

## "A Long, Long, Way" – Notes Of Our Gallipoli Visit – May 2023

For a long time, I've wanted to visit the resting place of adoptive Uncle, Private Aaron Green, 18438, 6<sup>th</sup> Bn., Yorkshire Regiment. The opportunity came this month, when Mike and I went with **Battle Honours Tours**, on their "**Walking Gallipoli**" 4-day programme. If you did want to research the Tour Operator further, here is their web address: [Gallipoli battlefield tour 2023 \(battle-honours.co.uk\)](http://Gallipolibattlefieldtour2023.battlehonours.co.uk)

### Aaron Green – From Chapeltown to Gallipoli, by way of Darlington and Lemnos Bay ...



Aaron, born in 1895, was the Son of Mr. Alfred Ernest & Mrs Harriet Green, of Greystones, Sheffield. He had older siblings (Florence, Priscilla & Maurice) and younger ones (Hilda, Colin & Elizabeth). He had what sounds like a challenging childhood and adolescence. His Father pretty much abandoned the Family and his Mother died young. Aged 15, he was apprenticed out of the Ecclesall Bierlow Workhouse to live with the Birks Family in Chapeltown, an industrial/mining village just to the North of Sheffield. Herbert Horace & Annie Birks are my maternal Grandparents. My Grandfather, Herbert Horace, also lost his Mother when he was young and himself had a similar Workhouse upbringing. So, it seems likely there was a motive for the couple to give a chance to someone who had also had it tough. Aaron was apprenticed to Herbert Horace at Newton Chambers Iron Foundry, to work as a trainee Cast Iron Pipe Moulder. This he did till the outbreak of WW1.

From Aaron's letters and documents, it's clear he viewed Annie as Mother and was obviously very fond of her. There's a strong impression that he had settled in his new life and his home in Chapeltown. Things were more settled for him at last. When War came, he joined up around July 1915 and did training in Darlington, along with Charlie, who was Annie's Brother. Then he went out to Gallipoli, landing in early September 1915, as part of reinforcements to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion's initial August landing.

Tragically, he was killed on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1915 and is buried at Hill 10 Cemetery, Suvla Bay. This was the main purpose of the recent visit, to pay respect at his resting place and find out more about the Gallipoli Campaign. Aaron has always been a part of the Birks Family, even though he had a different Birth Family. My Cousins and I were always told that he was "Grannie and Grandad's adoptive Son". This is how we thought of him, still do and always will.

### Gallipoli Walking Tour

Beforehand, I felt like we were undertaking quite an adventure. Even though Gallipoli is only just on the edges of Europe, it seemed like it would be a remote place to visit, somewhere that felt a long, long way away -almost a mythical place and for all the wrong reasons.



Here is a map showing its location:



Here is another showing the various amphibious landings of the Campaign:

**Here is a brief Summary of the Gallipoli Campaign:**

The Allied objective in the Gallipoli campaign was, by capturing Constantinople (now Istanbul), to force Germany's ally, Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, out of the War. This would also open an ice-free supply route, from the Aegean through the Dardanelles and onto the Black Sea, to aid Russia. It was also hoped that the pressure on Turkey would influence the then neutral states of Bulgaria, Romania and Greece to enter the War on the Allied side. Initially commenced in March 1915, as mainly a naval campaign, it then developed, though April, into a series of amphibious landings. This then led onto the final large-scale landings at Sulva Bay in early August. The Final withdrawal was made in late December 1915.

You can read between those lines for sure ...

**Introductory Information on the Tour**

Our 5 Guides were great (4 UK and 2 Turkish). There was a nice atmosphere in our Group as a whole. There were two Tours running simultaneously, "Walking Gallipoli" and "Hidden Gallipoli". The first is meant more for first time visitors and the second geared to those returning, who want to visit lesser-known sites on (and off) the Peninsula. Each of the Tours had 2 UK Guides and 1 Turkish. The Turkish Guides stayed with the same Tour for the whole trip. Each day you could choose which of the two Tours you wanted to join and the Guides did their very best to accommodate individual requests. There were 24 of us in the whole Group itself and our Walking Gallipoli Tour numbered about 11/12 people on any day, depending on who was joining which itinerary. Each Tour had its own minibus, plus driver and if there was room in the buses that day, you had complete freedom to mix and match which activity you wanted to do.

## DAY ONE – SUNDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY - TRAVELLING TO CANAKKALE



Long day! Once arrived at Istanbul Airport late pm, we began to introduce ourselves to one another and meet a few of the party who'd travelled independently to meet us. We had a 3-hour coach journey to Canakkale, (pronounced "Chanakkali"), accompanied by our UK Guides and one of the Turkish Guides, who came to meet us. The route to our destination was made so much easier by the relatively new bridge over the Dardanelles Straits – which looks a bit like the QE2 Bridge. Once arrived, around 10 pm, we had very welcome drinks & snacks in the restaurant of the **Grand Anzac Hotel** right in the characterful heart of Canakkale.

We were given a briefing about the format for the Tour and introduced to "Efe's" Turkish Pilsner – which was much enjoyed!

Here is a picture of the Centre of Canakkali and our Hotel was just beyond the street in this shot, on the left-hand side of a little square, near where the minaret is:



We were also told that each day, to get to the Peninsula, we would take a local ferry across the "Narrows". This is, as the name implies, the most minimal distance across the Straits, over to a large village called Eceabat. We would then use the minibus to get around, returning on the ferry late pm.

Every day was a 9.00 AM start, for the short walk from the Hotel to the Ferry terminal.



This is a view from our first ferry trip looking back at Canakkale and the adjacent picture is when we were pulling back into the terminal later on during our first day – in glorious sunshine. We are looking back at Eceabat across the Narrows. Up on the hillside to the right of Eceabat is a Turkish Memorial, commemorating Gallipoli, from a Turkish point of view.

### Monday 8 May Option One – Walking Gallipoli AM – Walk 1 Helles –

We took the ferry over to Eceabat. Then minibus to West Beach, Cape Helles. Saw the cemeteries of Lancashire Landing and V Beach. Crossing the fields around Hunter-Weston Hill, we arrived at the Helles memorial to the missing. We then visited Sedd el Bahr where the substantial Turkish defences awaited the men assaulting from the famous coal steamer the River Clyde. For lunch we met up with the other Tour at a nice restaurant/cafe. We had a chance to chat over a great 3 course meal, which set us up nicely for the afternoon!

**PM Walk 2 Gully Ravine** – we walked “up the line” along the weather-beaten Gully Ravine to Pink Farm, allowing us to visit spots that once housed over-burdened Field Ambulances and countless billets in its shelter, alongside wells sunk by the Engineers to quench the parched thirst of the troops.



This is one of the famous Ataturk Memorials, with a beautiful message, very moving. It apparently replicates Mustafa Kemal’s words post War. However, I was told by one of our party, that this is slightly controversial and the subject of debate. On further research, enabled by this former Australian Army fellow traveller, it seems like the “legend” which has grown up, about it being Ataturk’s exact words, is a bit apocryphal. It could have been a blending of spoken and written words by Ataturk/his

minister/others ...

However, it still feels very powerful and comforting to me. Especially so, as every Cemetery on the Peninsula is immaculately maintained by a Turkish CWG Team based there.

Our Turkish Guide, Adem, also gave us the Turkish perspective on the War and explained more about Ataturk – who really founded Turkish secular democracy post WW1. If you want to read the text of the slightly disputed Ataturk speech, here is a link: [Ataturk's Speech about Gallipoli: The Greatest in Turkish History \(turkeytravelcentre.com\)](http://turkeytravelcentre.com)

Caught the ferry back to Canakkale and after a bit of a rest / tidy up, we went out to explore eateries around the bay and ferry terminal. It's a very lively town, even on a Monday evening! We ended up having a great meal at a Bar/Restaurant called "Memphis", where, thankfully, English was spoken. It was buzzy and informal. We got a few stares as A) we were drinking wine (unusual there I think!) and B) we were obviously a little older than their more typical clients – it was all good though! Canakkale is a university town and also a hub for people, like us, visiting the Peninsula. It was especially lively because of the political hustings taking place along the waterfront during the evenings we were there. It was the week before the first round of the Elections and from what I understand, Canakkale is in an area more typically popular with the Opposition, than with Erdogan. See what happens this coming Sunday at the second round. I have a feeling it's a foregone conclusion.

### **Tuesday 9 May Option One – Walking Gallipoli AM Walk 3**

After leaving the ferry, we drove to a place called Gaba Tepe for a dive boat trip around the Anzac Cove, viewing the landing area from the sea. It was very windy and a bit chilly, so no diving undertaken ha ha! However, it was very atmospheric, both to see the land from the sea, also to be on such a very characterful dive boat.



Once back on shore we drove to the same places we'd seen from the boat. Here the Anzac Forces landed and scrambled past the "Sphinx" to breach the Turkish lines. We then walked from the stunning Beach Cemetery to the high ground of Lone Pine. We had a very breezy picnic lunch sheltering in the lee of the Lone Pine Memorial!

**PM Walk 4** - Clinging to the cliffs above the beaches, we charted the frontline held by Anzac troops. Burial spots at Parade Ground Cemetery and Johnston's Jolly joined preserved trenches and memorials named after courageous Australians. We finished at the tragic site of the attack by the Australian Light Horse on The Nek ('Gallipoli' -Mel Gibson). We then repaired for a very welcome cup of Turkish tea (which they call "chai") at another site. Although though it was a bit of a chilly day,



some brave souls were determined to enjoy ice cream! On the ferry returning to Canakkale, most people opted to sit within the spacious interior of the boat, because it was so cold and windy. It was a nice atmosphere and there was a busker playing traditional Turkish music, which I personally thought was lovely and made the journey back very pleasant.

Evening meal taken in our favourite of the 3 eateries we tried on the waterfront in Canakkale – a restaurant/bar called “Assos”, again, very successful relaxed meal, again

with local red wine! After our meal it was easy to stroll round then numerous lanes which extend back from the waterfront. Lots of bars, eateries and character.

### **Wednesday 10 May Option One – Walking Gallipoli AM Walk 5 –**

A beautiful walk in the remote area of North Anzac. Leaving Embarkation Cemetery, we followed the path of Monash’s brigade through the notorious Taylor’s Gap and into Agyhl Dere.

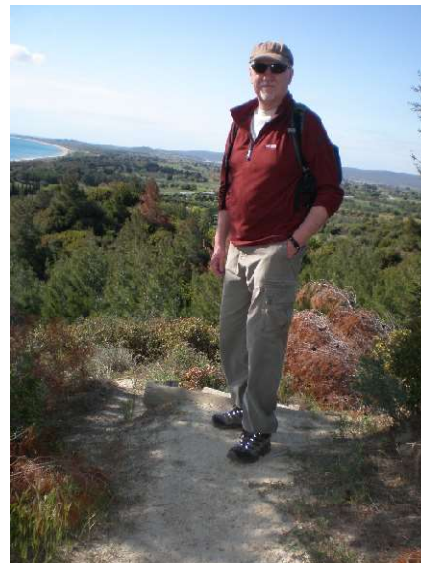


From there we ascended onto Damakjelik Spur, passing Australia Valley and learning out the actions of Hill 60. It also gave first views of Suvla Bay. This felt very special as we could also see the Kiretch Tepe Ridge away in the distance behind the Salt Lake, just inland from Suvla Bay. Not only that, but there is also a view of Nibrunesi Point, near where the first landings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Yorkshires took place in early August 2015. Just behind Nibrunesi Point there is Lala Baba Cemetery, the most remote and least visited of the CWG sites on the Peninsula.

**PM Walk 6** - The most spectacular battlefield walk from the heights of Chunuk Bair to the beaches below. Focusing on Kiwi forces and New Army troops we followed their battle along the Rhododendron Ridge. This walk is on steep, mountainous terrain along a winding trail and is not for the faint hearted but enormously rewarding. The sun came out for us and it was a glorious walk.



We were accompanied all the way down the Ridge by one of the stray dogs that are on the Peninsula. This one was very friendly and rewarded with refreshments at the end of the walk and the point we joined the minibus. Most dogs are friendly enough, yet they can fight each other for food, so you try to keep them apart, if you get more than one at any point. Our Guide, Adem, proved a bit of a “dog whisperer” and liked to see them cared for & fed, without them competing with one another. Apparently, up at Chunuk Bair, where we started our descent of the Ridge, there is a kennel for the stray dogs in that area and they are fed twice a day!



Here is a picture of Adem and the minibus driver serving refreshments to our four-pawed extra

guide! You can see our minibus behind. It was very comfy and our driver was excellent.



For our evening meal we frequented a different eaterie – called the Hangover Bar! Again, a good choice and managed to avoid giving ourselves a hangover!

#### **Thursday 11 May Option One – Walking Gallipoli AM Walk 7 – Lala Baba**

Well, here it was at last, the day I'd been waiting and preparing for all week. As the week progressed, and Suvla Bay came into view, (whilst working our way North and inland), the trip began to feel very personal. So once on the Peninsula, we drove to Lala Baba Cemetery – the most remote and least visited on Gallipoli. Wow, did we appreciate the confidence and determination of our marvellous minibus driver! We bumped along a farm track for a couple of miles, across to near the coast itself.



Lala Baba Cemetery is beautifully kept and very peaceful. It is well sheltered, with poppies growing outside the wall and a slightly lush feel to the vegetation/plants within and around. It was well worth a visit, just poignant it's so remote that a lot of people would be unable to see it. You couldn't get a normal sized coach down there and the road is rutted with lots of standing water! We looked out at Nibrunesi Point, where the Yorkshires started their assault in early August. We then followed the initial landings of the new Army Troops as they assaulted up Lala Baba Hill and

approached the Salt Lakes and beyond. After that we drove to Chocolate Hill, Green Hill and Scimitar Hill, where we considered the last great attack of the Gallipoli Campaign.

We had our picnic lunch at a village farm property and museum, where the local farmer has collected and received exhibits from the Campaign. We sat out in the sun and were treated to a traditional Turkish dish – Menemen – which is a mix of cooked spiced vegetables (& a tomato base?) together with broken pieces of scrambled egg. This just appeared courtesy of the farmer's wife, together with home-made crusty bread – gorgeous. Our driver carried a bag of his own spices with him and



offered us some – probably a heady mix of chilli’s! The dish was spiced enough in itself. I’ll look up the recipe and try to do it justice!

**PM – Walk 8 – Suvla** After lunch we drove to Hill 10 Cemetery. Our main Guide, Clive, had asked if he could borrow Aaron’s file the night before, so he could prep for the day. He said to me, during our morning’s walk, that he’d like to read one of Aaron’s letters at the graveside. He said which one he’d got in mind. This was the one I was pleased he’d chosen. It was perhaps Aaron’s most moving, brutally honest letter and the penultimate one before he was killed. Everyone gathered round and it was a very poignant yet extremely heart-warming moment. It must have been a hard letter for our Grannie, in particular, to receive. In his last letter (written 1<sup>st</sup> November), he does try to reassure her that things had seemingly got better. Ironically and tragically, 10 days later he was killed ...

This is the letter:

LETTER 11 – October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1915

3<sup>rd</sup> letter from ? Suvla Bay on unheaded paper. Punctuation etc. all retained as per original.

Pte A. Green 18438  
A Coy. 6 Yorks Regt.  
32 Brigade 11<sup>th</sup> Division  
Mediterranean Ex. Force

Dear Mother

Just a few lines hoping to find you all in the best of health as I am at present. You will wonder what is the matter with me when you open this letter, well my boss as payed me and as gone home sick and money is no use to us out hear as there is no houses never mind shops. I hope that all the boys are in the pink, I expect that baby will be getting strong now. I am about as strong as a mug of tea. The weather out here is very bad, during the day it is very hot and at night you can’t get warm and we live in holes out in the earth so take all the plants from the top of the garden and when I come home I will make a dugout there and I shall sleep there so that it will remind me of these times and for my Sunday dinner I shall want a bit of corned beef and a bit of rice it doesn’t matter about any sugar or milk being put into the rice and for my tea I will have a bit of bully beef and a drop of tea. I don’t know if you are getting my letters or not but I have received no letters from you yet. I am sending these checes so that you can send me a box or two as I don’t think that I shall get home for Xmas but I may be home about next feast. I shall have to close so hoping that you will remember me to Mr. & Mrs. Bellamy and all of them and hoping that everybody is in the best of health I will close with best love to all

from  
Aaron

xxx  
xxx  
xxx

Send Charlie’s address  
The “Holt?” chece is ready for cashing



Mike and I prepared to place the little spray of poppies we'd brought. Also two people had separately given us wooden crosses to place at the grave. We put one on Aaron's grave and one on the adjoining plot – that of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Kirkwood, who died on the same day and so it seems, in the same action as Aaron. Clive thought it was possible that Aaron had been working as Kirkwood's Orderly. He'd said that morning that he would be unsurprised if they were buried alongside at Hill 10. He was right.



We also were able to view the Kiretch Tepe Ridge, which is where the fighting centred at the time Aaron was at Suvla Bay. It was noted in the War Diary that 1 Officer of the Yorkshire's (Kirkwood) and one "man" (most likely Aaron), were killed in the shell attack on Jephson's Post on the AM of the 11<sup>th</sup> November. The Yorkshires (plus other Regiment(s) were up on the Ridge and controlled part of it, the Turkish forces on the other Section, to the right of the Ridge. The letter which Grannie received from Aaron's Sergeant (Sgt. Kay), informing of Aaron's death, ties in with the War Diary and what we now understand more clearly because of the visit. This includes our having a clearer understanding about where, most likely,

Aaron died, with whom and about another Officer who died in the same incident at Jephson's Post, Kiretch Tepe.



The view behind me is Kiretch Tepe Ridge and the long dip you can see, between two slightly higher points is the broad area of Jephson's Post.

After we had finished visiting Hill 10, we went on to Azmac Cemetery, where Clive (Main Guide) has a relative buried. Ironically his relative has no identifiable grave within the Cemetery itself, it's just known that he's buried there. We learnt, during our time at Gallipoli, that of the 44, 150 Allied Casualties at Gallipoli, 20,960 of them are remembered on the Helles Memorial to the Missing. So nearly half of them have no known grave. It's made me realise how unusual we are to have a known grave to visit. Several people we met on the Tour were in the position of having no set spot at which to pay respect, no way of knowing their relative was there.

After visiting Azmac we were taken to a remote fisherman's cabin on the coast for end of day and end of Tour drinks. This was very special, especially after such an afternoon. At one point we sat on this bench, with one of our party, looking out on the Bay and we toasted our respective relatives.



The cabin was very characterful, with an ornate shell inlaid open fireplace, a resident dog and cat, plus great views and a friendly welcome.

We then took the minibus back to Eceabat for our final ferry trip away from the Peninsula – a poignant moment.



That evening, we decided to return to the place we'd enjoyed most to have our evening meal. That was Assos'.

A great end to the last day.

### **Friday 12 May After breakfast, the group departed Canakkale for Istanbul**

Before we started off for Istanbul, we visited the Consular Cemetery in Canakkale. This was a sort of "private view", hosted by the head of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for the Gallipoli Peninsula. It was very historic, including graves from as long ago as the Crimean War. Also, it held graves of those who died post War / whilst creating the Cemeteries and likewise during the Civil War which followed WW1. At rest there also were several nurses, nuns and poignantly, visitors who had passed away on trips to visit their relatives post First World War ....

We then boarded the coach for Istanbul. Arriving at the Airport, we were told there would be a high level of security, including from the moment you walked through the door. This was certainly true – luggage scan on arrival, multiple security checks, including body scans. It is tight because of the attack on the Airport a few years ago. Poignant to see the Turkish coast disappearing after take-off, yet very satisfying to know this was "mission accomplished"!



For Aaron Green

With love from Veronica and Mike

