

Col. Charles Snodgrass Ryan At Gallipoli with a Verascope

by Ralph Reiley

The First World War was the first war to be extensively photographed officially by professionals and unofficially by amateurs serving in the front lines. It was also the first war to use photography and film for propaganda. At the start of the war, all nations involved censored photographers and journalists. The British remembered the effect of uncensored photos and reports from the Crimean War. The Germans made it known that foreign correspondents found with a camera would be treated as spies. Soldiers were forbidden to take cameras with them to the front lines, but some soldiers ignored the order. As with all rules, there were exceptions. In some cases a soldier with a camera was chosen by the commanding officer to act as the regimental or divisional photographer. In other cases those in command did not enforce the photography ban.

Dr. Ryan with his Verascope camera, April 1915, on the Greek island of Lemnos, used as a base for the Gallipoli invasion force.

(Photo courtesy Australia War Memorial)



The governments of the warring nations wanted to keep tight control on what was reported on the war. On the home front there was in increasing demand for the latest news and images. Newspapers, magazines and newsreels were doing what they could to provide what the public demanded, often using stock photos or creating images and passing them off as actual photos of the war. [See SW Vol. 41 No. 3, page 12.] As the war progressed, governments of the nations at war saw the propaganda value of photography, as official reports from the army were not sufficient. The armies began to place official photographers at the front line, and restrictions on soldiers slowly changed, allowing more freedom to snap photos. The British continued to control photography for the entire war, but the Australians had a much more liberal view. Winston Churchill, first Lord of the Admiralty, and a former journalist, also had a much more liberal view of war photography than the British army.

In October 1914, a convoy was ready to transport the men of the Australian Imperial Force, the A.I.F., and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, the N.Z.E.F., to France. The combined force became the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, or Anzac. When they reached the Suez Canal, their orders changed. The Ottoman Empire was close to

An Auckland newspaper ad for the Kodak pocket camera.



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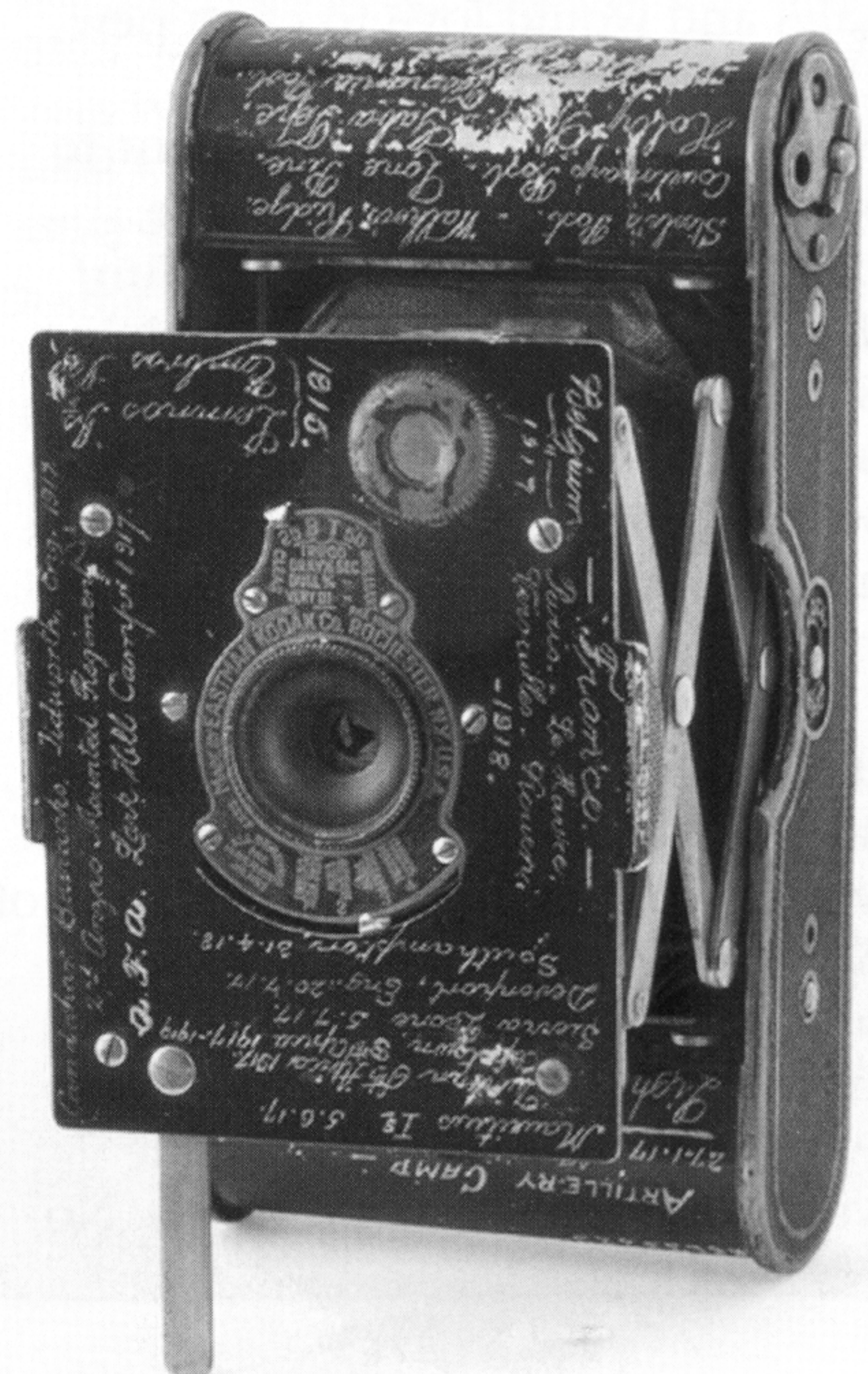
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The 1912 Kodak folding "Autographic" 127 camera that was popular with soldiers of the First World War. This particular one was carried by an Australian soldier.



entering the war on the side of the Germans and Austrians. The Anzacs disembarked in Egypt and set up base camp near the pyramids to secure the Suez Canal and prepare for possible campaigning against the Ottoman Empire, as relations with the British were deteriorating quickly.

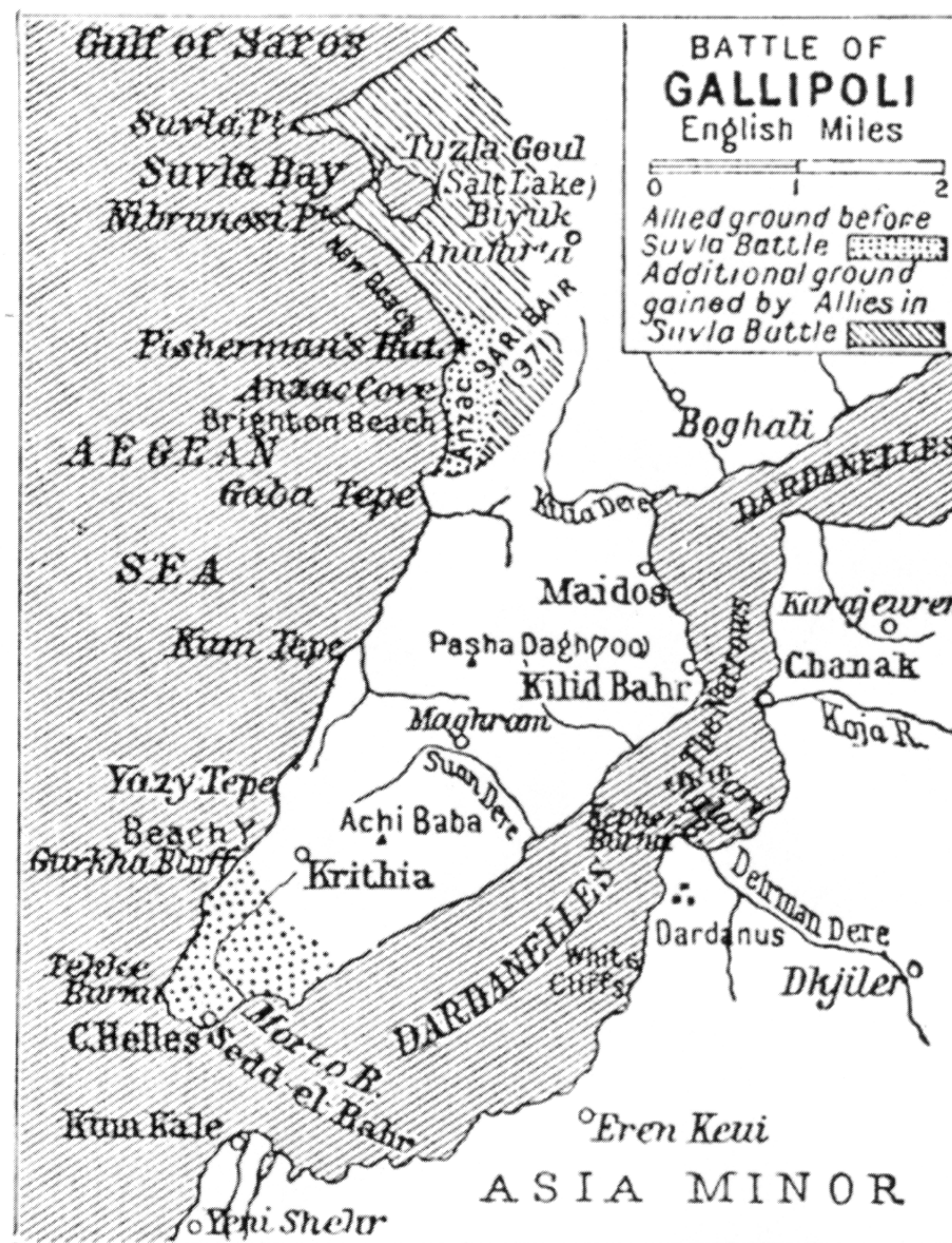
Nearly half of all Anzac troops went to war with a camera, ignoring the official rule. The war was thought to be a grand adventure, and they all wanted a camera handy to record the event. The 1912 Kodak pocket camera was the most popular type for a soldier to pack with his kit. Kodak advertised in newspapers and magazines the virtues of their small pocket camera as just the thing for the man at the front. Newspapers advertised that they would pay very well for photos of front line action. When they could, soldiers would supply photos, and often risked their lives in the effort.

The war in Europe was not going well for any of the nations involved. It was supposed to have ended with a glorious victory before Christmas 1914, but the enemy stubbornly refused to be defeated. The Ottoman Empire entered the war on Nov. 1, 1914, as a German ally and closed the Dardanelles to Allied shipping. This shut off the supply line to Russia, which had no lack of men, but was lacking in everything else. The Russian army did not have enough rifles for all of its soldiers. Those with rifles often had no bullets. Food and medical supplies were getting dangerously low. The supply line needed to be reestablished if Russia was to stay in the war. A plan to force the Dardanelles was drawn up,

and it was determined that a joint British and French naval force could reduce the fortifications of the Dardanelles and open a supply line to Russia in the Black Sea. It was thought that just the sight of the mighty British and French navy might topple the Ottoman government before they opened fire. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, devised the plan to reopen the supply line to Russia. It would be such a bold plan that no infantry would be needed, and the war would soon be over with a victory for the Allies.

The Ottoman Empire was believed to be so decrepit that the newest ships of the navy would not be needed, and older battleships would be more than enough. The launching of the HMS *Dreadnought* in 1906 made all ships built before it obsolete. Battleship design and construction was advancing at such a rapid pace that by 1912, the HMS *Dreadnought* was obsolete. On February 19, 1915, the combined British and French naval force of pre-1906 battleships steamed into the straits, and began shelling the fortifications. They succeeded in reducing the fortifications, and the way to Istanbul looked open. But the Turks had mined the straits, and four battleships were lost. Then howitzers

located behind the ridges started raining shells into the straits, and the ships' guns were unable to silence them. The invincible naval attack had failed, and it was forced to withdraw. While the attack was a surprise, the Ottoman government remained un-toppled. If the infantry landing had coincided with the first naval attack, securing the Gallipoli peninsula might have been achieved, as the only Turkish troops on the peninsula were the garrisons at the coastal forts. As with many battles of World War One, this became just



A contemporary map of the Gallipoli peninsula during the battle. Anzac Cove is just above the "AEGEAN SEA" label.

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Anzac Cove from the Aegean Sea with Plugge's Plateau in the background. This is where the Anzacs landed, a narrow beach with steep hills. The Turks were on top of the ridge, and the machine gun and rifle fire was devastating to the men packed in boats being towed to shore.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)

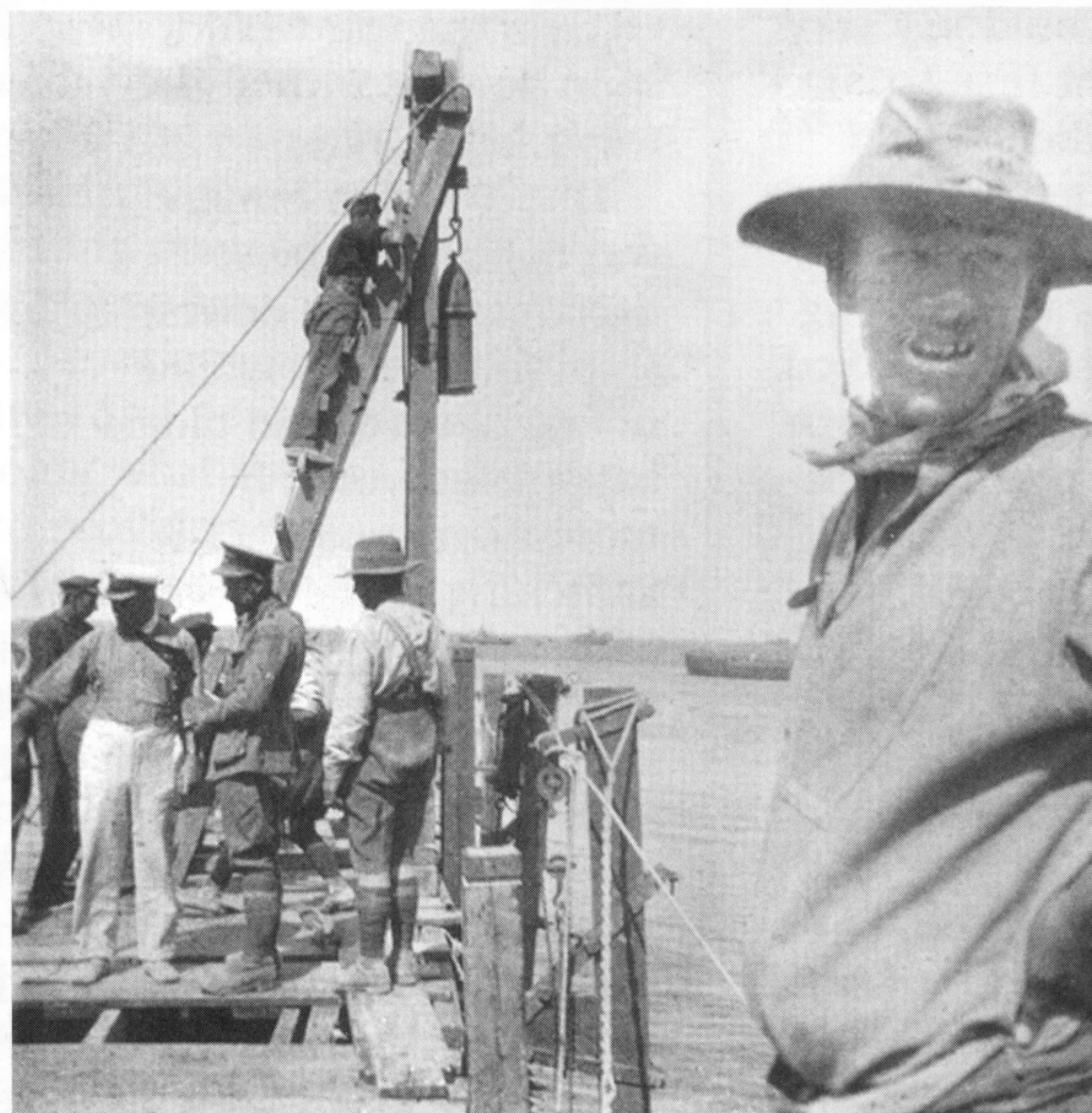




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Dr. Ryan's glass view published by *Realistic Travels* as No. 281, "Transport land reinforcements and munitions on Anzac Beach to support the final attack on Sari Bair." The attack at Sari Bair was actually in August 1915, after Dr. Ryan had been evacuated to Egypt. He took this photo in May 1915 as reinforcements and munitions were being landed at the narrow Anzac Beach, often under fire from the Turks on top of the ridge and always in range of Turkish artillery.

(Photo courtesy Australia War Memorial)

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Soldiers constructing Watson's Pier, May 1915. A dud Turkish 8" shell is being used as a pile driver. Lt. S.H. Watson, the officer in the background, is supervising the work.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)

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another lost opportunity. On March 4, 1915, a new naval force steamed into the straits, but with mine sweepers to clear the way for the navy to capture Istanbul. Mobile Turkish artillery batteries located behind the ridges could not be silenced, and the mine sweepers failed to fully clear the path. Four more old battleships were lost, and the second invincible naval attack failed. It looked like the infantry would be needed after all.

During the battle of Gallipoli a change in the control of photographers was tested for the first time by the British. With Churchill's official sanction of more liberal rules on photography and the Australian disdain for rules, there are hundreds of photographs of the Gallipoli campaign, some by official photographers, but most by soldiers taking photos as if they were on a holiday.

Churchill allowed soldiers and journalists a degree of freedom to photograph, and for newspapers and magazines to use these images, with more liberal guidelines than the army allowed on the Western Front. It should be noted that Australians probably would have done the same without British approval. Churchill had several official photographers sent to Gallipoli. Earnest Brooks, an officer in the naval reserve, and a journalist before the war, became the first official photographer at Gallipoli. The first Australian photographer was Captain Charles Bean, who was also an avid historian. He immediately expanded the nature of his official duties. At Gallipoli, Capt. Bean began collecting photographs from everyone, and these photos became the foundation of the photo collection at the Australian War Memorial, an institution that he

helped create while the war was still in progress.

In Egypt, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, the M.E.F., was being assembled. It was composed of the British 29th Division and the Royal Naval Division, both part of the pre-war regular army, the Anzacs, an all-volunteer force, and the French Oriental Expeditionary Corps consisting of French nationals from the colonies and native colonial troops. The British were the only regular troops used, the rest were volunteers and conscripts. The Turks had not been idle after the two naval attacks. The Germans had supplied them with artillery, aircraft, pilots, infantry officers, and General Limon von Sanders, one of their most capable field commanders. The Gallipoli peninsula was now well defended on the land and the sea.

On April 25, 1915, the first landings took place. The men had received some training in amphibious landings, but under ideal conditions. They were put into boats and barges, and towed to the beach. It was not expected for the Turks to defend the beach, and there were no provisions for an amphibious landing under fire. As the boats packed full of men approached the beaches, the Turkish machine guns opened up on them to devastating effect. The Turks, who were defending their homeland from a foreign invader, fought stubbornly and refused to give up any ground, except at a very high cost in men on both sides. The British and French troops landed at the southernmost tip of the Gallipoli peninsula, at Cape Helles. The Anzacs landed further up the coast, but on the wrong beach, at what became known as Anzac Cove, a place with a narrow beach and steep

hills. They did establish a narrow beach head, but the stubborn and tenacious defense by the Turks prevented them from pushing forward inland, no matter how many men were lost in the attempt.

As the Allied force could not push its way forward, it dug in, in Western Front fashion. When the Turks recovered from the shock of invasion, counter attacks were organized. They were not successful, so also in Western Front fashion, the Turks dug in. The opposing trenches were close enough in some parts of the line that insults could be hurled back and forth, along with the makeshift grenades that both sides manufactured from ration tins. As the months wore on, men on both sides were killed in short furious battles or shot by snipers when they got careless, but mostly by disease. The dead in No Man's Land went unburied. There were swarms of flies feeding

on the dead, in the open latrines, and on the rations the men ate. Dysentery and typhoid caused more casualties than enemy action. As there were no proper field kitchens, the Allied soldiers had to make due with a monotonous diet of hard biscuits, tins of tasteless jam and bully beef. The sanitary conditions were primitive. Water was always in short supply. Every soldier was infested with lice. There was no rear area to rest troops exhausted by front line duty that was not within range of the Turkish artillery. The one hospital ship had been used to transport horses before it was a hospital, and it had not been cleaned properly. It was obvious even to the British that the Dardanelles campaign was a miserable failure, but there seemed to be no way to end it without the political fallout of the British Empire being beaten by a perceived inferior nation. So the campaign drug on for

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Dr. Ryan's glass view published by Realistic Travels as No. 117, "Turkish emissary with white flag being led blind folded through our lines at Anzac beach, Gallipoli." On May 22, 1915, Major Sam Butler, with the white flag, leads Major Kemal Ohri through the lines at Anzac Beach. He is being taken to Gen. Birdwood's headquarters to arrange an armistice for May 24 so that both sides can bury the dead from the May 19 battle.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)



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Australians burying the Australian and Turkish dead during the nine hour armistice on May 24, 1915, in front of Quinn's Post or the Chessboard. Every important trench position or distinctive landmark was given a name by the soldiers. More than 3000 men were buried that day.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)





Casualties on the slopes of Sari Bair after our repulse of furious enemy assaults on the ridges.

months, until the Serbian front started to collapse.

With the Germans and Austrians in the north, and then the Bulgarians coming from the east, the Serbian army gave way, and began a long retreat. In October 1915, the French pulled their force from Gallipoli and sent it to Salonica to aid the Serbs. This forced the British and Anzacs to begin their evacuation. It seems the evacuation was the only well planned part of the campaign, from December 1915 through January 8, 1916. A number of deceptions were carried out to disguise the fact that the British were leaving. Extra camp fires were set at night to make it appear that the positions were fully manned. Rifles were set up,

Realistic Travels view No. 405, "Casualties on the slopes of Sari Bair after our repulse of furious enemy assaults on the ridges." A creative caption given to a photo by Dr. Ryan, taken on May 24, 1915 during the nine hour armistice to bury the dead of the battle on May 19. Sari Bair was a hill the Australians tried to take from the Turks in August 1915, after Dr. Ryan had been evacuated to Egypt. These are dead Australians in the photo, who had been laying in No Man's Land well before the Turkish assault of May 19, 1915.

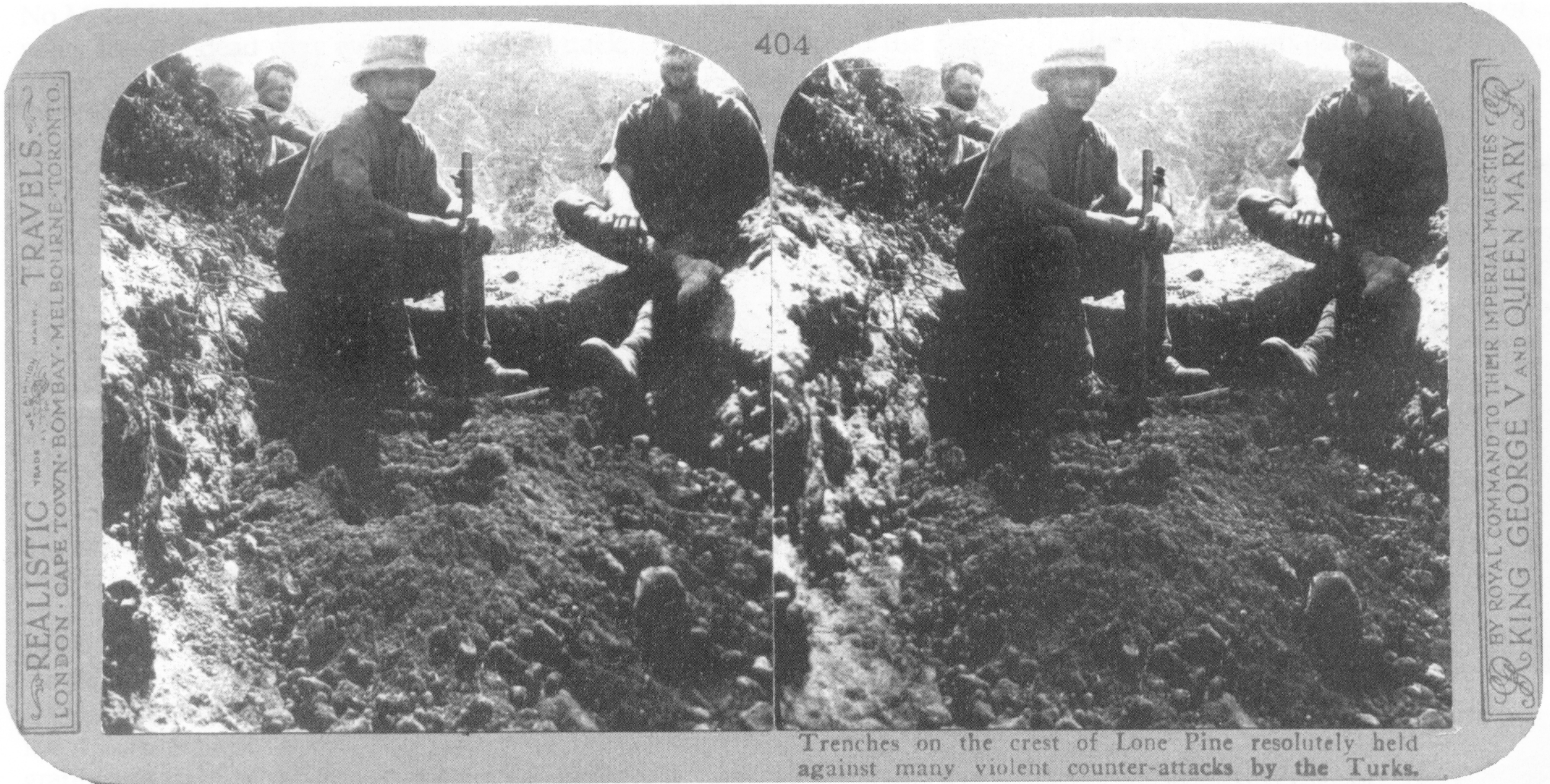
with a can tied to the trigger. Water dripped into the can, and eventually pulled the trigger, making empty trenches appear to be manned as random rifle fire continued up and down the line.

The plan to open the Dardanelles failed, making it an Ottoman victory, but one with a terrible cost. The British sent a total of 496,000 men, 328,000 combatants and 141,000 non-combatants to Gallipoli, of which 120,000 were casualties, including 34,000 dead. A steady flow

of replacements marched in as the wounded and sick were shipped out. Nearly 60,000 Anzacs were sent to Gallipoli. The Australians lost 19,441 wounded and 8709 dead. The New Zealanders lost 4752 wounded and 2721 dead. The French sent 79,000 men to Gallipoli and lost 17,175 wounded and 9829 dead. Nearly 500,000 Ottomans served at Gallipoli, and suffered nearly 300,000 casualties, including 87,000 dead while 1,700 Indian laborers died, as did an uncounted number of Ger-



Dr. Ryan's glass view published by Realistic Travels as No. 284, "Turks lying as they fell amid the bush on the slopes of Chunuk Bair, taken and held under a withering fire." One of the photos Dr. Ryan took in No Man's Land on May 22, 1915, during the nine hour truce to bury the dead from the Turkish attack of May 19 at Quinn's Post or the Nek, two important trench positions the Turks wanted to capture. As the battle wore on, every trench and terrain feature received a name from the troops defending it, or trying to capture it. (Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)



Realistic Travels view No. 404, "Trenches on the crest of Lone Pine resolutely held against many violent counter-attacks by the Turks." A view by Dr. Ryan, taken in May 1915. The battle at Lone Pine was in August, after Dr. Ryan had left Gallipoli. Here soldiers take a break in digging a trench. [The high contrast in this and other Realistic Travels prints of Ryan's images may be due to copying Ryan's glass positives rather than having his negatives available.]

mans, Newfoundlanders and Senegalese.

Dr. Ryan

One of the men at Gallipoli was a very unusual soldier who left Australia with a stereo camera. Charles Snodgrass Ryan had already lived a full life before 1914. Born in Killeen, Victoria, in 1853, he was the son of Irish immigrants who came to Australia in the 1840s, the time of the Potato Famine. He studied medicine at Melbourne University, and fin-

ished his medical studies in 1875 at Edinburgh, Scotland, one of the best medical schools in the world. After finishing his studies, he took a year off, traveled through Europe and spent an extended time in Rome. He wrote that he was nearly engaged to an attractive young Italian woman from a wealthy and aristocratic family. One Friday, at a restaurant, he ordered mutton chops, and not fish. His very catholic near fiancé broke it off with him for being an uncultured lout. A few weeks later he read in the

London Times that the Turkish army wanted twenty military surgeons. A few days later Dr. Ryan was on his way to Istanbul with £25 in his pocket for expenses and a contract from the Turkish government for 200 lira a year, to be paid monthly in gold. Dr. Ryan served as a military surgeon in the last phase of the Turkish-Serbian war of 1876-1877. He then went directly into the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, with the Turkish force defending the city of Plevna. Ryan was admired for his reckless habit of tending the wounded men on the front lines during battles, and was called Plevna Ryan, a name that would follow him back home. He also participated in one cavalry charge against the Russians,

Dr. Ryan's glass view published by Realistic Travels as No. 404 reveals the superior tonal quality of his original prints when compared to the Realistic Travels card using the same image.

(Courtesy of Australia War Memorial)





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 Officers and soldiers in a trench. While the Australians did not push very far off the beach, an amazing complex of trenches was constructed due to the entire position being in range of the Turkish artillery. The rocky terrain limited the depth of trenches in many places, and sand-bag parapets had to be constructed. Note the primitive latrine at lower right.

(Photo courtesy Australia War Memorial)

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 Dr. Ryan sitting outside his dugout, marked M.O. for Medical Officer, May 1915.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)

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where he narrowly escaped capture. During his time as a surgeon for the Turkish army, he learned to perform amputations quickly and effectively. With the primitive medical facilities at the time, wounded soldiers had two bad choices, death by gangrene or an amputated limb.

Before the city fell to the Russians, Ryan was ordered to escort the wounded to Sofia, 300 miles away. He was then sent to Erzerum, in Anatolia, where typhoid killed more soldiers than enemy action. Ryan was one of the few surgeons to survive the winter. He wrote later that the winter in Ezerum was the most horrifying part of his life. The city surrendered to the Russians, and Ryan was captured. The war ended shortly afterward and he was treated as a guest of the Russian army and not a prisoner. When Ryan returned to Istanbul, he was awarded the Order of Meidjidie 4th class and the

Order of Osmanieh 3rd class, both prestigious Turkish medals.

Dr. Ryan returned to Australia and wrote a book about his experience, *Under the Red Crescent*, which is still in print. He set up practice in Melbourne in 1878, and was on staff at the Melbourne Hospital and the Children's Hospital. In 1880 he treated Ned Kelly and kept him healthy for his trial and execution. In the last shootout Ned Kelly and his gang had with the police, only Kelly survived the battle. Like Jesse James, Kelly was a folk hero to some, a murderous bushranger to others. Dr. Ryan remarked that Ned Kelly displayed none of the tough stoicism the wounded Turkish Soldiers displayed as he treated them for their wounds. Dr. Ryan was Medical Officer to the Victorian Railways and the Turkish Consul, and was an avid ornithologist and photographer. He joined the Australian Militia, as Prin-

cipal Medical Officer, third military district.

In August 1914, at the age of 60, Dr. Ryan enlisted for active duty. He was made a colonel with the Corps Headquarter staff and appointed Consulting Surgeon to the A.I.F., the Australian Imperial Force. He sailed for Egypt in October 1914, and was appointed to Lt. General Sir William Birdwood's staff. Colonel Ryan was unique among the Australians in packing his Jules Richard Verascope camera with his kit and not a Kodak pocket camera. He took about 180 stereoviews of his time in Egypt and Gallipoli. As Dr. Ryan went about his duties at Gallipoli, he would snap photos, as did other soldiers, despite the harsh and dangerous conditions.

On May 19, 1915, the Turks attacked the Australian lines. In a few hours 10,000 men were wounded and more than 3000 Turks and 160 Anzacs were killed in the battle.

No Man's Land was only thirty yards wide, and the dead were everywhere. After a few days in the sun, the stench from the dead was unendurable, and the clouds of flies feeding on them grew massive. On May 22, 1915, Major Kemal Ohri came to the Australian front line under a flag of truce. He was blindfolded and taken to the command bunker on the beach to arrange an armistice to bury the dead. Dr. Ryan snapped a stereo of Major Ohri being lead to General Birdwood, the Australian commander.

A nine hour truce on May 24 was quickly arranged. It was also understood that no offensive action such as digging new trenches, fortifying positions or gaining intelligence would take place. Dr. Ryan took his camera, against the armistice agreement, into No Man's Land to photograph the burial of the Turks and

Australians killed in the May 19th attack. His camera caught the attention of two Turkish officers who approached Ryan to investigate what he was doing. When they saw the Turkish medals on his uniform they commented to each other about who he had stolen them from, in their language. Dr. Ryan took offense at being thought a thief, and replied to them in passable Turkish that the medals were his and that he earned them in 1878 at Plevna. The Turkish officers were astonished, and had a lively conversation with him, until some German officers approached and brought a rude and unpleasant end to the fraternization.

In June 1915, Dr. Ryan contracted typhoid fever after a bout with dysentery, and was evacuated to Egypt to recover. He was then sent to England in 1916, where he served as consulting surgeon, medical head-

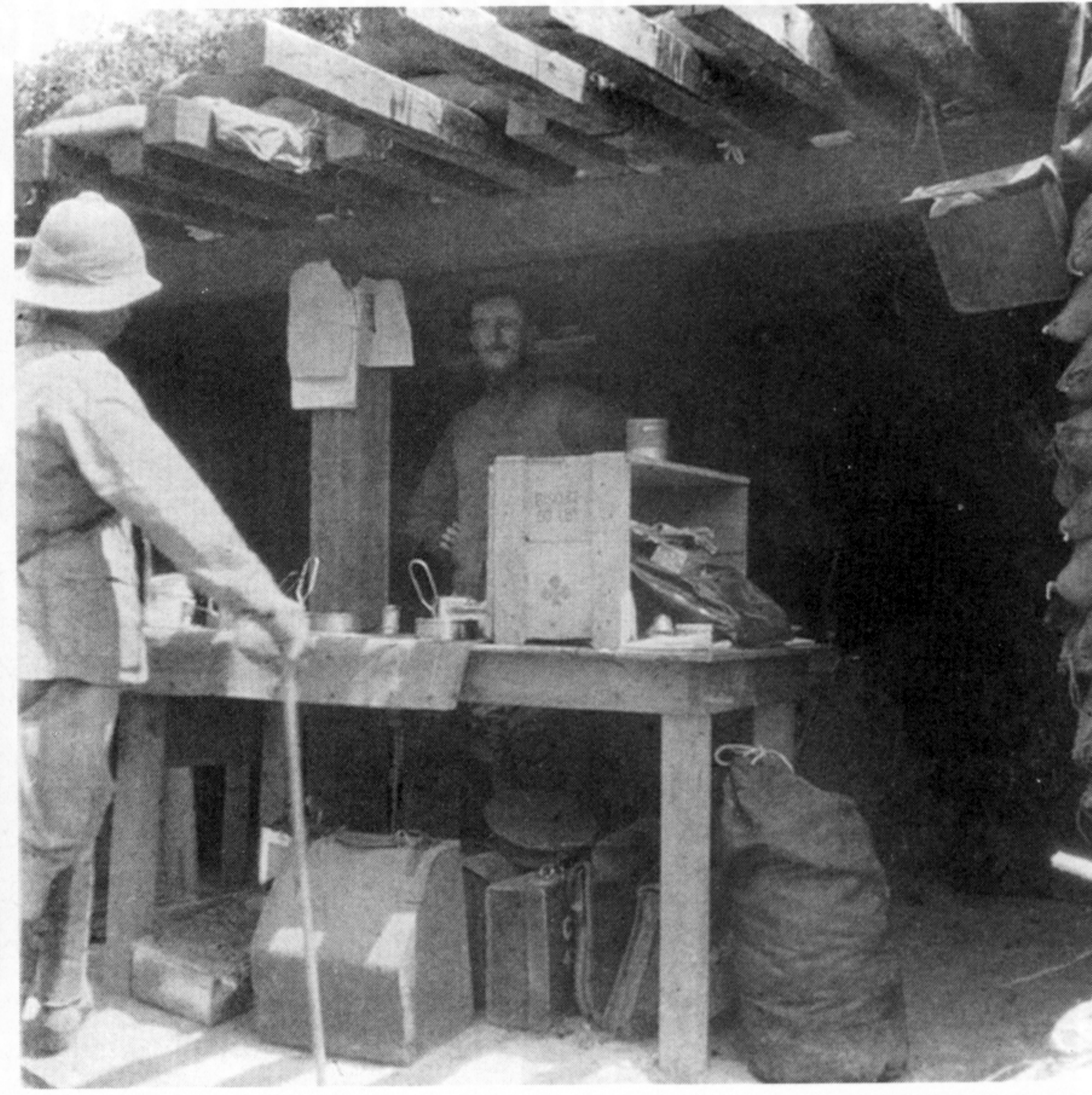
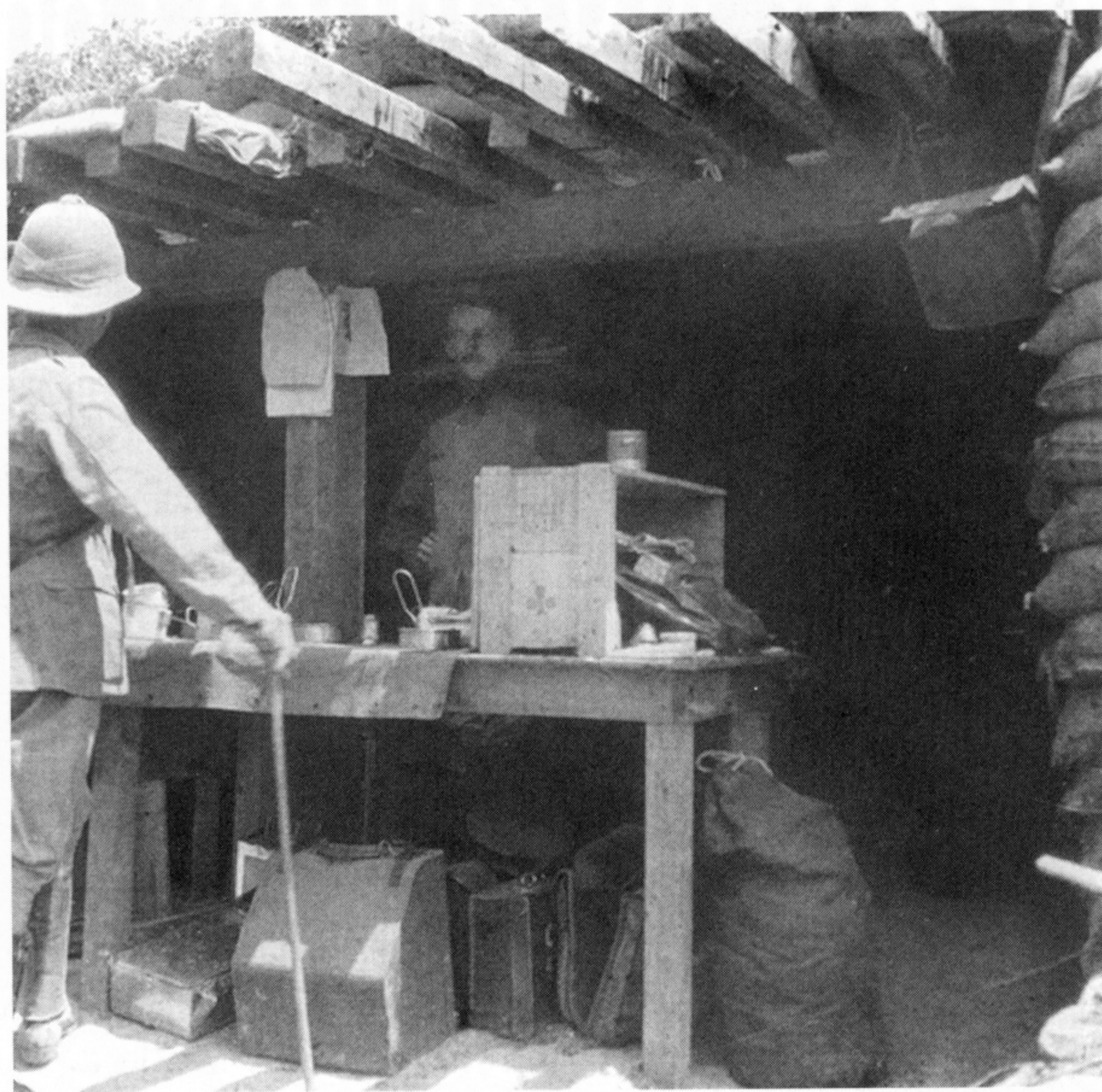
quarters staff, A.I.F. until the end of the war. He soon gained a reputation for being very tough on medical boards, as he expected all military doctors and surgeons to maintain a high standard of performance. In 1917 he was appointed honorary surgeon-general A.I.F. In May 1919, he returned to Australia, having retired with the rank of honorary major general. In 1919 he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire, and became Sir Charles Snodgrass Ryan. In 1926, Dr. Ryan was returning to Australia from Europe onboard the *Ontranto* when he complained to other passengers that he was not feeling well, and died a few hours later of cardiac failure at the age of 73. He was buried in the Melbourne general cemetery.

The conditions under which Dr. Ryan took his photos were

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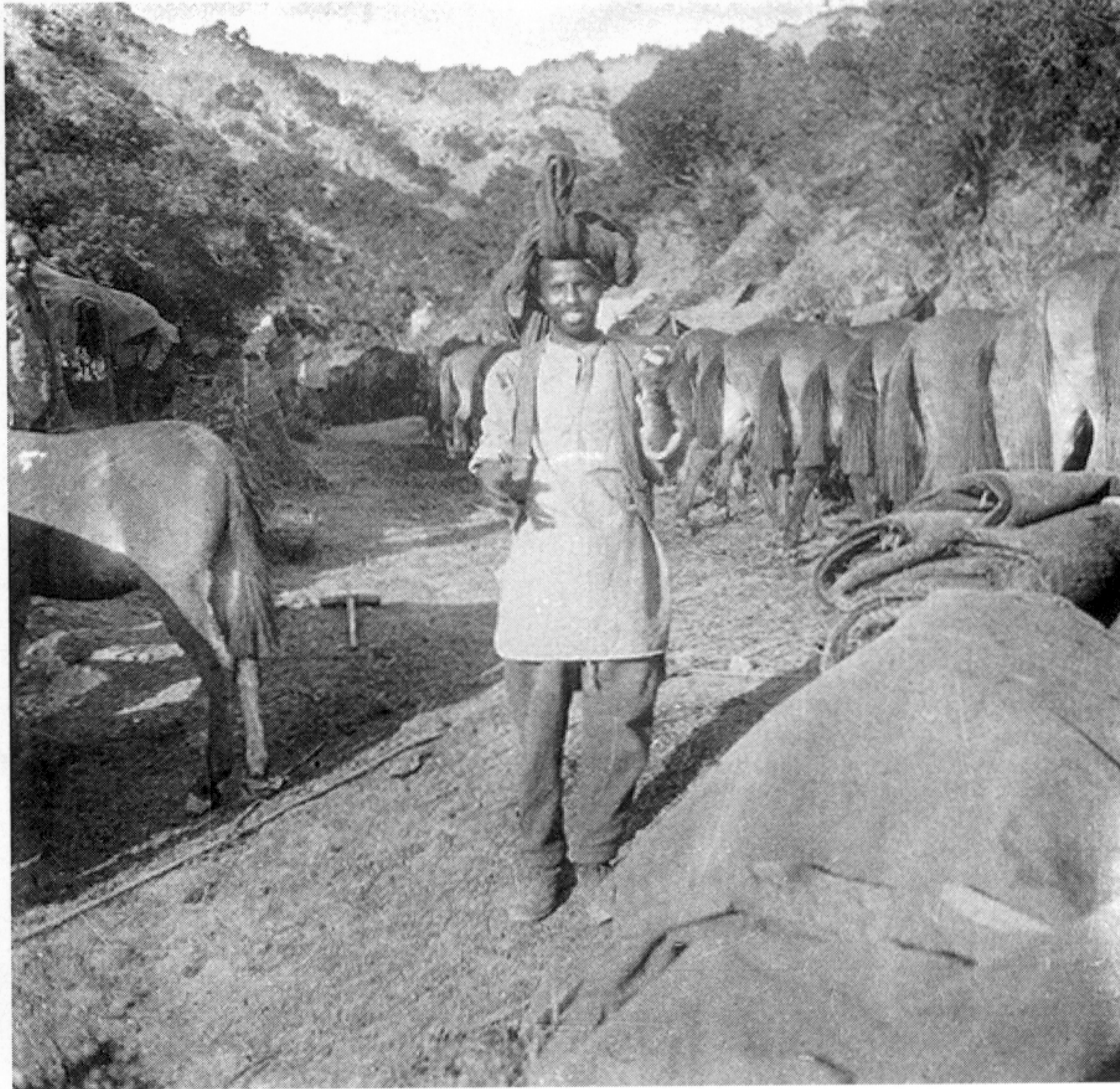
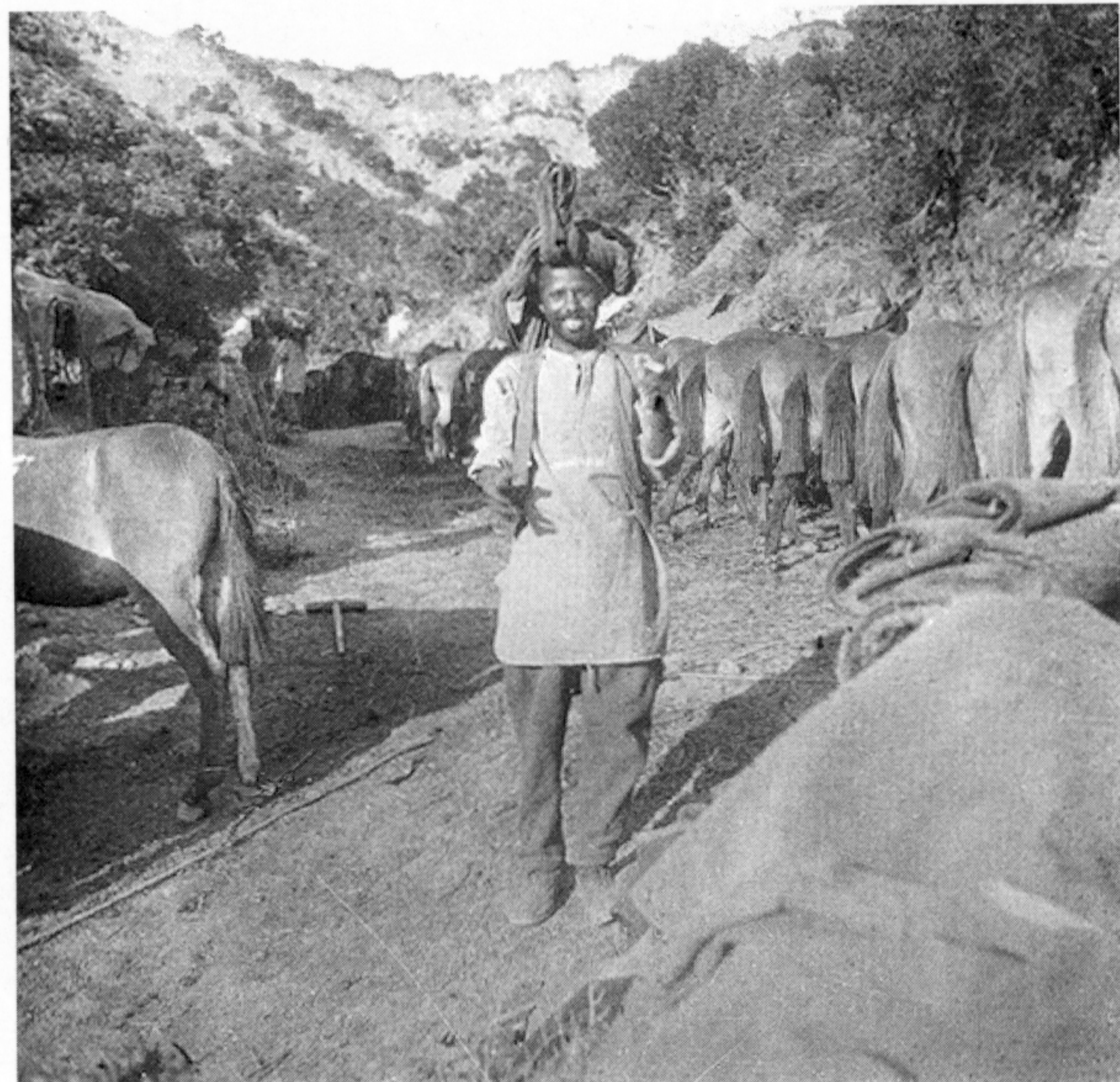
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Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant J.W. Donnelly behind the table, with General Birdwood, at the dugout used for the 1st Division Headquarters.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)



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Dr. Ryan's glass view published by Realistic Travels as No. 407, "Horse and mule lines near the front line, Dardanelles." An Indian laborer at Anzac Beach, May 1915.

(Photo courtesy State Library of New South Wales)



At Gallipoli with a Verascope (Continued from page 15)

extraordinarily difficult and hazardous. The entire Anzac position was in range of the Turkish artillery. Gallipoli was a very inhospitable place to live, and waging a war there was extremely difficult. The food was monotonous, water was scarce. Swarms of flies were everywhere, and uniforms were full of lice. Everyone there was suffering from dysentery to some degree. The weather was either extremely hot and arid, or cold and arid. That did not stop Dr. Ryan and the other Australians from snapping thousands of images during one of the most miserable and pointless battles of World War One.

Many of Dr. Ryan's photos have survived 100 years after they were taken. He used a Richard Verascope camera, and his images are on 45mm x 107mm glass plates. There are multiple copies of his glass views. One set of 31 views of Gallipoli was acquired by the State Library of New

South Wales in 2008, and can be found on the library's Flickr site. A group of his views are held by the Australia War Memorial, where they were donated during the war or shortly after it ended. They can be found on the Australia War Memorial website. One group was donated by Dr. Ryan, but they are all of the Australian troops in Egypt. The other two groups are of Gallipoli, and were donated by R. G. Casey and J. P. McGlenn. Both men were officers in the A.I.F., and both were at Gallipoli when Dr. Ryan was there. If Dr. Ryan did not know them before 1914, he certainly would have had plenty of time to get to know them in Egypt and Gallipoli. It is possible that Dr. Ryan gave both of them copies of his views, and they later donated them to the war memorial.

H.D. Girdwood acquired a number of Dr. Ryan's images, and they are in the set of 600 Realistic Travels war

views. Typically the images in the Realistic Travels views are sharp and clear, but Dr. Ryan's are not as sharp or clear as the others, with high contrast in the images, much like those of the Troutman war views. One can speculate that they were copy views, or there could have been other reasons, so speculation is mostly pointless, but entertaining.

Dr. Ryan had nearly been forgotten until 2014, when a traveling exhibition of his images made the rounds in Australia as part of the 100th anniversary of the First World War. The exhibition was called "A Camera at Gallipoli, the Photographs of Charles Ryan." Stereoview halves were enlarged for the exhibit, with a detailed description of each one, a biography of Dr. Ryan and the history of the Gallipoli campaign.

There were two questions I was not able to answer. One was why

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there are multiple copies of his glass images. Of the known sets, many images are the same in each set, and some images are unique to each set. The other question was how Dr. Ryan's images found their way into the Realistic Travels set of war views. I asked a number of Australians those questions, including the curators of the Ryan traveling exhibition. They all politely answered that they had no idea. Maybe they are pointless questions, and his images are enough for anyone, but they make me wonder. The Realistic Travels images are courtesy of Bob Boyd. The glass images are courtesy of the Mitchel Library, State Library of New South Wales and the Australia War Memorial.

Sources

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European Gems

(Continued from page 4)

Some unknown photographer probably took a fancy to the scene and tried to re-stage it for the stereoscope. Though the attitude of the young maid doesn't look as natural as in the painting and though Cupid has lost some of his impishness, he didn't do too badly with such a difficult subject, even adding a British touch to the composition—note the presence of a Staffordshire dog—and some tools to the tired maid who now has to carry about a long-handled duster, a broom, a brush and a dustpan. The poor quality of the print is no fault of his, the photo shown here (Fig. 2) being a pirated version. 