

FORGOTTEN GUNNERS OF GALLIPOLI

7 MOUNTAIN INDIAN ARTILLERY BRIGADE

(EX BRITISH INDIA – NOW PART OF PAKISTAN ARTILLERY)

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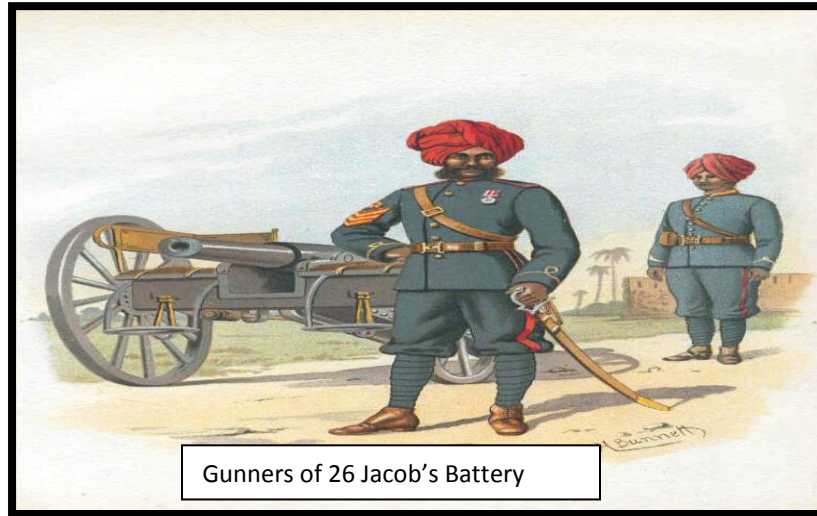
“These men fought side by side in the famous landing at Gaba Tepe and the batteries did so well that the Australians have metaphorically taken them to their hearts.”

(Regimental History of ‘The First Self Propelled Regiment (Frontier Force)’, Pakistan Artillery)

These were the words by a senior Australian officer deployed at Gallipoli, he appreciated the men of 26th Jacob’s Mountain Battery and 21st Kohat Mountain Battery. These batteries were known as 7th Indian Mountain Artillery (7 IMA) Brigade. They were the only artillery representation of British India under command ANZAC at Gallipoli in 1915. These brave and valiant outfits have distinct a historical legacy which they hold with great pride and honour. Both batteries together with 23rd Peshawar Mountain Battery (Frontier Force) were combined and designated as 21st Mountain Regiment after WWI. Today, this Regiment is part of the Pakistan Artillery and honoured as Pakistan’s most senior artillery unit and proudly known as ‘The First Self Propelled Regiment (Frontier Force)’. _ My approach will be to examine the operational performance of both batteries, separately, to highlight their effective role in supporting ANZAC throughout the Gallipoli Campaign.

26th Jacob’s Mountain Battery (Jacob’s Battery)

Jacobs’s Battery was raised on 28th March 1826. In July 1914, the Battery along with 21st Kohat Mountain Battery (Frontier Force) formed 7 IMA Brigade under command of Lt Col J.L Parker, RA at Dhera Dun. On 9th August, the Battery was ordered to mobilize. It was armed with 10 Pr BL guns. Officers of the Battery included Maj J.E.L. Bruce, RA., Capt J.A.D. Langhorne, RA, Lt H.A.Kirby, RA, Lt P.C.Champan, RA and Lt A.P.Y. Langhorne, DSO RA. On 7th August, 7 IMA Brigade was detailed as a component of Indian Expeditionary Force ‘A’ and entrained on 3rd September at Dera Dun for Karachi. 7 IMA Brigade embarked with sealed orders on 19th September on H.T “City of Poona”. These orders when opened on 21st September, directed the Brigade to disembark at Suez. Disembarking on 3rd October, the Battery entrained for Ismailia, where it camped along with 9th Infantry Brigade of 3rd Division, allotted to Suez Canal defence.



Gunners of 26 Jacob's Battery

On 3rd April 1915, the whole Battery entrained at Kantara for Alexandria and reached the destination on 4th April. The same day the 7 IMA Brigade was placed under command General Officer Commanding ANZAC and embarked on transport ship "A7". The ship sailed on 5th April; sealed orders were opened at sea and these orders directed them to proceed to Mudros Bay on Lemons Island. The ship arrived on 8th April. Next day, General Birdwood, Commanding the ANZAC discussed plans with the 7 IMA Brigade Commander. According to the plan, landing was to be made at the extreme south-west of the Gallipoli Peninsula. An infantry brigade was to land first; followed by 7 IMA Brigade. On 11th April, the GOC addressed the Brigade warning them it was probable that for the first three days after landing, they would have to be dependent on what food and water they carried ashore. On 12th April, the instructions for landing were issued. The French were to land on the Asiatic Coast, the 29th British Division at the south of the Peninsula while the ANZAC supported by 7 IMA Brigade was to land at Gaba Tepe.

On 24th April, the guns and ammunition were brought up on the deck. On morning of 25th April, bombardment by naval ships played havoc with the entrenched defenders. The ANZAC under command Birdwood was to land at dawn – all at one spot, the approach being made in dark hours and total surprise affected. Five battleships (Queen, London, Prince of Wales, Triumph and Majestic) were allotted to support Birdwood's Army Corps. The first three of these carried 1500 men of 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade, the remainder of the ships were to support the landing by gunfire. The rest of the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade, detailed as covering force, were to be transferred to destroyers to bring them close in shore, while the 2nd Victorian Brigade was to follow. The force sailed from Mudros on evening of 24th April.

It is interesting to read diary of the Adjutant of 7 IMA Brigade regarding the landing. It speaks of valorous performance by the mountain gunners:-

“April 24th, the first party to land has just gone off. The Commander thinks that they will get hell from machine guns on landing. (I fear they will be reduced tomorrow as they have a stiff climb). April 25th, we arrived at the inner rendezvous with the battleship. At 3 am we got the orders to ‘go’, and we raced through the battleship. As we stopped for the men to get into the boats, rifle fire was opened on us. The Col (Parker) and Lt (Kenyon) went with the second row. Embarking was a ticklish work while being sniped. A hole was made in the boat which we plugged. Meanwhile, a man was wounded. ‘Bayonets only’ was the order, and the men went like smoke, but there was no order, no discipline and all shouting.... It was ‘HELL’ up with the Battery, they had 27 men (25%) wounded including Chapman, Kirby and an Indian Officer”.

The following is an extract from the letter of a correspondent to a newspaper dealing with the ANZAC landing:-

“But there was a battery inland which it was impossible to locate. During the whole afternoon, it fired continuously a salvo of four shells every minute onto the ridges which our troops were holding – for the most part without protection. Some of them were in deserted Turkish trenches, of which the Turks had exact ranges. The Navy could do nothing practically to help because we could not tell them where to fire. The first relief was when a small force of Indian Mountain Artillery (26 J.M.B), which landed with us managed to drag its guns into a position just behind part of our line which was especially suffering. Then there was sound of our guns, answering the enemy’s. It came like fresh water to the infantry. The guns were doing blooming good work”.

On this day at Gallipoli the Battery fired 323 rounds and sustained the following casualties:-

- 2 British officers wounded, of whom one died later
- One Indian Officer and 18 soldiers wounded
- 2 mules killed and 9 wounded

The Battery received following awards:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| - Capt H.A.Kirky | - MC |
| - Subedar Jawala Singh | - OBI |
| - Havildar Gurbit Singh | - IDSM |
| - Naik Nikka Singh | - IDSM |

26th April was a unique day in Battery annals, as one officer and twenty Australian gunners were attached to 26th Jacob’s Mountain Battery to make up the deficiencies.

By the end of May, four soldiers, including two officers were killed and 63 sustained injuries while 8 mules were killed and 35 injured. A total of 3,705 artillery rounds were fired.

The cohesion, cooperation and comradeship amongst New Zealanders, Australian and Indian gunners were well appreciated by higher commanders at various echelons. Moreover, the Secretary of State for India issued the following press Communique' at that time:-

"A senior officer of the Indian Army states that he has been much impressed by the comradeship and good feelings existing between the Australian troops and the soldiers of Indian mountain batteries. These men fought side by side in the famous landing at Gaba Tepe and the batteries did so well that the Australians have metaphorically taken them to their hearts."

By the end of June the Battery had attained following awards:-

-	MC	-	3
-	IOM	-	2
-	IDSM	-	1
-	Mention in Dispatches	-	11

The casualties till 30th June included 7 personnel killed and 74 wounded whereas 19 mules had been killed and 59 wounded.

The 6th of August was the night of commencement of Sir Ian Hamilton's great August Offensive. An Australian and a New Zealand Division and the 29th Indian Brigade and a part of 13th Division took part in this operation. The Turk trenches on Chunuk Bair were heavily shelled. A total of 307 rounds were expended. On 9th August, the attack was renewed after a heavy artillery bombardment. The Battery fired a total of 364 rounds and gave selective punishment to the defenders. It provided effective fire support to General Cox's fresh venture on 27th and 28th August. It assisted in the success of gaining Hill 60. On these dates, 219 shrapnel shells were fired. These days furnished the last serious fighting of Gallipoli Campaign. Total gain so far was only 12 miles. By September eight British Divisions were on the orbat on the ANZAC – Suvla front. During August, the Battery fired 1,987 rounds.

The weather as usual played a dramatic role during November/December 1915 denting the professional will of military leaders and the led. A very severe blizzard on night 27th/28th November left 200 dead and 10,000 sick from the entire force. The Battery War Diary remarks:-

"Two inches of snow fell during the night. The comfort of the men in 7 IMA Brigade was, however, the constant thought of Col Fergusson who now commanded it. Hot bathing, clothes drying and dugouts were the delights of inspecting officers."

Meanwhile the strategic situation in Eastern Europe changed. The Russian debacle liberated, for other fields, vast enemy forces. Some of these fell upon Serbia from the north while Bulgarian forces did likewise from the south. The Serbians were driven southwards and Salonika was likely to fall. To obviate this and rally the Serbs, a Franco-British contingent was despatched to fend off the 'Central Powers' from the Western Aegean, for which the Gallipoli forces had to give one French and one British Division. A decision was therefore taken to call

off the Gallipoli Campaign. The evacuation was carried out by a masterpiece of organization, without casualties and without the Turks suspecting, on 18th and 19th December. The Battery prides itself on being the last artillery unit to leave ANZAC.

The various scattered details of the Battery joined up at Mudros and the Battery, complete, left on 25th December for Alexandria with one gun mounted in the bows for anti-submarine purposes. The Battery can thus claim, amongst many other roles during the war, to having acquired skill in naval gunnery. Four rounds were fired from this bow gun. Alexandria was reached on 31st December and same day the Battery entrained for Suez.

The Battery made firm friends with Australian and New Zealand troops, to whom they were attached throughout this campaign. A copy of ANZAC Book was presented to the Battery with ten pounds as a memento of comradeship. A silver "ANZAC" bowl was purchased with above sum. Battery statistics show that Jacob's Battery guns fired 9,135 rounds in Gallipoli, 21 men were killed and 144 wounded.

ANZAC Day was commemorated in 1st Mountain Regiment until 1960, it was discontinued thereafter for the reason that regular contact with ANZAC was lost and great Gallipoli gunners were forgotten.

21st Royal Kohat Mountain Battery



Operational and logistics details mentioned for 26th Jacob's Mountain Battery leading up to the Gallipoli landing are same for 21st Royal Kohat Mountain Battery. The Battery managed to put itself ashore at Gallipoli at 6.30 pm instead of 8.30 am. At dawn on 26th April, the Battery Commander was ordered by GOC Covering Force to bring the guns into action against Battleship Hill and Chessboard. The Battery fired throughout the day. The four guns fired 648 rounds that day. The guns with four of Jacob's Battery were the only guns firing at Anzac that day. 27th April was a calm day. Battery Headquarters was established at Pifferpore (Hill 50). By 96 hours after landing, all officers of the Battery were injured. Captain Whitting of Jacob's Battery framed the following formula to overcome crest clearance problems which helped achieve desired ranges:-

"Double the range minus 16% of range or 1/6th of the range".

During all this time, the orders were passed to the guns by word of mouth with an intermediate man positioned between the command post and guns, relaying the orders on account of the battlefield noise. This man was Lance Naik Karam Singh. He was shortly afterwards seen stained with blood. A gunner asked him the reason but Singh replied: "Never mind about me, I can carry on". Later, during a lull, it was found that a bullet has passed behind both eyes and he was quite blind. He was forcibly removed from the duty. For this bravery, he was awarded Indian Order of Merit (IOM).

Some observations were made about Australian gunners nearby to 21st Royal Kohat Mountain Battery. "They were always visiting and hanging around the guns and giving each other presents. For them probably war not a serious business. An order had to be issued to keep them away from the 21st Royal Kohat Mountain Battery gun area by posting a sentry."

For the Battery, life at Pifferpore was quite interesting and exciting. It, very soon, became exactly like an Indian village. Compartments were made for the mules by digging in. Mules would eat "chappaties" eagerly and often reported sick for stomach disorder. Pifferpore was also a straggler's rendezvous for Australian soldiers who had lost their way. An Australian, who got drunk and hit a driver was given six months imprisonment. Australians would take orders from Indian Commanding Officers and act quite efficiently. A well was dug by Australian experts and handed over to the Battery for use. The well positioned in full view of the Turks, had to be served with communication trenches.

The Battery had the custom of warming shells before use in winter. It proved quite effective. For a considerable time after landing, the Mountain Batteries were constantly accused of firing at their own troops. One day when Campbell was going round the firing lines, an Australian drew his attention to a shell on which CSF&RPA (made at Cossipore and filled at Rawalpindi) was written. On analysing the crater he ascertained their direction. It was possibly not fired by own guns. The Commanding Officer was informed accordingly but the mystery persisted. It was solved later. New Zealand, long before the war, ordered a battery amount of new pattern mountain guns. England sent out 10 Pr guns which New Zealand refused to accept. After much correspondence, they were told to sell them and credit the proceeds to the British Government. New Zealand sold them to Turkey which used the guns against British and New Zealand troops.

The Battery evacuated Gallipoli by 20th December 2015. During the stay at ANZAC, it had been in action continuously for 238 days and had fired 12,248 rounds, 2,041 rounds per gun. They had 11 men killed, 134 wounded of whom 5 died later of wounds, 35 animals killed, 199 animals wounded and one animal missing. Though Gallipoli was a failure, the Battery remained stout hearted, staunch and brave throughout the campaign.

Closing Remarks

An analysis of application of artillery fire at Gallipoli as mentioned in battery history books, reveals interesting details. Artillery was mainly responsible for causing heavy casualties on the both sides as well as curtailing freedom of action in the battlefield which resulted in the stagnation of trench warfare. The Ottoman artillery had complete supremacy on Day 1. They also had maximum liberty of action. The high number of casualties, some 5,000 casualties on Day 1 was probably contributed to by the failure to get the artillery ashore in an earlier time frame.

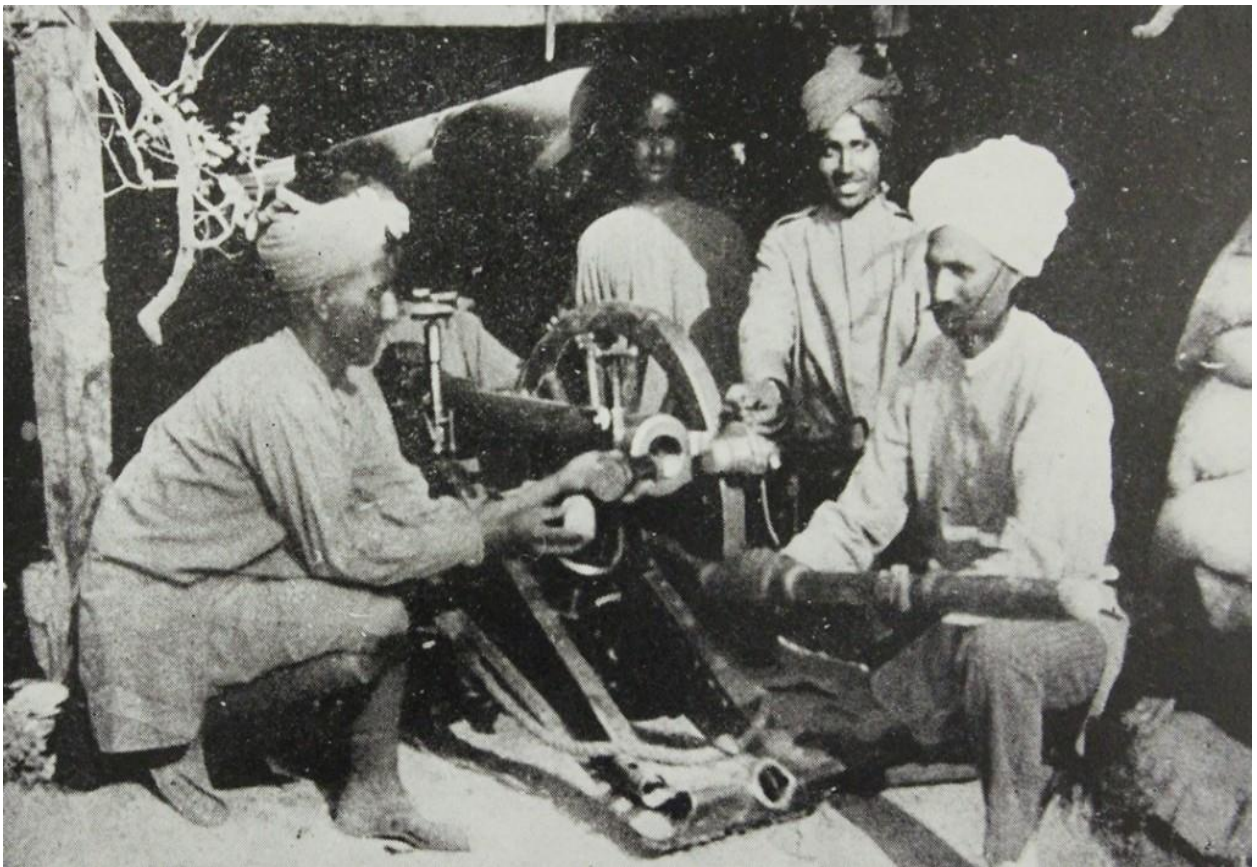
The Turks exploited characteristics of the terrain and deployed most of their artillery pieces on reverse slopes in nullahs and gullies. This ensured their complete concealment (particularly the Gaba Tepe Battery). Moreover the geographical configuration of the Anzac Cove was a challenging proposition which limited the attackers but presented the Turks an opportunity to generate artillery maneuver along exterior lines. This helped the Turks achieve superior gun density in the particular sectors. As noted, the attacking forces were slow in getting artillery ashore in the fighting environment and terrain (12 out of 60 guns landed in two days) although limited naval support was available on the first day. Naval guns were also constrained due to their flatter trajectories and thus had limited success trying to neutralize the hostile Turk batteries. It is worth mentioning that Turks had an advantage of a mix of calibers and this put intense pressure on the attackers (it is estimated 40 Turkish artillery pieces fired on the ANZAC landing – at some times this was a ratio of 8:1).

The command chain was also responsible for slow reactions. Most of the attacking officers had no experience in the application of modern fire power in rugged terrain. The use of arty air observation posts was in infancy. Limited number of planes, difficult terrain, limited availability of the trained pilots and evolving communication systems affected the application of -air observation and surveillance.

The Gallipoli Campaign helped in refinement of drills and techniques. These included the concept of piled up barrage, air OP, preliminary bombardment, SOS targets, superimposition of fire, review of safety distances, survey of gun locations, counter battery fire techniques and target registration procedures.

The author was commissioned in The First Self Propelled Regiment Artillery (Frontier Force) in 1989. He had the honour to command this great fighting unit from 2008 -2010. The author hopes to see Australia and New Zealand revive our old ANZAC affiliations rather than them being lost and forgotten forever.

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A group of gunners from the 7th Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade with one of their guns, which was used to support the Australian and New Zealand troops on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The guns of this brigade were the first ashore at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915; from then on they won, and kept, the admiration of the infantry.

Each battery has distinct history.....