
“Not one of them ever came back”: What Happened to the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion on 12 August 1915 at Gallipoli?



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RECENTLY, considerable attention has been paid to the “disappearance” of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion at Suvla, during the 1915 Gallipoli campaign. Much of this attention has come about through the release of the made-for-television BBC film entitled *All the King's Men* (1999). The story concerns particularly one company of the 1/5 Norfolks, the Sandringham Company, recruited from the Royal estate at Sandringham. This unit, and other members of the 1/5 Norfolks, disappeared during the action of 12 August at Suvla. King George V personally interested himself in the fate of the Sandringham Company, but nothing much could be discovered about it or the rest of the 1/5 Norfolks. Then rumours started that the Norfolks had disappeared in a mysterious way, or had been captured and then shot by the Turks.¹ This story then took on mythic proportions, illustrating the process by which history enters the popular consciousness. The present article follows this process, and uses Turkish archival sources for the first time, to attempt to answer the basic question: what happened to the 1/5 Norfolks?²

1. Properly speaking, the defenders of the Gallipoli peninsula should be referred to as Ottomans, since the Ottoman empire existed into the early 1920s, and several ethnic groups besides Turks were involved in the 1915 conflict. However, since the Turks were predominant in the Ottoman empire, and are popularly associated with the campaign, this term will be used here.

2. Recent interpretations of the fate of the Norfolk Battalion are: Dick Rayner, “The Sandringhams at Suvla Bay,” originally published in *Stand-To!* 58 (April 2000), and reproduced in *The Gallipolian* 93 (Autumn 2000): 1–11; Michael Hickey, “All the

On 12 August 1915, the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion took part in an attack in the Suvla plain toward the foothills of the Tekke Tepe range of hills at Suvla, with the idea of establishing a start line for a much larger attack the next day. The 1/5 Norfolk Battalion was part of 163 Brigade of 54 Division and was accompanied in its attack by the 1/4 Norfolk Battalion and the 1/8 Hampshire Battalion, with the 1/5 Suffolk Battalion in reserve. Observers watched the attack move forward, amidst heavy Turkish machine gun fire from the left and shrapnel fire from the right. The 1/5 Norfolk Battalion moved up on the right of the line, and made more rapid progress than the other battalions. Eventually, the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion advanced into forest and scrub, and was lost to view. After the war, two distinct answers emerged to explain the subsequent fate of this 1/5 Norfolk Battalion. The first—that the battalion had simply disappeared without normal explanation—might be termed the mythic explanation. The second answer was that those in the battalion who had not already become casualties were captured and then shot by the Turks. This might be termed the rational explanation of what happened, although questions remain over this conclusion.

Sir Ian Hamilton, commander in chief of the Gallipoli expedition, dramatically publicised the first explanation early on, by writing in his official despatch of 11 December 1915 that “There happened a very mysterious thing . . . Nothing more was ever seen or heard of any of them. They [the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion] charged into the forest and were lost to sight or sound. Not one of them ever came back.” The second explanation emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, probably as a result of the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Jourdain, 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers, told the British official historian of the campaign, Brigadier General Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, that the 1/5 Norfolks were all shot after capture, with a bullet in the head or face, and that “Their bones were [found] in a thicket.”³

In fact, Hamilton already knew quite a lot about the fate of the 1/5 Norfolks because of information he received in connection with a royal request. On 1 September 1915, King George V enquired of Hamilton what had happened to the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion. This was of concern to

King’s Men: A Review of the TV Drama,” *The Gallipolitan*, 91 (Winter 1999): 2–5; Michael Hickey, *Gallipoli* (London: John Murray, 1995), 300–301; Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Defeat at Gallipoli* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 278–80; and Nigel McCrery, *The Vanished Battalion* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

3. Ian Hamilton, cited in McCrery, *The Vanished Battalion*, 1, and in F. Loraine Petre, *The History of the Norfolk Regiment, 1685–1918* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, n.d.), 2: 125–26. Lieutenant Colonel Jourdain to Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, 11 February 1931, War Office 95/4296, Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London (hereafter PRO). Colonel Jourdain had already made this allegation in a letter to Aspinall-Oglander on 11 December 1930, Cabinet 45/242, PRO.

the King because the C Company of the battalion was the Sandringham Company, recruited from workers on the Royal estate at Sandringham in Norfolk, and the company commander was Captain Frank Beck, the King's agent at Sandringham. Hamilton replied immediately to the King, saying that 14 officers and about 250 men were missing from the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, including the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Sir Horace Proctor-Beauchamp, as well as Captain Beck and Lieutenant A. E. A. Beck. The commanding officer of 54 Division, Major General F. S. Inglefield, gave Hamilton as much information as he had available, and Hamilton presented the disappearance of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion to the King as a case of too much bravery: "the Battn and their leader were filled with ardour and dash and on coming into contact with the enemy pressed ahead of rest of Brigade into close broken country where he [Inglefield] entirely lost touch of them." Inglefield provided more information to Hamilton two days later when he surmised that 16 officers and some 250 men had either been surrounded or cut off by the enemy. Evidently, Inglefield was unsure how many officers were actually lost.⁴

The next day, 4 September 1915, Inglefield seems to have been the one actually to start the myth of the disappearance of the Norfolk Battalion when he again reported to Hamilton's headquarters. In this message he claimed that the survivors of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion could give no information as to what happened to the rest of the battalion: "Sixteen officers and some 250 men have disappeared and the present Battalion commander, Major Barton, assures me that no information concerning any of these can be obtained." However, Inglefield was certain that "Colonel Sir H. Beauchamp and those with him bore themselves gallantly whatever their trials may have been." Inglefield then went on to list those missing and those present from the Sandringham Company. Surprisingly, given the publicity surrounding the company, this list shows only twenty-three missing, while the great majority of this company, seventy, including two sick and five wounded, were actually present and accounted for after the action of 12 August.⁵

Following on from the interest of the King, the myth of the disappearance of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion gained momentum when at an old comrades meeting in 1965, a New Zealand sapper stated that he had watched the attack of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion on 12 August 1915. The

4. King George V to Hamilton, 1 September 1915; Hamilton to King George V, 1 September 1915; Inglefield to Hamilton, 2 September 1915; Inglefield to Hamilton, 3 September 1915; Hamilton to King George V, 3 September 1915, 7/1/21; Inglefield to Hamilton, 4 September 1915, and list of Sandringham Company casualties and survivors, 7/7/26, Hamilton Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London University, London (hereafter KCL).

5. Inglefield to Hamilton, 4 September 1915, and list of Sandringham Company missing and present, 7/2/42, Hamilton Papers, KCL.

sapper claimed that the battalion marched into some low clouds that covered their advance, and when the clouds lifted, the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion had disappeared. This supernatural story has gained some credence in Turkey, where a recent article in a journal devoted to supernatural events, supported the disappearance theory, including the idea of the abduction of the battalion by aliens. In Britain, the film *All the King's Men* gives a different version of what happened to the 1/5 Norfolks, going back to the second explanation about the 1/5 Norfolks—that they were overwhelmed, disarmed, and then shot by the Turkish defenders. This interpretation was based on the book by Nigel McCrery, *The Vanished Battalion* (1992). However, a recent article in Turkey strongly disputes the film's claim, and the historian Michael Hickey also argues against the idea of the Turks executing the Norfolks after capture. Meanwhile, the recent account by Dick Rayner simply leaves the question open. McCrery uses various first- and second-hand accounts to argue that the men of the 1/5 Norfolks who had not already been killed, were found, in postwar investigations, to have been shot in the head or bayoneted, presumably after capture.⁶

So, then, what did happen to the 1/5 Norfolks on 12 August 1915? A number of existing sources can tell the story. The British official history of the Gallipoli campaign does not produce much insight and instead perpetuates the mythic explanation. In the Public Record Office, London, are the war diaries of 163 Brigade and the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, together with those of adjacent battalions and brigades. Some first-hand accounts of the attack and its aftermath are recorded in the Imperial War Museum, London. However, of considerable interest are accounts from the Turkish side, which have never before been published in English. These derive partly from war reports of the relevant Turkish forces which opposed the 163 Brigade attack, and partly from the interrogation of surviving 163 Brigade prisoners of war. The Turkish official history also has some useful information.

Turning first to the British official history, this version actually reinforces the myth of the disappearance of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion. After pointing out the problems of the 163 Brigade attack on 12 August 1915, especially the inability of the artillery and the infantry to coordinate,

6. On abduction by aliens, see Mutlu Tuncer and M. Ata Nirun, "Canakkale'de 81 Yil Once, Kaybolan Alayi Bulduk!" [We found the Regiment that was lost 81 years ago!], *Fenomen*, Sayı 2, Mayıs 1996, 29–33; on the sapper story, and opposition to the film's claims, see Suleyman Beyoglu, "Gerceklerin Cok Uzaginda Bir Ingiliz Filmi, Kral'in Adamlar'ina Ne Oldu?" [What happened to the king's men: a British film which is far from being the truth], *Populer Tarih/Popular History* 1 (June 2000): 38–43. *All The King's Men*, TV Film Production, 1999, discussed in Hickey, "All the King's Men"; Rayner, "The Sandringhams at Suvla Bay," 10; McCrery, *The Vanished Battalion*, chs. 11 and 12.

together with the distribution of the wrong maps, and the lack of a proper objective for the infantry, Brigadier General Aspinall-Oglander notes that the infantry advance slowed and then halted, but a portion of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion pressed forward, and “this party, consisting of 15 officers and 250 men, was not supported, and was never seen again.”⁷ Next, the war diary of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion is understandably brief, given the problems of the battalion that day. It simply relates that on 12 August 1915, the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion on the right “met a strong opposition and suffered heavily. Lost 22 officers and about 350 men. Held our lines during the night in spite of heavy enemy fire.” The war diary of 163 Brigade adds very little. At 1600 hours on 12 August 1915, the naval supporting fire commenced, but the line did not advance until 1640 hours. The Brigade was hit by machine gun fire from the left and shrapnel fire from the right. At 1800 hours the three and a half battalions of 163 Brigade were very mixed up, casualties were heavy, and there was a lack of water and ammunition. Next day, it was estimated that casualties were 60 officers and 1350 other ranks, although wounded and stragglers from August 12 continued to come in over the next couple of days.⁸

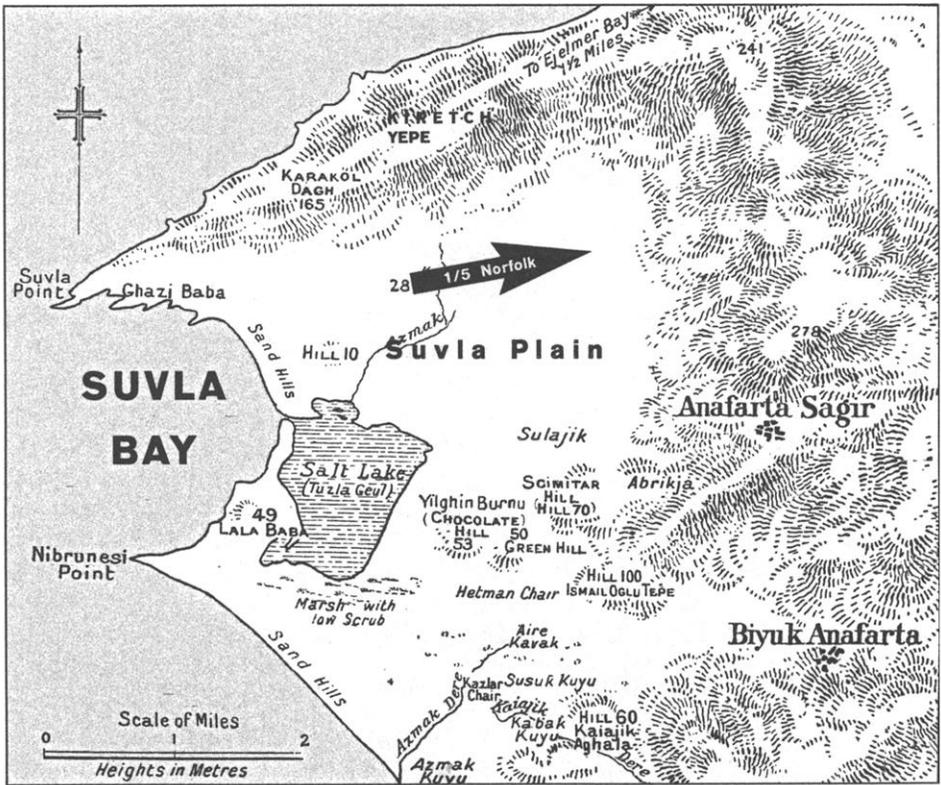
However, the war diaries of neighbouring units give further information on the distinct problems of the 12 August attack. The 159 Brigade war diary simply notes that its men watched the attack disappear into the woods in the foothills. But “After dark [on 12 August] large numbers of Norfolk and Hereford regiments [presumably the 1/1st Herefords of 158 Brigade] and some Suffolks were found in our line.” Additionally, the war diary states that the 1/4 Cheshire and 1/5 Welsh Fusiliers failed to find and support the attack. In contrast, the war diary of the 1/4 Cheshire Battalion reports that the battalion watched the 1/5 Norfolks go through their lines to the attack at 4:00 p.m., and claimed that the 1/4 Cheshires did go forward to support the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion at 6:00 p.m. But soon after, “The Norfolk Regiment retired through us in apparent disorder.” A 1/4 Cheshire officer also argued that the 1/5 Norfolks were supported at least by his company, which lost three officers that evening.⁹

A more detailed account is available from an officer of the 1/8 Hampshire Battalion (Isle of Wight Rifles). This account states that the advance commenced at 4:00 p.m. with the 1/8 Hampshire Battalion in

7. Brigadier General C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations, Gallipoli* (London: Heinemann, 1932), 2: 317–18.

8. War Diaries of 1/5 Norfolk Battalion and 163 Brigade, War Office 95/4325, PRO.

9. War Diaries of 159 Brigade and 1/4 Cheshire Battalion, War Office 95/4323, PRO; Captain Christie to Aspinall-Oglander, 19 April 1932, OG 111, Aspinall-Oglander Papers, County Record Office, Isle of Wight (hereafter IOW).



the centre, the 1/4 Norfolk Battalion on the left, and the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion on the right. (This is incorrect—the advance consisted of the 1/5 Suffolks on the left, the 1/8 Hampshires in the middle, and the 1/5 Norfolks on the right. The 1/4 Norfolks were in support behind the left wing.) Initially, according to this account, the wrong maps, these being of the Anzac area, were issued for the assault. These maps were then recalled, and correct maps were issued, though with “some obvious errors on them.” The officers had no time to issue food or to see that water bottles were full, or to conduct a reconnaissance of the ground. In particular, the orders were vague and identified no specific objective, except to aim generally for the Kavak Tepe and Tekke Tepe hills in front. The 163 Brigade moved forward with both flanks in the air, but without artillery support to lay down fire in front of the brigade. The right and left of the brigade advanced more quickly than the centre, “and one Company of the 5th Norfolks with their C.O. outstripped the remainder and eventually disappeared.” Here, obviously, the myth of disappearance is repeated. The attack ground to a halt after some two miles, due more to exhaustion in the heat, and disorganisation, than to enemy action. Nevertheless, the writer claims that the 1/5th Norfolks lost nearly five hundred killed and wounded.¹⁰

In fact, it seems that 14 officers and 142 men were the actual 1/5 Norfolk Battalion casualties on 12 August, so contemporary accounts contained some exaggeration. But what did happen to the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion that day when they “disappeared”? A useful oral account, recorded after the war by Sergeant Tom Williamson of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, is available in the Imperial War Museum. Williamson remembers that the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion lost its officers early when they were picked off by Turkish snipers. Enemy artillery fire became intense, and then the battalion members crossed a ridge and saw the Turks in front of them. Some of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion rushed on and got behind the Turkish line: “Most of the battalion went through the Turkish lines unknowingly. We were intermixed with the Turks, they were scattered around us.” Williamson was wounded and decided to get out, but “It was then that I noticed the Sandringham Platoon, part of E Company, about 40 men, under Sergeant Aymers sheltering in a barn. The scrub was on fire, the snipers, [the company] more or less surrounded by the Turks, a hopeless position for them to be in. They were undoubtedly killed or wounded where they were. I can picture him [Aymers] now rallying his men.”¹¹

10. “8th Bn. Hampshire Regiment, (Isle of Wight Rifles) at Suvla Bay,” 163 Brigade Report, War Office 95/4325, PRO.

11. Sergeant Tom Williamson, Interview 9317, Imperial War Museum, cited in Steel and Hart, *Defeat at Gallipoli*, 279–80.

Williamson offers a useful analysis and makes clear the problem for some of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion: they obviously advanced too rapidly, without support from the other battalions, and found themselves mixed in with, and behind, the Turkish lines. However, Williamson must be mistaken about the Sandringham men because the Sandringham Company was C and not E Company and had no Sergeant Aymers. On the other hand, the scene that he describes sounds authentic, and the barn was probably part of the farm that served as a last rallying point for some of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion. This picture of the last moments of many of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion is supported by evidence from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which after the war found about 180 bodies in all, of which 122 were 1/5 Norfolks, the rest being from the 1/8 Hampshire Battalion, plus a few 1/5 Suffolks and some Cheshires. These bodies were found about eight hundred yards behind the Turkish front line. Many were probably killed at the farm, because after the campaign, the local owner allegedly reported that he had returned to his farm, and finding many decomposing bodies, simply threw them into a nearby ravine. Here, the rational explanation of the end of the 1/5 Norfolks sounds credible.¹²

Other British evidence comes from some rough pencil notes kept by Captain E. W. Montgomerie, then commanding the supporting 1/4 Norfolk Battalion. He wrote that the attack on 12 August seemed to be going well until the three battalions came over a crest and saw the Turkish trenches on the other side of the valley. Enemy shrapnel fire was severe, and half of C (Sandringham) Company went off to the right. Montgomerie halted his battalion on the crest, as he saw that both the 163 Brigade and the attack generally were in trouble. An officer of the 1/5 Suffolks came running back saying that his battalion was being outflanked on the right, and urgently requesting help. Later, Montgomerie claimed he saw the Turks retreating across the front of the 1/8 Hampshires and 1/5 Norfolks. (If so, this suggests the 1/5 Norfolks were close to the Turkish front line, and probably mixed up with the enemy, though not as yet behind Turkish lines.) Still later, the brigade major came up and told Montgomerie the men were having an awful time. Montgomerie and his battalion for some reason stayed where they were, while "All through the night men were coming in who had lost their units, and I think I had 200 men with me next morning. I gave them water of which they were in great need." In support of this account, a telegram on 12 August from Colonel Mustafa Kemal, commanding the northern Turkish group, to Turkish Fifth Army also reports that the interrogation of British

12. Petre, *History of the Norfolk Regiment*, 2: 126.

prisoners of war showed the prisoners to be psychologically and materially depressed, and in need of food and water.¹³

So far, it seems that the earlier explanation of the fate of the 1/5 Norfolks, namely, of an unexplained and perhaps unnatural disappearance, can be discounted. The second explanation, that the Turks executed the survivors of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion after their capture, cannot yet be confirmed or denied. But a third and equally likely explanation also exists: the unfortunate 1/5 Norfolks were simply part of a bungled and disorganised attack, with the normal heavy casualties accompanying such a situation. Can Turkish sources provide any further evidence about either the shooting-after-capture idea, or the bungled attack concept?

Turkish units kept abbreviated war diaries, comprising reports and messages, known as “Harp Ceridesi.” These are available for the 36th Regiment of 12 Division, which defended against the attack of the British 163 Brigade, together with support from the 3rd Battalion of the 35th Regiment. (The Turkish division consisted of three regiments, each equivalent in strength to a British brigade, with three battalions in each regiment. Battalions were then divided into four companies). On 11 August 1915, Major Munib, commanding the 36th Regiment, made his defensive dispositions, stretching his regiment roughly across the Suvla plain, to the edge of the Kiretch Tepe ridge on the north Suvla coast.¹⁴ The next day, after the battle involving 163 Brigade and the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, Munib wrote down his report of the action. According to him, nothing happened until 4:00 p.m., when the enemy started to bombard the front lines and the rear areas. This bombardment came from the British navy, whose continuous shelling of the high ground and Suvla plain areas was a clear indication to Munib and his forces that an attack was coming. The major deduced that the enemy was preparing to make a link up between the attacking forces and the forces on Kiretch Tepe. He thereupon also ordered up two companies of the 3rd Battalion of the 35th Regiment to provide support. At 4:50 p.m., the enemy infantry was spotted, and infantry fire commenced. Firing was intense from both sides, and it seemed that the enemy was trying to outflank the right wing of Major Munib’s 1st Battalion. After thirty minutes’ exchange of heavy fire, the 1st Battalion attacked with the bayonet and halted the enemy attack. The firing ceased for a time, and then started up again. Munib

13. Ibid., 128; Mustafa Kemal, Northern Group, to Fifth Army, 12 August 1915, Record 72, File 3402, Index 15–27, General Staff Archives, Ankara (hereafter GSA) in *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* (Military History Documents), August 1989, Year 38, Issue 88 (Ankara: Genelkurmay, 1989), 121–22.

14. Major Munib, Regimental Orders, 36th Regiment, 11 August 1915, Record H-2, File 5359, Index 14, GSA.

ordered up the last reserves from his battalion and came up himself to study the situation.¹⁵

Apparently matters were serious, because Munib noted that the fighting lines were only five or six metres apart. Further help was obviously necessary, and he ordered up the neighbouring 3rd Battalion of the 35th Regiment to stiffen his left wing, plus companies from the adjacent 127th Regiment (which were keeping an eye on a possible Allied landing on the Kiretch Tepe coast). The Allied attack started again, on the left and centre of the 36th Regiment's line, but this was halted, and in fact thrown back some five hundred or six hundred metres. The major noted: "so thanks to God the enemy were utterly defeated and scattered." He estimated the Allied attacking force at two battalions (although in fact the British had three battalions), and enemy losses as approximately 300 bodies lying on the ground, with around 250 Allied rifles seized. According to Munib's report, Colonel Sir Horace Yotam (Sir Horace Beauchamp) and 250 of his command were among the dead. The bodies were left in the rear of the Turkish line, where they would presumably be buried. Then, in a significant sentence, Munib reported that 35 enemy soldiers, who were all wounded, were taken as prisoners of war. This would not suggest any post-battle shooting of Allied wounded prisoners of war. Then, in a subsequent report on 13 August 1915, Munib reported again that the Allied prisoners of war numbered 35, and that these wounded prisoners were sent to the medical aid post of the division.¹⁶

Meanwhile, on 12 August after 8:30 p.m., Lieutenant Colonel Selahaddin Adil, the commander of the Turkish 12 Division, had issued orders to Major Munib of 36th Regiment. Adil noted that the enemy attack had been halted by 36th Regiment, with assistance from 35th Regiment. Because it was becoming dark, only reconnaissance forces would be sent to pursue the enemy. Artillery pieces of the enemy were to be observed and their locations identified by white cloth hung from tree branches or trunks, to make range finding easier and to enable accurate fire from Turkish artillery. Finally, in an emotional conclusion to his orders, Adil stated that after the action, the enemy attackers lacked sufficient strength to meet up with the other enemy forces on the Suvla plain. The enemy had acted foolishly by attacking in daylight. Moreover, the enemy forces had behaved in a cowardly fashion, and displaying this

15. Major Munib, After Action Report, 36th Regiment, 12 August 1915, Record H2, File 5359, Index F.1.16/1.17, GSA.

16. *Ibid.*; Major Munib to the Commander of 12 Division, 13 August 1915, 7:15 a.m., at Kucuk Anafarta, Record H-2, File 5359, Index 1.19, GSA. A shorter, paraphrased version of Major Munib's 12 August 1915 report is in "Reply to a letter from RN Captain," Cabinet 45/236, PRO.

particular talent, they had fallen into a trap set by the brave soldiers under his command, who without doubt deserved a reward.¹⁷

Other available Turkish sources include the Turkish official history, which states that on 12 August 1915, the 163 Brigade attack was met by the Turkish defenders of the 1st Battalion of the 36th Turkish Regiment and the 3rd Battalion of the 35th Regiment. The British attackers, including the 1/5 Norfolks, were forced back five hundred metres. The 163 Brigade attack resumed at 6:25 p.m., and the 1st Battalion of the 36th Regiment fell back, with the British attackers in pursuit. But the two Turkish battalions started a counterattack and bayoneted the pursuing British units, including their commander. The British losses were estimated at 680, plus the capture of 37 prisoners of war and the seizure of 250 British rifles. Turkish losses were put at 282.¹⁸

The picture given here is basically the same as the report of Major Munib. It seems that units of the 163 Brigade, particularly the 1/5 Norfolks, over-pursued the Turkish defenders and fell victim to a Turkish counterattack. Significantly, the Turkish official history emphasises an important point—that the attackers were all bayoneted, rather than shot, as the British sources frequently suggest. There are also some minor discrepancies, such as Munib's figure of 35 prisoners of war, as against 37 from the Turkish official history. Obviously the total numbers of casualties on both sides are also different, probably resulting from postwar analysis of overall losses in 12 Turkish Division, and overall Allied losses on 12 August. Hence, Munib lists his own casualties as 165 wounded and 61 martyrs (killed) from the 1,192 men and officers of the 36th Regiment and the 3rd Battalion of the 35th Regiment who participated in the battle. Judging by the breakdown of Turkish losses, the 1st Battalion of 36th Regiment took the brunt of the British attack, rather than the 3rd Battalion of 35th Regiment. One other Turkish report, by Kiazim Bey, chief of staff to Otto Liman von Sanders, commander of Turkish Fifth Army, states that on 12 August, 12 Turkish Division met the Allied attack, halted it, and pursued the enemy back. In contrast to Major Munib, Kiazim Bey reported rather confusingly that only 19 prisoners of war were taken, and these came from 163 Brigade of 54 Division.¹⁹

17. Lieutenant Colonel Selahaddin Adil, commanding 12 Division, to the commander of 36th Regiment, 12 August 1915, after 8:30 p.m., Record H-2, File 5359, Index 1.17, GSA.

18. *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Turk Harbi v. Cilt, Canakkale Cephesi Harekati, 1 nci, 2 nci ve 3 nci Kitapların Özetlenmiş Tarihi (Haziran 1914–9 Ocak 1916)* (Ankara: Genelkurmay, 1997), 213–14.

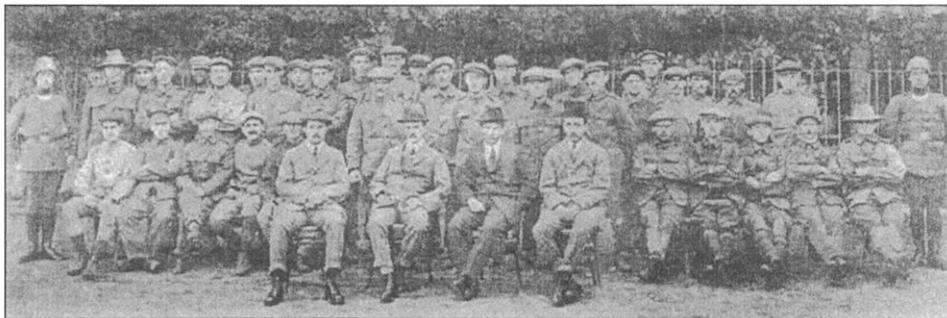
19. Record H-2, File 5359, Index 1.16/1.17, GSA. Killed in 36th Regiment were 44 men and one officer, compared with 16 from the 3rd Battalion of 35th Regiment. Overall, 165 men were wounded. The number of bombs thrown by individuals is also

The Turkish reports of prisoners of war lead to a final useful Turkish source, namely, the Turkish interrogation of Allied prisoners of war and their statements. These show that at least some 1/5 Norfolk Battalion prisoners of war were captured and not shot, as alleged in the British second, rational explanation, of what happened to the 1/5 Norfolks. Among these 1/5 Norfolk Battalion prisoners was Private Brown, who stated that he was wounded and captured in an attack on a hill whose name he did not know. Brown gave the name of his divisional commander, Inglefield, but disclaimed knowledge of anything else. Private Nobbs, 1/5 Norfolks, simply says he was wounded while acting as part of the vanguard of the 12 August attack, while still near the starting point. Next was Private Reeve, 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, who was wounded and sent to a Turkish hospital. Reeve also said he was wounded while retreating from the Suvla plain area, because he could not keep up with the others. Another 1/5 Norfolk Battalion prisoner was Private Thompson, wounded in the left shoulder. He claimed not even to know which division or brigade he belonged to, because he had recently arrived as a draft. Another badly wounded prisoner of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion was not properly named in the Turkish reports, being simply described in unlikely fashion as Walter's son, Dilkin. Due to the severity of his wounds, Dilkin was eventually transferred to Switzerland. Three more 1/5 Norfolk prisoners of war—Privates Cross, Land, and Small—were reported in Turkish documents as later working at the Darica Cement Factory in Istanbul and receiving parcels from home.²⁰

What is notable about these stories, apart from Cross, Land, and Small, whose condition at time of capture was not recorded, is that they *were all wounded* before being captured. No prisoner of war interrogation of the 1/5 Norfolks in the extant Turkish records available show 1/5 Norfolk prisoners of war who were *not* wounded. This may give some strength to the rational explanation, that is, those who suspect that the unwounded 1/5 Norfolk prisoners of war might have been shot, or as the Turkish official history states, bayoneted, although the Turkish history does not indicate whether this occurred before or after capture. In this context, the most striking case of a wounded 1/5 Norfolk prisoner escaping death, was the one 1/5 Norfolk officer in the Turkish prisoner of war records—Second Lieutenant William George Stewart Fawkes.

recorded at 79, with 177 cartridge boxes used on 12 August 1915. Kiazim Bey to Supreme Military Command, Istanbul, 13 August 1915, Record 782, File 182, Index 101, GSA. On British belief in the shooting of the 1/5 Norfolks, see McCrery, *The Vanished Battalion*, *passim*.

20. These prisoner of war reports are all in File 542, Record 2115, with separate Index numbers; Walter's son, Dilkin, is in File 2456, Record 244, Index 1–32; Privates Cross, Land, and Small are noted in File 2190, Record 2, Index 1–36 for Cross, and File 866, Record 933, Index 1–55 for Land and Small, GSA.



A group of Allied prisoners of war, taken on various fronts, including Gallipoli. The prison camp is at Basr-el-Galis, east of the Suez Canal. The four officers seated in front of the group are, from left to right: Lieutenant Stewart White (?), no regiment or brigade listed; next to him is 2d Lieutenant William George Stewart Fawkes (referred to in the text), 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, 163 Brigade, 54 Division; then 2d Lieutenant Paul Otatay (?), French forces on Gallipoli; finally Police 2d Lieutenant Selim Zeki, Turkish forces. (Source: Harp Mecmuasi 1, no. 6 [Subat 1331 (February 1916)]: 96.)

In his interrogation by Turkish officers, Fawkes said that his colonel (Beauchamp) ordered the battalion forward at 4:00 p.m., while the battalion was deployed near the leading edge of the Kiretech Tepe ridge. Fawkes said that he went forward with his platoon, but intense Turkish fire destroyed his unit. Only Fawkes and his sergeant, Varley, were left alive. They proceeded forward for about one hundred yards, when Sergeant Varley fell. Fawkes continued on and was wounded, but still tried to go forward. After some yards, Fawkes's wound caused him to lose consciousness. When he came to, the stars were shining, and Fawkes found himself being used as part of the parapet by the Turks. Fawkes felt that if he moved at all, that would be the end of him. Fawkes lost consciousness again, but when he came to once more, he tried to seize the trench. Surprisingly, the Turkish soldiers did not cause him further injury, but gave him food and water, and carried him to the hospital. Fawkes reported to his Turkish interrogators that he was grateful for all the help given to him, and assured his captors that if he returned home he would mention their kind behaviour. Fawkes's story was confirmed by a fellow prisoner from another unit, Lieutenant Still, who reported that Fawkes had been shot in the chest and was taken for dead by the Turks, who built him into a parapet made up of sandbags and dead men. Still was very surprised that Fawkes "survived the war." Fawkes very likely survived because he was wounded, but his Turk-

ish captors certainly showed considerable restraint if it was true that Fawkes tried to seize the trench.²¹

What now can be concluded from the evidence available regarding the “disappearance” of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion on 12 August 1915? Obviously the battalion did not disappear in an unnatural, or unexplained, fashion, although this myth attracted several key observers, including Sir Ian Hamilton. It seems instead that the battalion was severely handled on 12 August because it over-pursued the retreating Turks, and then became mixed up with, and overcome by, the Turkish counterattack. This resulted in the heavy 1/5 Norfolk casualties. Did the Turkish 35th and 36th Regiments then shoot their 1/5 Norfolk prisoners, as the second explanation alleges? The Turkish official history states that the 163 Brigade attacking forces who were killed were all bayoneted. It does not mention prisoners being shot, but it is possible they were bayoneted. Judging by the statements of Major Munib, the thirty-five British prisoners of war were all wounded. Similarly, the only surviving Turkish prisoner of war statements from the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion all came from *wounded* prisoners, apart from the three in Istanbul, whose condition at time of capture was uncertain. The existence of interrogation accounts of wounded, rather than unwounded, prisoners of war may simply be a quirk of the Turkish archives, but it may also reflect a Turkish desire at the time to spare only wounded prisoners of war. No doubt most 1/5 Norfolks were either shot or bayoneted during the battle, but it seems possible that the unwounded and able-bodied officers and soldiers were bayoneted during the battle and after, while those that survived as prisoners of war were apparently the wounded.

This second explanation is also supported to some extent by a Turkish propaganda leaflet, which was issued on 6 June 1915 by the commander of the Turkish forces in the southern sector of Gallipoli. He ordered that ten thousand copies be produced immediately and thrown into the British and Allied trenches. The leaflet reads, in rather poor English: “We hear from prisoners we made lately, that your officers try to make you believe that we Turks kill and massacre our prisoners. Not just the international law, but also our religion as well tell us to treat prisoners and wounded kindly. Be sure English soldiers, that we will receive every single man of you who come to us friendly, that he will return safely home to wife and child.” This leaflet obviously reflected the widespread belief among Allied soldiers that the Turks did indeed kill their

21. Second Lieutenant Fawkes, 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, interrogation, File 542, Record 2115, Index 21–3, GSA. Lieutenant John Still to Aspinall, 10 May 1932, OG 111, Aspinall-Oglander Papers, IOW. One other 1/5 Norfolks officer was also captured and survived, but he does not appear in the Turkish archives. Significantly, though, he also was wounded; see “Captain A. Cedric M. Coxon TD,” *The Gallipolitan*, 92 (Spring 2000): 16–20.



British, French, and Australian officers taken prisoner during the Gallipoli campaign. A Turkish officer is on the left. (Source: Harp Mecmuası 1, no. 8 [Nisan 1332 (April 1916)]: 128.)

prisoners, and one amusing Turkish document further illustrates this point. According to this document, an Anzac private and sergeant captured by the Turks at Arıburnu (Anzac Cove) maintained in their interrogation that their Anzac commanders had told them that if they were captured, the Turks would kill them, cut them up, and eat them. Hence, when they were captured, the first thing the two prisoners asked was when would they be eaten. This may have been an attempt at Anzac humor, but in any case, it tends to support the general sense that the “shot/bayonnetted after capture” explanation of the fate of the 1/5 Norfolks was anticipated at the time. A recent book also generally argues for the poor treatment of Allied prisoners of war by the Turks, but a relatively neutral observer, Captain Carl Muhlmann, a German officer on Liman von Sanders’s staff in 1915, defends the Turkish army and explains that “We do not take many prisoners because the war basically

consists of a frontal push, and in the bayonet fight the Turks almost always fatally injure the opponent.”²²

It is only fair to add that the Allies at Gallipoli did on occasion dispose of Turkish prisoners of war. Thus, at one point, Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood, GOC Anzac, asked one of his brigades why it had so few Turkish prisoners of war. The answer was that they originally possessed a large number, but a heavy Turkish counterattack made them feel they could not afford to keep the men as prisoners, so the Turks were killed. Turkish snipers also were sometimes killed after capture, partly on the grounds that their form of warfare was inherently unfair. Just to give one example, Captain Hicks, 10th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, noticed four captured Turkish snipers being led off to be shot during the early August 1915 Allied offensive in the Anzac area: “The Turks caught us by the hand and begged for mercy. But we weren’t feeling very merciful to snipers just then.” A Turkish message sent by Kiazim Bey also gives the story of two Turkish prisoners, arms tied behind their backs, who were bayoneted in an Allied trench at Yusufuk Tepesi (Scimitar Hill, in the Suvla area) on 21 August 1915, because their captors did not want to bring the prisoners along as they evacuated the trench. Kiazim Bey denounced this particular action as being against the laws of war, humanity, and civilization.²³

Obviously both sides were sometimes guilty of killing prisoners of war. Yet is this rational explanation the real conclusion that can be drawn from the unhappy episode of the 1/5 Norfolks? In fact, the third explanation of a severely bungled attack seems just as likely to account for the fate of the 1/5 Norfolks, though this does not totally exclude the second, rational explanation of shooting/bayonetting after capture. In any event, the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion would have suffered severely from its vulnerable position on 12 August 1915 because of factors ranging from inexperienced commanding officers, to poor staff work in preparing the attack, to simple inexperience. According to one junior officer, the commanding officer of 54 Division, General Inglefield, left much to be desired. In his 1915 Gallipoli diary, Lieutenant Thomas Fremantle, M.P.,

22. Salim Bey Ciftligi, commander of Turkish forces near Seddulbahir (Southern Front), 6 June 1915, Record 75, File 3451, Index 20–8, GSA; Anzac prisoner of war interrogation, 17 May 1915, Record 790, File 185, Index 3–8, GSA. On Turkish treatment of prisoners, Greg Kerr, *Lost Anzacs: The Story of Two Brothers* (Melbourne, 1977, paperback edition, 1998), 3–4, 99–100. Captain Carl Muhlmann to his parents, May/June 1915, RH 69, W10-51475, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (Freiburg). Grateful thanks to my colleague Holger Herwig for obtaining this letter and deciphering the obscure German.

23. Birdwood to Hamilton, 11 October 1917, Birdwood Correspondence, 1916–1918, 8/1/11, Hamilton Papers, KCL; Captain Hicks, Diary, 8–10 August 1915, Cabinet 45/254, PRO; Kiazim Bey to Fifth Army, 19 September 1915, Record 783, File 183, Index 88, GSA.

argued that Inglefield became commanding officer to everyone's intense regret. Fremantle went on to allege that Inglefield "is a hopeless incompetent—by universal consent responsible for hundreds if not thousands of lives. He thwarts his staff out of mere whim; bungles their most careful plans; is oblivious to their superlative loyalty; and [is] a standing obstruction to their professional advancement."²⁴

Next, the commanding officer of 163 Brigade in 54 Division, Brigadier General Capel Brunker, was considered to have ideas that were "early Victorian—on one occasion he informed the officers of the Brigade that no officer should ever smoke a pipe, not even in the seclusion of his own quarters. As a leader he inspired no confidence whatever." Another officer even stated that Brunker had become mentally unstable when in temporary command of 54 Division.²⁵ Nor were the officers commanding the 1/4 and 1/5 Norfolk Battalions secure from criticism. According to Major C. P. Hines, later chief instructor at an Army Training School, "the inefficiency of so many of the battalion and higher commanders was well known . . . and the younger and thoroughly efficient officers and the men lacked all confidence in their C.O.'s and Brigadiers." Major Hines, serving in the 1/4 Norfolk Battalion in 1915, claimed to know the records of the colonels of the two Norfolk battalions very well, and alleged that "Neither Harvey nor Beauchamp were fit to lead a patrol of Boy Scouts."²⁶

It seems that although all these senior officers were courageous, many were too old or lacked experience and efficiency. If the senior officers came in for criticism, so did the arrangements for the attack of 163 Brigade on 12 August. It is clear that there were map problems, the artillery/naval fire was not coordinated with the infantry, the advance started about forty-five minutes late due to the failure to tell some battalions the actual start time, some battalions received orders and some did not, and in general, the objectives for 163 Brigade were very vague. This uncertainty about the objectives had a critical impact on the supporting artillery fire, since 59 Brigade Field Artillery later stated that "They [163 Brigade] did not mention on what they wanted us to fire or even in what direction." According to another officer, the only order was

24. Lieutenant Fremantle, Diary, 15 November 1915, 24 November 1915, OG 113, Aspinall-Oglander Papers, IOW. General Henry de Beauvoir de Lisle (commanding general, 29 Division) considered that none of the commanding officers of 11, 53, and 54 Divisions had any experience of modern war. De Lisle, "My Narrative of the Great German War," 1:89, 8/1, Hamilton Papers, KCL.

25. War Diary, "8th Battalion Hampshire Regiment, (Isle of Wight Rifles) at Suvla Bay," 163 Brigade HQ; Major Lord Dunally (1/10 London Battalion) to Aspinall, 5 February 1915, War Office 95/4325, PRO.

26. Major C. P. Hines to Aspinall, 15 April 1932, OG 111, Aspinall-Oglander Papers, IOW.

to advance in a line for twelve hours, and clear the ground of snipers. J. H. Jephson, after whom a key post at Kiretch Tepe was named, later wrote a critique. According to Jephson, the 163 Brigade attack was "badly conceived" because the brigade was fired on from both sides while advancing. In other words, it had no flank support. And "We seldom had any idea of what was required, never made a recce: we had no intelligible Maps and did not even know where we had landed. More or less always when starting a movement, we moved off 'in the blue,' with no knowledge whether our own troops were in front, or were not, etc."²⁷

It seems therefore that the attack of 163 Brigade, and of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, was ill-fated from the beginning, due to disorganisation. Most of the problems resulted from inexperience, poor staff work, inefficient commanders, and communication problems. The 1/5 Norfolk Battalion did not disappear; it was simply overwhelmed in bayonet fighting by the Turkish counterattack, after a praiseworthy but poorly organised and overly ambitious advance. The mythic explanation of the fate of the 1/5 Norfolks has always attracted supporters, but it cannot be substantiated in any way. The second, rational explanation of execution after capture may possibly be true, but if it occurred, the deaths took place through bayonetting rather than shooting. However, an opposing factor to this explanation is that the Turks did look after the wounded. The third explanation, offered here, of the bungled attack, offers the more convincing account of the fate of the 1/5 Norfolks. History, it seems, never rests, but is continually being transformed by current events as well as the past. On the other hand, the descendants of those 1/5 Norfolks who died that day will want to get as close to the truth as is possible.

Finally, and strangely enough, the sacrifice of 163 Brigade, and of the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion, was not without results. It was because of the failure of the attack of 12 August 1915 (and because of similar problems at Anzac), that a key member of Sir Ian Hamilton's staff, Major Guy Dawnay, first put forward at GHQ the idea of giving up the Suvla/Anzac beachhead, and even the whole Gallipoli expedition. In other words, Dawnay was suggesting the evacuation of Gallipoli, which, of course, eventually occurred. Because of the results of 12 August 1915, Dawnay recognised that strong action was necessary: "on August 12 when we had finally failed at Anzac and Suvla . . . I put it [evacuation] forward at GHQ."²⁸

27. 12 August 1915, War Diary, 59 Brigade Field Artillery, 11 Division, War Office 95/4298; H. N. Bridgwater to Aspinall, 24 March 1931, Cabinet 45/241; J. H. Jephson to Aspinall, 13 May 1931, Cabinet 454/242, PRO.

28. Major Guy Dawnay to wife, 9 January 1916, Letters to wife, Dawnay Papers, 69/21/1, Imperial War Museum, London.