

= Battle for No.3 Post =

The Battle for No.3 Post (28 ? 30 May 1915) was fought during the Gallipoli Campaign in the First World War , between the forces of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade and the Turkish 19th Division .

The New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade was responsible for the defence of the northern perimeter of the ANZAC beach @-@ head , holding a sector from the position known as Walker 's Top down the ridge line to the sea . Part of this defence line was formed by No.1 and No.2 Posts , isolated positions in the far north that could only be approached in safety during the hours of darkness . Near the end of May 1915 , the Turks started constructing a new position just inland from No.2 Post , that if left to be completed would cause problems for the New Zealanders . Therefore , it was decided to assault and capture the post . After the position was captured , it was named No.3 Post , and the New Zealanders settled in and attempted to improve its defences . The same night , the Turks counter @-@ attacked . Surrounded and cut off from the rest of the brigade , running short of ammunition and supplies , the defending 9th (Wellington East Coast) Squadron held out for twenty @-@ eight hours until relieved , and beat off several attempts to break through their lines . When the squadron was eventually relieved it was decided the post was untenable , and it was abandoned the same night .

The New Zealand Mounted Brigade 's casualties during the battle were forty @-@ two dead and 109 wounded . The exact number of Turkish casualties is not known but was around two hundred men . The New Zealand brigade went on to fight in the Battle of Chunuk Bair and the Battle of Hill 60 , and was then evacuated from the peninsula before the campaign ended in December 1915 .

= = Background = =

= = = ANZAC landings = = =

On 25 April , at the start of the Gallipoli Campaign , the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) landed at what later became known as Anzac Cove . Included in the landings was the New Zealand and Australian Division , but the division had been forced to leave part of its strength , including the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade , behind in Egypt . The commanders believed there would be no requirement or opportunities for mounted troops on the peninsula . However , heavy casualties , and the lack of any other reinforcements , forced them to reconsider the decision , and the mounted troops were later dispatched to Gallipoli to serve in a dismounted role .

= = = New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade = = =

Under the command of Brigadier @-@ General Andrew Russell , the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade was raised in August 1914 and consisted of three regiments of mounted infantry . While the brigade had an establishment of 1 @, @ 940 men , when dismounted its rifle strength was only the equivalent of an infantry battalion . Each of the brigade 's regiments was formed from three squadrons , each of 158 men organised into a headquarters and four troops .

When the brigade arrived in Egypt , it came under the command of the newly formed New Zealand and Australian Division . In April 1915 , the division 's infantry units left Egypt for an undisclosed destination , and it was not until 1 May that the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade learned about the Gallipoli landings . Four days later the brigade received news that it would also deploy , as reinforcements , to Gallipoli , but in a dismounted role without their horses . They arrived off the Gallipoli peninsula on 12 May , and disembarked at Anzac Cove . The next day , the brigade moved into the front line on the northern left flank , relieving the Royal Naval Brigade . Their trenches stretched from the Aegean Sea to Walker 's Ridge , and included two outposts , No.1 Post and No.2 Post . The latter position was the beach @-@ head 's most northern position , situated only two miles (3 @. @ 2 km) from Chatham 's Post , which was the southernmost point . The outlying

position of the two posts meant that movement between them and the main lines could only be undertaken safely at night . The brigade deployed with the Canterbury Mounted Rifles on the left , the Auckland Mounted Rifles in the centre , and the Wellington Mounted Rifles on the right .

= = = Turkish forces = = =

The First World War Ottoman Turkish Army was badly underestimated by the Allies . During the war it would defeat forces from the British , French and Russian armies . Before the landings Gallipoli was defended by several divisions , based on infantry battalion strong @-@ points overlooking potential landing beaches . By April 1915 , the Turks had 82 fixed and 230 mobile artillery pieces on the peninsula .

In May 1915 , the Turkish force that would confront the New Zealanders was provided by the 19th Division , comprising the 57th , 72nd and 77th Infantry Regiments , all under the command of Colonel Mustafa Kemal . Kemal was noted as " the most imaginative , most successful officer to fight on either side " during the Gallipoli Campaign . How the Turks viewed the invasion can be judged by Kemal 's orders to his troops following the initial landings ; " Men , I am not ordering you to attack . I am ordering you to die . In the time that it takes us to die , other forces and commanders can come and take our place . "

Virtually all the Turkish Army commanders , down to company commander level , were very experienced , being veterans of the Balkan Wars . But their command structure was weaker at the non @-@ commissioned officer (NCO) level , with only one NCO in each company . One advantage that the Turkish Army had over the New Zealanders , at the time , was their hand grenades , which were not used by the British forces .

= = No.3 Post = =

= = = Capture = = =

After an abortive Turkish attack in early May , from the middle of the month the New Zealanders observed their opponents improving their defensive positions . One position in particular was started overnight on 26 / 27 May , at the foot of the ridge that led down to No.2 Post and only 450 yards (410 m) from it . It gave the New Zealanders cause for concern , and therefore it was decided that the position must be captured and denied to the Turks .

Plans for the assault were formed , and the task was given to the 1st (Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry) Squadron of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles , commanded by Major Percy Acton @-@ Adams . On 28 May , the squadron was concentrated at No.2 Post and at 22 : 00 left the post to capture the Turkish position . By 23 : 30 , after advancing along the ridge , they arrived and with only slight opposition drove off the twenty Turkish defenders at a cost of one dead and five wounded . They were followed up by the 6th (Manawatu) Squadron from the Wellington Mounted Rifles , who carried entrenching tools to improve the defences and would then garrison the position , now named No.3 Post .

The 6th Squadron , who had orders to " hold the post until relieved " , started constructing defences against a Turkish counter @-@ attack , which would not be easy as the post was surrounded on three sides by the Turks . After sunrise on 29 May the squadron was in full view of the Turks and they were engaged by small arms and artillery fire . They were forced to take cover and stop building defences . That night at 21 : 00 the 6th Squadron was relieved by three troops (nine officers and ninety @-@ three other ranks) of the 9th (Wellington East Coast) Squadron , Wellington Mounted Rifles , commanded by Major Selwyn Chambers .

= = = Defence = = =

Chambers and his second in command , Captain Charles Spragg , immediately set about

constructing a defensive trench across the post , and strengthening its other defences . But by now the Turks , from the 72nd Infantry Regiment , about 1 @, @ 000 @-@ strong , had managed to use the terrain and darkness to close in on the position . At 22 : 00 Chambers reported that the position was under attack and surrounded , and at 23 : 35 the telephone line to headquarters was cut by the Turks . The area in front of No.3 Post was in a gully and out of sight to the defenders , so they had to climb on the trench parapet to engage the Turks . This tactic worked well , and they broke up the Turkish assault , causing the attackers some casualties . The Turks did not withdraw far , and crept up to the edge of the New Zealanders ' trench during the night . They then threw hand grenades into the New Zealanders ' position . At the same time , small arms fire from the surrounding Turkish positions pinned the New Zealanders down .

Just after midnight the New Zealanders sent the 2nd (Wellington West Coast) Squadron , commanded by Major James McGregor Elmslie , forward to reinforce the 9th Squadron . But by itself the 2nd Squadron was not strong enough to break through the Turkish lines and reach the post , and at times they had to engage in close quarter fighting in the thick scrub . Eventually the 2nd Squadron had to form their own defensive position in the ground between No.2 and No.3 Posts .

At 03 : 00 , just before dawn , Spragg took command of the trench in the southern sector of No.3 Post , opposite where the Turks appeared to be gathering their forces to assault the post . He successfully deployed his men so that when the attack began , it was met and broken up by the New Zealanders ' small arms fire . But by 03 : 30 the post was under sustained Turkish rifle and grenade attack and the relieving 2nd Squadron was still held up on a ridge to the south of the post . Between them and No.3 Post was a strong Turkish force which had dug in and were in communication with the Turkish attackers in the gully to the north of the post . However , the 2nd Squadron could now bring their own small arms fire onto the Turks attacking No.3 Post , making them keep their heads down . At daylight Elmslie led a troop in an attack which captured a Turkish trench to the left of the post . At 06 : 30 communications were re @-@ established with No.3 Post by using signal flags , and Allied artillery were able to bring harassing fire onto the Turkish communications trenches . But by now the defenders were running short of supplies , especially ammunition , and no one could be spared to look after the wounded , who had to see to themselves .

The 6th Squadron , commanded by Major Charles Dick , were also sent forward to support the 2nd Squadron 's attempt to break through to the post . Advancing along the ridge from No.2 Post , they reached a position on the open plateau to the north of No.3 Post , but neither of the relieving squadrons could break through the Turkish lines , and were confronted by heavy Turkish fire from the surrounding higher ground . They were blocked by the sheer number of Turkish troops . Around noon the Turks undermined and blew up part of the trench at No.3 Post , which they then occupied . Turkish attacks continued all day , and they brought into action a mountain artillery gun from a nearby position . It was now estimated that around 3 @, @ 000 Turkish troops were involved in the assault on No.3 Post .

Unable to break through to No.3 Post during the day , the New Zealanders decided to wait for nightfall to make another attempt . At the same time the Canterbury Mounted Rifles were warned they would have to provide two squadrons to take over the defence , once the 9th Squadron had been relieved . During this time the Turks had not given up their attempts to recapture the post . At 19 : 00 Chambers signalled that the " repeated bombing of the trenches on the northern side of the post had resulted in a portion of the trenches being damaged , to such an extent that he could no longer prevent the enemy from getting in . " This was followed ten minutes later with a message that the Turks had occupied the trenches in the north of the post . Around the same time the 6th Squadron , advancing from the south , had managed to get to within one hundred yards (91 m) of the post before being pinned down . Even though they now had fire support from a mountain artillery battery and a British destroyer , HMS Rattlesnake , they were unable to advance any further . As darkness approached the Turkish attacks lessened , and at 22 : 30 , covered by the 2nd and 6th Squadrons , the 10th (Nelson) Squadron and two troops from the 8th (South Canterbury) Squadron from the Canterbury Mounted Rifles managed to break through to No.3 Post . By 23 : 00 the 9th Squadron 's survivors had been evacuated and the Canterbury Regiment had taken over the

defence of the post . An hour later the 2nd and 6th Squadrons were withdrawn back to the brigade lines . Shortly after the relief , it was decided that the post was untenable and it was abandoned . While the Canterbury's were withdrawing south towards No.1 Post they were attacked by the Turks . The New Zealanders turned and opened fire , then counter @-@ attacked in a bayonet charge , forcing the Turks to withdraw before re @-@ occupying No.3 Post . The 9th Squadron had held out for twenty @-@ eight hours , during which the brigade had lost forty @-@ two men killed and 109 wounded , the vast majority from 9th Squadron . Turkish casualties were around two hundred men .

= = Aftermath = =

The battle for No.3 Post seemed a major event to those involved , but in General Ian Hamilton 's dispatches the fight only received a brief mention : " On 28 May , at 9 p.m. , a raid was made on a Turkish post overlooking the beach 1 @,@ 200 yards north of Kaba Tepe , H.M.S. " Rattlesnake " co @-@ operating . A party of 50 rifles rushed the post , killing or capturing the occupants . A similar raid was made against an enemy trench to the left of our line which cost the Turks 200 casualties , as was afterwards ascertained . "

The battle for No.3 Post cost the New Zealanders forty @-@ two dead and 109 wounded . The brigade fought another two battles at Gallipoli : the Battle of Chunuk Bair , and the Battle of Hill 60 . Their involvement in these battles proved costly , and in September 1915 , with a strength of only 249 men , they left the peninsula for the rest camp on the island of Lemnos . During the campaign , 4 @,@ 000 men served in the brigade ; 727 of those were killed and 1 @,@ 239 wounded , which equates to a casualty rate of almost fifty per cent . Amongst the dead were Chambers ? the commander of the 9th Squadron ? and Elmslie of the 6th Squadron . Both survived the battle for No.3 Post , but not the campaign , and were killed in action in August 1915 during the Battle of Chunuk Bair . Like many other New Zealanders , neither have a known grave , and they are therefore commemorated on the Chunuk Bair Memorial . The adjacent Commonwealth War Graves Commission Chunuk Bair Cemetery has 632 graves of which only ten men have been identified . During the 260 days of the Gallipoli Campaign , a total of 2 @,@ 721 New Zealand soldiers were killed and another 4 @,@ 852 wounded , out of the total 8 @,@ 556 New Zealanders who took part . The exact number of Turkish casualties at Gallipoli is not known , but has been estimated at 87 @,@ 000 dead , from a total of around 250 @,@ 000 casualties .

The war between the British and Ottoman Turkish Empires ended on 31 October 1918 , following the signing of the Armistice of Mudros . In November , the Canterbury Mounted Rifles were selected to be part of the Allied force of occupation for the Dardanelles peninsula . During their time there they took the opportunity to look for and bury the brigade 's war dead . Kemal , the commander of the Turkish 19th Division , survived the war . Following the Turkish War of Independence he became known as Atatürk (Father of the Turks) and became the first president of the new Republic of Turkey , where he is acknowledged as the nation 's " founding father " .