russian battleship which is commonly known by the troops as the pack of Woodbines, because of its five funnels.

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<sup>4</sup> Mudros comprised a small Greek port on the Mediterranean island of Lemnos. It gained wartime significance with the determination of the Allies - chiefly the British and largely through the enthusiasm of [Winston Churchill](#) - in the early part of 1915 to attempt to seize control of the Dardanelles Straits, some 50km away.

We stayed about two days here and it was there that the draft for the Fifth East Lancashires was taken off because their battalion was at Mudros for a fortnight's rest. They were taken off about dinner time and it was about four o'clock when we were told to get all our packs on and rifles, so as to be ready to get on the minesweepers that were to take us up to the peninsular.



Landing craft at Gallipoli  
1915

We were all on safely and then they started off. It was about four hours' sail, and we landed at the mouth of the straits about nine o'clock at night. It was a pretty clear night, and we could see the battered forts of Sidle Bhari, and we could also see the keep of the sunken battleship Majestic, showing above the water. There was a light fixed there probably to guide the boats away, so that they would not collide with it. It was here that our lot, the Fourth East Lancashires, were told that we were to get on to a small lighter and it was here that we were packed so tight, that we could not move an inch. We all had our full packs on and our rifles and blankets as well as having to carry 200 rounds of ammunition.

We sailed for about two hours and then we were hailed from the beach. We made for the barges that were used for a landing stage, and here I saw the boat that the Gurkhas came on and which had been beached. It was called the River Clyde.<sup>5</sup>

I felt so funny, for we could hear the booming of the guns and the rattle of the machine gun and rifle fire and now and then we could see the star shells as they lit the sky up. At the same time as we were landing there were some French Singhalese troops landing also and the orders were given in a whisper.

It just seemed as though we were all struck dumb. We all got to the beach safely and then we were formed up and we started off. We passed through little graveyards where some of the men were buried and now and again we came across some of the native troops with their mules.

We went on and on, getting nearer to the trenches all the time until at last we got the order to halt and then we were taken into a small trench. It was just coming daylight and then we were told off to our different companies. My pal and I were told to join 'A' company, so we were at once made as comfortable as possible by our comrades who were at present resting in the dug outs behind the firing line. As soon as it came light we hunted around for some of the lads we knew were out here.

We found them, and we shook hands heartily with one another, then they told us

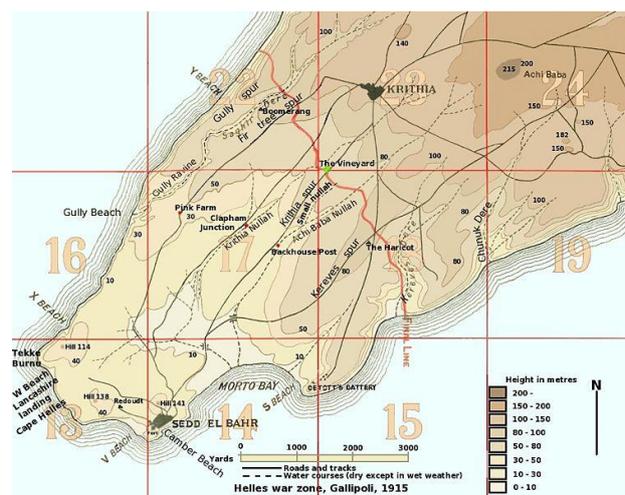


Figure 2 Helles War Zone - Gallipoli, 1915

<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_River\\_Clyde](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_River_Clyde)

how they had fared, and told us also how many of the lads had gone under. We knew then that we were in for a rough time.

It was very funny, but when it came light, and the Turks could see us, they sent their first shell for the day and every one of the lads who had just come, ducked down in the dug outs like a rabbit in its burrow.

But I will tell you candidly that I was afraid when I heard it come whistling through the air, but however, after a time I got quite used to it and I walked about as though there was nothing to trouble about.

Well naturally with it being so hot I was always after water to drink. It was very hot in the daytime and the flies were very irritating, for there were swarms of them and they used to get on your food when you were eating. If you were eating a biscuit it was covered with flies and I had to keep them off with one hand while I took a bite.

We were supposed to be resting while we were in the dug outs, but we were taken out every day with a pick, your rifle and a rag bandolier with 50 rounds of ammunition in, for we had to take our rifle with us every time we went on a fatigue duty.

We used to have to dig or else widen mule trenches and make communication trenches. The place was honeycombed with trenches for it was not safe to walk about in the open when it was daylight for the Turks could see you anywhere and they would send us a point of a shell if they saw about three or four of us together and they used to drop too near for my liking.

We had about eight days of this and then I began to feel the strain of the hot weather and the water was bad and we did not get much to eat, but a few biscuits and a bit of bacon for breakfast and stew for dinner and for tea, jam and bread, but very often there was no bread.

We had been in the dug outs just a fortnight, and by this time I was feeling right done up, when we got the order to move up to the reserve trenches. So we put our kit and other odds and ends into our packs and gave our rifles a good cleaning and then had our respirators inspected. But, by the way, we had these inspections every day to see that we did not neglect them.

I don't think we had been in the reserve trenches for more than an hour when the word was passed along that we must keep our heads well down as there was going to be a bombardment at two o'clock, and by Jove it was a terrible time, it was. Hell upon Earth it was, the first time under fire, and I hoped it would be the last.

It must have been awful for the lads who were in the front line trenches after about four hours of it the machine guns started with their awful deathlike rattle and we knew then that our men on the left were advancing and we heard afterwards that they had taken three lines of trenches.

But we were cut up by the Turkish fire. The next day our men in the centre who were just in front of us had to advance and the bombardment was even worse than that of the previous day. The noise was awful; it very nearly drove me crazy what with the shrapnel shell and the lydite or high explosive shell. Oh it's awful, no one can think what it is like until they have been there and heard it.

And after they had been bombarding for about three hours, the machines started and our troops in the centre advanced about 400 yards. They also were cut up by the Turkish fire, but it is only what is expected, for no one can advance in broad daylight, under heavy fire, without losing a lot of men. After the advance it was one continual line of wounded that passed by us in the reserve trenches; there were some awful sights.

Well, they managed to hold the positions that they had taken and towards morning things were a lot quieter. Then our company was taken over on to the left in a trench further back and here we got a good night's sleep.

We were in for the remainder of the day till it was just going dark and then we were told that we had to leave our packs and get a pick and the next man a spade, as we had to go and dig ourselves in, in front of our firing line.

We got to the firing line and we were then put in order, a man with a pick and a man with a spade and then told to dig together. We also carried our rifles and two sand bags each, and then over the top we went. We had been told to go about 40 yards and then commence to dig. As soon as I got over the parapet I went hell-for-leather for the distance, but I don't think I had got more than 15 yards from the parapet when I got caught in our barbed wire and I went over like a shot rabbit.

I tore all my hands and knees, but I had not time to trouble over that. I got up and found my rifle, which was about 10 yards away and then I had to look for my pick, I found it at last and then I went forward for I could not find my sand bags. I got to the other lads and started to dig like mad, using my hands as well as the pick, for I knew that if I did not get deep enough before the morning I should have a poor chance of coming out alive.

So all through the night I went on digging until I had got about two feet deep and then I was able to ease off a little.

It was this night our sergeant was killed and others besides him were killed for I could hear them all through the night, first one, and then another scream out that they had been hit. And it was impossible to get them away and they had to lie there all through the night.

Then as it was just beginning to come light, I ventured to have a peep and I did get a shock for I don't think we were more than 30 yards away from the Turkish trenches and I was expecting them to make an attack on us all that day.

We had to lie there all that day with nothing to eat or drink. Well, when it was going dark we started to dig towards one another so that we could crawl along when we had to leave.

After about three hours, word was passed along to get ready to leave and I put on my equipment and got my rifle and pick ready for moving. At last the word came to move along as quietly as possible to the end of the line and here, there was a small trench or sap leading to the firing trench.

They had been digging this in the day time while we had been lying there. I got safely back in the firing with the others and then we were taken away into the reserve trenches again for about two days. Then we were taken back to the trench we had left and which had been made wider and deeper by the men of the Engineers and we were in as a sort of garrison.

We had not to dig at all, we were there as a guard, and we were in for about five days, and I will never forget the nights in that trench.

We went on guard in our turns an hour at a time, and we had to keep a sharp look out all the time. I could see some of our lads and had the Turks as well lying there dead, and I was very careful to take notice of every object and its position, so that the Turks could not creep out and get behind me without me noticing them.

In the day time the men came to dig it and widen it. I did not get any sleep all the time I was in that trench, for we had to stand to every morning with fixed bayonets, so as to be ready if they made an attack.

At the same time our men were digging, or sapping as it was called, straight towards the Turkish trenches and the Turks were sapping towards us so that they were bound to meet some time or other and then there would have been some terrific bombing encounters.

It was about tea time on the fifth day that we heard that we were going to be relieved the following morning, but alas our hopes were not to be fulfilled for just when we had finished our tea, the Turks started to bombard us and it was time for us.

We had been told that we would have to hold it at all costs. As we crouched down in the trench and waited, we had plenty of ammunition, and we waited for the bombardment to cool down a little.

As soon as this occurred we got the order for rapid fire and we were up in a tick, for we knew that the Turks were massing for the attack, so I began to blaze away like mad. My rifle was well cleaned and oiled so I was not troubled much with it, but it was soon red hot and it began to scorch the skin off my hands.

Of course I did not trouble about that then, for I was thinking more about the Turks, whether they would advance or not, for to tell you the truth I really wanted them to come, because if they had, they would have been mown down with our fire.

Anyway, they came but not in the way I expected, for they had got into the sap that our men had been digging and we then got order to retire, so I managed to get back into the old firing line safely, and I started to fire again, then I was told that all the Fourth East Lancashires were wanted up the trench known as the vineyard sap.

Here all our battalion was on the firing platform, firing for all they were worth, so I at once jumped up and began to fire also.

All this time we were under heavy shell fire from the Turks and the lads were falling on either side of me for they were getting shot from all directions and we thought it was our own men who were firing on us. So the word was passed to our men in the firing, to fire half right as they were hitting us instead of the Turks. But still the lads were falling, many of them shot from behind until it was found that the Turks had got behind us somehow so that we had to bomb them out.

After a time things began to be quieter and we were allowed to have a bit of rest, so many at a time, while some were on guard.

I could hardly keep my eyes open by now, but I did my best and went on guard when it came my turn. At last it was coming daylight, and we were expecting to be relieved, but to cap it all when it was just coming down, we were gathered together, and then told that we would have to take back the trench we had lost.

We fixed our bayonets and went back to the old firing line over on the right, about 100 yards away from the trench we were now leaving. We got in some kind of order and then we went over the top to charge. We got about 20 yards when I tumbled into a trench of some kind but it was only a dummy trench. Then we went on again and we got lost. At last I rambled over into our trenches where we were got into some kind of order again.

Over we went again, but we were not successful and we tried for a third time, but no good, it was given up and we were allowed to stay where we were. It was very light by now and things were very quiet now.

I could stand it no longer and I went to sleep. I don't know how long I had been asleep, but I was wakened by someone and then I heard that we were going to be relieved. We were taken down to the reserve trenches for about an hour or two and we had something to eat.

Then I was picked out to go back into the firing line. By this time our men had been able to get the Turks out by bombing them and we went back into the trench that we had lost the night before. We had to stay in here till we were relieved by the Lowland Division. When the men had got settled down in the firing line we were told that we could go back. Other men took our place in that trench and we went down into the dug outs for a well-earned rest.

We rested here for the night and then in the morning the roll was called and I will never forget it for there were lads missing out of every section and a platoon in the battalion. It was while we were here that the next draft for us arrived and they were needed for the battalion was not more than 300 strong then.

Well, we were in the dug outs for about a week, and then we moved away to Y beach on garrison duty there. Here, we had a very good rest, and we could go into the sea for a bath any time we wanted.

From there I was sent to a bombing school not far away up the Big Gulley. I had been in about five days when I was taken very ill. Bear in mind, I had been bad with dysentery all through the bombardment and ever since we left the firing line. However I was taken to the Number One Field ambulance and when the doctor took my temperature I was 104 degrees.

He bundled me down to the Beach Hospital right away. I stayed there overnight, then I was taken on board a boat that had once belonged to the Germans and had been captured by us and was being used as a hospital ship. It was called the Huntsend and I was taken to Malta and from Malta to England. I landed at Southampton and was then taken to the Wharnccliffe War Hospital<sup>6</sup> and..."

***By Albert Garner (1896-1968) of Darwen, Lancashire***

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<sup>6</sup> "At the start of the First World War the Hospital (in Sheffield) was offered to the War Office, and the patients were removed during the period March 16th, to March 30th. It was then renamed the "Wharnccliffe War Hospital", and had 1,500 beds, three operating theatres and a X-ray Department. The Wharnccliffe War Hospital was closed for soldiers on July 31st, 1920, having treated 35,000.



Figure 3 Hospital ship Huntsend 1915

**Description** Medal card of Garner, Albert

Corps	Regiment No	Rank
East Lancashire Regiment	3139	Private
Manchester Regiment	88157	Private

**Date** 1914-1920

**Catalogue reference** [WO 372/7](#)

Name		Regt.	Regtl. No.
GARNER		5 <sup>th</sup> Fe	3139
Albert		Manch	88157
Regt.	Regtl. No.	Page	Remarks
5 <sup>th</sup> Fe	3139	6006	Diment
15 <sup>th</sup> BATT	41151	113	Pub (1943 R.E. 1914) 8149/100
Theatre of War preserved in		(21)	
Date of entry therein		17. 7. 15	

Catalogue Reference: WO/372/7

