

The continuity of learning in Gallipoli

The objective of this essay is to establish the application and continuity of learning from training into battle and subsequent new learning experienced by the 1st (Regular) the 6th and 7th (Service) Battalions of the RDF who served in Gallipoli in 1915 in categories of learning in trench warfare such as tactics, infantry - artillery co-operation, equipment, infantry training, trench design and aspects of trench life.

Training for 'V' Beach and Suvla Bay

On 21 December 1914, the 1st (Regular) Battalion of the RDF arrived at Plymouth from India where they had been stationed since 1910. In early January 1915, under the command of Lieut.-Col. R.A. Rooth, the 1st RDF linked up with the 86th Brigade (Brigadier-General S.W. Hare) of the 29th Division (Major-General Shaw) at Nuneaton.¹ As with most regular battalions, the 1st RDF was under-strength and was brought up to battle strength with the arrival of reservists. In early February, 180 men arrived from the 4th RDF stationed at Sittingbourne and the 3rd RDF stationed at Cork.²

The decision to send the 29th Division to Gallipoli was made at a War Council meeting in London on 16 February 1915. Despatch of the division began on 10 March.³ On 16 March 1915, the 1st RDF departed for the Dardanelles with a battalion strength of twenty-eight officers and 1,007 other ranks.⁴ According to Captain Stair Gillon, the 29th Division carried out little or no divisional training during their two and a half months in England before embarkation.⁵ Planning for the Gallipoli campaign proceeded on an ad-hoc basis.

¹ Wylly. *Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922.* p.11.

² "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310," (London: Public Records Office).

³ Hart, Peter. *Gallipoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).p24. The final decision taken by the War Council to send the 29th Division to Gallipoli was taken on 19 February 1915.

⁴ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310."

⁵ Gillon, Stair Capt. *The Story of the 29th Division* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1925). p.7.

The official history noted. ‘An army had been embarked upon a great amphibious campaign without previous preparation or plan’.⁶ The lack of relative tactical training in England reflected that ad-hoc approach to the Gallipoli project.

Due to the dispersal of the 29th Division throughout Warwickshire, much of which was ‘unsuited to manoeuvres’, training was confined to company and battalion level exercises within the brigade during the month of February 1915.⁷ This lack of brigade and divisional training deprived staff officers of field exercises in the co-ordination and movement of men and indeed exercises in command and control of their brigades within the divisional framework. Unlike other divisions who had pre-war divisional training time together prior to their deployment to a war zone, such as the 4th Division’s 1912 and 1913 army manoeuvres, when the 29th Division assembled at Nuneaton, it was the first time they had come together.

Battalion training consisted of route marches, drill and a couple of days on the Kingsbury rifle range.⁸ The training syllabus for the 86th Brigade was in accordance with *Infantry Training* manuals 1911 and 1914. The brigade diary noted, ‘the Brigade carried out regular training including route marches, digging and other exercises’.⁹ There was no specific training done in England that related to the theatre of war they were going to. However, new rifles and sun helmets were issued before they left for Gallipoli.¹⁰

The training the 1st RDF carried out for their amphibious assault on the Turkish forts at Sedh-El-Bahr at ‘V’ Beach on 25 April 1915 was in accordance with the plan designed to get the men ashore.

⁶ Oglander, Aspinall. *Military Operations - Gallipoli*, vol. 1 (London: Imperial War Museum, 1928). p.108. The Report of the Dardanelles Commission comments on the absence of any preliminary plan by the General Staff. The reason for the omission was that not until 11 March the General Staff were informed that any large military operations in the Dardanelles were contemplated. Aspinall Oglander, *Military Operations – Gallipoli*, vol.1.p69. According to Gillon, ‘the general plan for the invasion’ of the Gallipoli peninsula ‘had been worked out during the voyage’ to Alexandria. Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division* p.11. Alan Moorehead stated that when they got to Alexandria, ‘no plan had been made, and no one had yet decided where the Army was to be put ashore.’ Moorehead, *Gallipoli* p.108. Moorehead stated that, ‘Hamilton and his staff set about drawing up their plans at their headquarters in the Metropole Hotel in Alexandria.’ Moorehead p.110. The official history stated that the plan for the invasion was approved by General Sir Ian Hamilton on 23 March 1915. Aspinall Oglander, *Military Operations – Gallipoli*, vol.1.p111.

⁷ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.7.

⁸ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310," (London: Public Records Office). War Diary 2nd Royal Fusiliers 15 February 1915.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.9. See also "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310."

Training lasted about three weeks and began when the 1st RDF arrived at Mex Camp near Alexandria on 29 March 1915 and continued on when they moved to the Greek Island of Lemnos.¹¹ It was here that their learning curve made an upward turn. Along with the usual route marches, they practised new skills of embarking and disembarking from vessels into open boats with full packs and climbing up and down rope ladders.¹² The 2nd Royal Fusiliers practiced ‘disembarkation under fire followed by an attack’.¹³ While at Mudros Harbour, ‘every day was spent in practicing embarking in whale-boats by means of ladders, in full marching order’.¹⁴ They also practiced rowing in boats loaned by ships, forming up and advancing rapidly after landing with full kits.¹⁵ As a rehearsal of ‘stowing the men on board’, while at Lemnos the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers (RMF) and some of the 1st RDF filled the main landing vessel the *S.S. River Clyde*.¹⁶ In addition they practiced disembarking from the *River Clyde* in full kit and ‘a pamphlet was also issued to units, giving extracts from the various textbooks with regard to landings and combined work with the navy’.¹⁷ Their training reflected their professionalism as regular troops.

Morale and optimism was high among the 1st RDF as they left Mudros harbour for Tenedos. They ‘cheered and cheered till the harbour rang with cheering’.¹⁸ Their optimism and high morale may have come from a sense of self confidence and belief they felt in achieving their mission because of their relevant training and preparation. Hew Strachan suggested that training had a positive role to play in raising morale. Quoting a post-war German army officer, Hans von Seeckt, who studied the relationship between training and morale, Strachan noted that, ‘every kind of military training was ultimately in vain if the improvement of the morale of the troops did not keep pace with it’.¹⁹

¹¹ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 30 March 1915.

¹² Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.13.

¹³ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." War Diary 2nd Royal Fusiliers 3 April 1915.

¹⁴ McCance, S. *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. 1861 to 1922*, vol. 2 (Cork: Schull Books, 1995).p.45.

¹⁵ Wylly. *Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922. Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922*. p.17. The 2nd Royal Fusiliers often had difficulty getting the loan of boats from ships crews. See War Diary 86th Brigade W095/4310.

¹⁶ McCance. *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. 1861 to 1922*. p.45.

¹⁷ Oglander. p.141. Chapter 3, Section 41, Pp.64-67 of Field Service Regulations 1909 outlines the general principles of co-operation between the Navy and Army.

¹⁸ Wylly. *Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922. Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922*.p.24.

¹⁹ Strachan, Hew. "Training, Morale and Modern War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 2 (2006). p.211. For further study of morale see Watson, Alexander. *Enduring the Great War. Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). And Bowman, Timothy. *Irish Regiments in the Great War-Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

Conversely, Watson has suggested that the lack and quality of training may have facilitated the breakdown of the professional British and German armies of 1914.²⁰

On Friday 9 July 1915, the 6th and 7th (Service) Battalions of the RDF left Basingstoke by train and began their journey to Gallipoli. The combined strength of both RDF battalions was 1,878 officers and men.²¹ One month later on 7 August 1915 both battalions came ashore at Suvla Bay.

Table 4.1
Strength of 6th and 7th RDF (Service) Battalions 9 July 1915.

Battalion	Officers	Warrant Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Other Ranks	Total all ranks
6 th RDF	30	6	53	76	787	952
7 th RDF	29	6			920	955

Unlike the 1st RDF, neither the 6th or 7th RDF battalions carried out any relevant training for their amphibious landing. According to Michael Hickey, for almost a year previous, training of New Army men ‘had been directed towards trench warfare on the Western Front and when confronted by a very different situation at Gallipoli they were lost’.²² The two RDF service battalions spent two weeks on board their transport ship doing almost no training. Inactivity led to boredom and frustration. On 4 August, Drury noted, ‘this day last year the war started, 365 days and we have done nothing yet, it’s disgusting and the delay is doing the men no good’.²³ Even when they did get a chance to train ashore on the island of Mitylene, there was a lack of initiative shown by the battalion’s officers to devise training programmes relevant to the nature of the warfare that would face them. Most of the training was route marches around the island.

²⁰ Neiberg, Michael. "Review - *Enduring the Great War, Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918*, Cambridge University Press (2008)," *Journal of Social History*, no. Summer (2010). p.1117.

²¹ "War Diary 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296." See also "War Diary 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296," (London: Public Records Office).

²² Hickey, Michael. *Gallipoli* (London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, 1995). Forward p. xi.

²³ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." p.79.

Drury kept his signallers busy by obtaining permission to place two of them on the bridge of the *Alaunia* to practice receiving and sending messages using either Morse Code by lamps or semaphore signalling between the *Alaunia* and her accompanying two destroyers.²⁴ Occasionally, 7th RDF Machine Gun Company practiced their machine-gun firing skills by firing at a tin box towed behind the ship.²⁵ This lack of training initiative and foresight was present at a higher level of command too. On 1 August 1915, Brigadier-General F.F. Hill, G.O.C. Commanding Troops on Mitylene issued a set of eleven 'Routine Orders'. The last order on the list was titled 'Training', which simply stated, 'training instructions have this day been issued to officers commanding troops concerned'.²⁶ The actual training that was carried out was again no more than route marching. Inexperienced commanders had no concept of preparing for what lay ahead of them. They displayed no training initiative even when they were told of what was required. Following a chance meeting between 1st RDF and 86th Brigade staff officers and officers from the 10th (Irish) Division on board a ship at Mudros, Cooper noted, 'we learned from men who had been in Gallipoli since they had struggled through the surf and wire on April 25th the truth as to the nature of the fighting there'.²⁷

Continuity of learning, was training used or not in the RDF landings and subsequent encounters with the Turks?

The training and combat skills of the 1st, 6th and 7th RDF battalions were tested almost immediately when they landed on the peninsula. Although the men of the 1st RDF were 'highly trained and strictly disciplined', and had used their amphibious training in attempting to get ashore in their amphibious assault, the landing on 25 April 1915 at 'V' Beach failed mainly due to the failure of the naval bombardment to remove Turkish machine gun positions above the beach.²⁸ Some 96% of the 1st RDF officers and 63% other ranks were either killed, wounded or reported missing in their attempt to do so.²⁹ Great credit must go to the Turkish defenders.

²⁴ Ibid. p.45.

²⁵ Ibid. p.46.

²⁶ "War Diary 31st Brigade W095/4296," (London: Public Records Office).

²⁷ Cooper. p.39.

²⁸ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." Report by Captain G.W. Geddes, 1st RMF. Naval artillery failed to remove Turkish machine gun positions above 'V' Beach.

²⁹ Ibid. 30 April 1915.

For a Turkish army whose effectiveness was ‘considered to be very low’, the Turkish soldiers at ‘V’ Beach, who more than likely were mainly Anatolian peasant stock, fought very bravely.³⁰ Moreover the Turks had little equipment. According to James, ‘a total of three platoons and four old machine guns constituted the sum total of the defenders of ‘V’ Beach’.³¹

The attack along Gully Ravine on 28 June was the first major attack the re-enforced 1st RDF and 86th Brigade undertook since they arrived on the peninsula. The 86th Brigade after-battle report indicates that their training and experience as professional troops stood to them in terms of battle planning, infantry / artillery co-operation and combat. For example, as regular soldiers, their training in fire control and musketry stood to them at their first real test. One Territorial Officer posted into a regular battalion at Sedh-El-Bahr recalled with awe, how his platoon, confronted with an oncoming horde of Turkish infantry at 274 meters (300 yards) range, ‘opened the breeches of their almost red-hot rifles and held their fire until the Turks were less than fifty paces away, in order to allow the weapons a chance to cool before resuming rapid fire’.³² Pre-war training in communications skills also stood to them. Signals sent from shore to ship for fire support was by semaphore.³³ Although telephone lines were established between brigade and division, messages between brigade and battalion H.Qs were mostly sent by runner using Army Form C.2122 titled *Messages and Signals*.³⁴ Officers’ watches were synchronised. Timings and sequence of events, particularly when artillery was used, were kept under control at Gully Ravine. Messages coming into and going out from 86th Brigade H.Q. during the attack were at regular intervals thus informing each battalion commander of the situation on their flanks and ensuring good command and control.³⁵

³⁰ Afflerbach, Holger. "The Impact of the Ottoman Empire in the German Strategy of 1915," in *The Gallipoli Campaign International Perspectives 85 Years on, Conference Papers, 24-25 April 2000*, ed. Kenan Celik(Canakkale, Turkey: Ataturk ans Gallipoli Campaign Research Centre, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, 2001). p.36. and p.44. See also Zurcher, Erik. "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The Ottoman Soldier's Experience," in *Facing Armageddon - the First World War Experienced*, ed. H Cecil(London: Leo Cooper, 1996). p.230.

³¹ Rhodes, Robert J. *Gallipoli* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965). p.121. These men fought against a total of 2,100 men on board the River Clyde and held out for thirty-six hours. See Wylly, *Neill's Blue Caps*, p.25. and Ulrich, Trumpener. "The Turkish War, 1914-18," in *A Companion to World War 1*, ed. J Horne(West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012). p.101.

³² Hickey. *Gallipoli*. p.58.

³³ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." Communications between Capt. Geddes and Col. Tizard on board the *SS.River Clyde* on 25 April was by Semaphore. See report by Geddes on landings.

³⁴ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." June 1915.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Report of action on 28 June 1915.

Despite the lack of amphibious training and Turkish shrapnel fire over the men disembarking from landing craft (Beetles) at Suvla Bay, men of the 6th and 7th (Service) RDF battalions did not get lost as Hickey suggested.³⁶ They held their discipline and their training stood to them when they moved off the beach. Lieut. Drury noted that at 1:00 p.m. on 7 August, his 6th RDF moved off the beach in 'artillery formation', a movement practiced at the Curragh in 1914.³⁷ Their tactical crossing of *The Cut* was disciplined and controlled by an officer giving co-ordinated instructions to move off, 'in single file'.³⁸ Their training in fire and movement tactics also stood to them when first tested. While the 6th RDF brought stores ashore, the 7th RDF attacked Hill 53 (Green Hill) during which they were subjected to, 'heavy shrapnel, Maxim and rifle fire'.³⁹ Their advance towards the Turkish line was made by rushes, 'through which it steadily and quickly advanced from one piece of cover to the next'.⁴⁰ The advance with fire and movement saved lives and credit must go to NCOs who led these rushes. The 7th RDF war diary noted, 'owing to the rapidity and frequency of the advances, the casualties were greatly reduced'.⁴¹ Douglas Gunning believed it was the men's discipline and training that got them through this first test with the Turks. 'We did everything mechanically', he noted 'and I believe we owed it all to the way in which discipline had been drilled into us'.⁴² The casualties of the 7th RDF consisted of three officers and 109 other ranks, ten of whom died of wounds one of whom was the elected and inexperienced 2nd Lieut. Ernest Julien.⁴³ This was the first test the 7th RDF was exposed to in combat and they used their limited training successfully.

Although the attack failed, discipline learned in training in the 6th and 7th RDF stood to them in their attack on the Kiretch Tepe Sirt ridge on 15 August. Douglas Gunning's account of the fighting during the Turkish counterattack revealed the value of discipline.

³⁶ Ekins, Ashley. "A Ridge Too Far: Military Objectives and the Dominance of Terrain in the Gallipoli Campaign," in *The Gallipoli Campaign International Perspectives 85 Yers On. Conference Papers April 2000*, ed. K Celik(Canakkale,Turkey: Ataturk snd Gallipoli Campaign Research Center, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, 2001). p.24.

³⁷ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." p.82.

³⁸ "Gunning, Cecil and Frank,Diary." Section 2, p.2. The Cut was a small sea inlet to a salt lake at Suvla.

³⁹ "War Diary 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296." 7 August 1915.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Gunning, Cecil and Frank,Diary." Section 2, p.3.

⁴³ "War Diary 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296." 7 August 1915. See also *Soldiers Died in the Great War Parts 71 72 and 73*.

‘We were absolutely dazed and stupefied but did everything mechanically, which shows the value of discipline’.⁴⁴ Moreover, he revealed the experience of the battalion’s senior NCOs and the inexperience of the battalion’s officers. ‘Sergeant Kee roared to us to form up a line behind the others in front...Sergeant prepared to lead us over with a charge’.⁴⁵

But there were limiting points on their pre-landing learning curves to where training took the 1st, 6th and 7th RDF battalions. Beyond which inexperience and factors out of their control led to failure in achieving battle objectives. Because of their expertise as regular soldiers, the limiting point of the pre-landing learning of the 1st RDF extended beyond the limiting point of the 6th and 7th RDF battalions. There are many examples of the consequences of these limitations of knowledge and experience. The planning and preparation for the initial landings exposed the gap in experience between the professional 1st RDF and amateur 6th and 7th RDF battalions. Despite the disaster at ‘V’ Beach, most of the 1st RDF officers were aware of their plan and objectives. In contrast, Lieut. Drury complained that his men came ashore at Suvla with no maps or orders. According to Cooper, ‘regimental officers and men knew nothing of what was intended’.⁴⁶

On 9 August the limits of training and learning was exposed when the 6th RDF participated with the 11th Division in their failed attempt to take Hill 70 known as Scimitar Hill. Lieut. Drury believed, ‘the attack was a fiasco... it was a rotten show with no method’. Drury noted that for two days prior to the attack, the 11th Division did, ‘nothing but lying about sleeping or eating’.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ "Gunning, Cecil and Frank,Diary." Section 2, Pp.13-15.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Note - The top of the ridge was taken by the Munster Fusiliers. However due to a strong counter attack by the Turks and a lack of artillery support; the ridge was retaken by the Turks The bombs the 7th RDF had were made from a ‘couple of dozen of hurriedly made Jam Tins.’ Capt. R.G. Kelly who served with the 7th RDF as Adjutant and Signalling Officer wrote of the action that day. ‘Turkish bombs were caught and thrown back at them. One private (Wilkin) by name caught four but the fifth unfortunately blew him to pieces.’ See War Diary 86th Brigade WO95/4296. The official history noted that the Irish troops resorted to throwing stones and rocks at the Turks. See Military Operations – Gallipoli. p.323.

⁴⁶ Cooper. *The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli*. p.44.

⁴⁷ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." p.94.

Some of Drury's more experienced men knew of the consequences of such inaction and were, 'grousing like blazes, saying we are throwing away any chance and will pay for it later'.⁴⁸ The Dardanelles Commission commented on this lack of leadership shown at a crucial time.⁴⁹ Drury offered two reasons for the failure which were, a lack of planning at 11th Division staff level and 'the extraordinarily dab behaviour of the 11th Division troops and some of the 53rd Division,' who were inexperienced soldiers of the Staffordshire and Border Regiments.⁵⁰ He believed that whoever allowed a brigade of the 53rd Division to line up and march to the front line under Turkish shell and machine gun fire as if they were on a parade ground in Aldershot, should have been shot.⁵¹ Mostly Drury was critical of the command at brigade level and even higher up. Operational Orders from 33rd Brigade H.Q. were vague and again reflected their inexperience and amateurism. Describing the order, Drury sarcastically noted. 'This is a useful order to get for an important battle! No information about what positions are to be attacked, nor at what time, nor even what part we are to take in the advance'.⁵² The total casualties for the three companies of 6th RDF were eleven officers and 259 other ranks.⁵³ Their total loss since they landed on the peninsula over two days was eleven officers and 450 other ranks.⁵⁴ Finally, the fatal charge led by Captain Poole Hickman against, 'a small force of Ottoman soldiers and gendarmes' on the Kiretch Tepe Sirt Ridge was brave but it showed inexperience in his choice of fighting tactics.⁵⁵ Instead of charging at the Turks, which was difficult owing to the rocky hill terrain, he could have used fire and movement tactics as the battalion had successfully previously used.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.85.

⁴⁹ Coates, T. *The Dardanelles Commission, 1914-1916* (Norwich: The Stationery Office, 2001). p.192. 'The advantage had not been pressed. The senior commanders at Suvla had had no personal experience of the new trench warfare; of the Turkish methods; of the paramount importance of time. Strong clear leadership had not been promptly enough applied.'

⁵⁰ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." Pp. 91-92.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.94.

⁵² Ibid. Pp.93-94.

⁵³ "War Diary 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296."

⁵⁴ "War Diary 31st Brigade W095/4296." Appendix 3. Report on action 7-15 August 1915.

⁵⁵ Ulrich. p.102. For further reading on the Gallipoli terrain see. Doyle, Peter. "Terrain and the Gallipoli Campaign, 1915," in *In the Gallipoli Campaign International Perspectives 85 Yers On. Conference Papers April 2000* ed. K Celik(Canakkale,Turkey: Ataturk snd Gallipoli Campaign Research Center, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, 2001., 2001). Pp. 46-69.

⁵⁶ The Dardanelles Commission cited a lack of experience of senior commanders at Suvla as a reason for failure. Moreover, the Commission also noted that 'hill warfare is not an easy business for troops unaccustomed to it.' Commission p.192.

In general, basic training stood to all three RDF battalions in their first encounters with the Turks thus indicating the application and continuity of learning from basic training. However, there was a limiting point to where their basic training took them in those encounters. Regardless of their training and enthusiasm, it was inexperience in battle displayed by the 6th, 7th RDF and other New Army units along with poor operational planning, logistics, command and control at divisional level that contributed to their failures.⁵⁷ However, it was from those failures that new lessons were learned.

Table 4.2
Losses of 86th Brigade Gully Ravine 28 June 1915⁵⁸

Regiment	Officers 27 June	Officers 30 June	% Officer Loss	Other Ranks 27 June	Other Ranks 30 June	% Other Ranks Loss
Headquarters Staff	6	6	0%	122	122	0%
2 nd Royal Fusiliers	12	3	75%	673	412	39%
1 st Lancashire Fusiliers	12	5	58%	572	392	31%
1 st Royal Munster Fusiliers	23	15	35%	590	443	25%
1 st Royal Dublin Fusiliers	19	8	58%	852	595	30%
Overall Brigade	72	37	49%	2,809	1,964	30%

⁵⁷ Coates. Pp.189-192.

⁵⁸ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." June 1915.

Table 4.3

Comparison of per cent losses in battalions of the 86th Brigade between
‘V’ Beach landings (25 April) and Gully Ravine (28 June)

Regiment	‘V’ Beach (Officers)	Gully Ravine (Officers)	‘V’ Beach (Other Ranks)	Gully Ravine (Other Ranks)
Headquarters	No data	0%	No data	0%
2 nd Royal Fusiliers	54%	75%	52%	39%
1 st Lancashire Fusiliers	61%	58%	59%	31%
1 st Royal Munster Fusiliers	54%	35%	41%	25%
1 st Royal Dublin Fusiliers	96%	58%	54%	30%
Overall Brigade	67%	49%	54%	30%

Table 4.4

1st RDF death casualties between September and December 1915.⁵⁹

Month	Strength Officers	Other Ranks	Loss Officers	Loss Other Ranks
1 September	11	788	1	17
1 October	15	608	0	14 (3 NCOs)
1 November	17	511	1	16 (4 NCOs)
1 December	12	295	0	20 (2 NCOs)

⁵⁹ Ibid. War Diary 86th Brigade.

Table 4.5

Comparison of per cent losses in battalions of the 86th Brigade between 'V' Beach landings (25 April), Gully Ravine (28 June) and Scimitar Hill (21 August).⁶⁰

Regiment	'V' Beach (Officers)	Gully Ravine (Officers)	Scimitar Hill (Officers)	'V' Beach (Other Ranks)	Gully Ravine (Other Ranks)	Scimitar Hill (Other Ranks)
Headquarters	No data	0%	0%	No data	0%	0%
2 nd Royal Fusiliers	54%	75%	13%	52%	39%	8%
1 st Lancashire Fusiliers	61%	58%	66%	59%	31%	35%
1 st Royal Munster Fusiliers	54%	35%	53%	41%	25%	54.3%
1 st Royal Dublin Fusiliers	96%	58%	18%	54%	30%	1%
Overall Brigade	67%	49%	37.8	54%	30%	24.3%

The attack on Scimitar Hill on 21 August 1915 was the last major battle the battalions of the RDF were involved in on the Gallipoli peninsula.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wylly. *Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922. Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922.* p.63. The 6th and 7th RDF left Gallipoli for Salonicka on 1 October 1915 and the 1st RDF left for Egypt on 2 January 1916. Of the 1,007 men of the 1st RDF who left Portsmouth in March 1915, only eleven of those men had survived uninjured in body when they left the peninsula in January 1916.

Table 4.6

Losses of 6th and 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers for month of August 1915. ⁶²

Battalion	Date	Officers	Other Ranks
6 th RDF	29 July 1915	28	751
	23 August	4	364
Loses		24	387
Per cent loses		85.7%	51.5%
7 th RDF	31 July 1915	26	751
	31 August	5	424
Losses		21	327
Per cent loses		80.7%	43.5%

⁶² "War Diary 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296." See also "War Diary 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/4296."

Evidence of learning

One indication that men were learning about their tasks and gaining experience in the 6th and 7th RDF battalions was the awarding of temporary commissions to men from the ranks. These soldiers were considered a better option as officer replacements rather than receiving inexperienced Territorial Officers, whose supply was not always guaranteed. In mid-September 1915, seventeen men from the 7th RDF were awarded Temporary Commissions to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.⁶³ It is interesting to note that the 7th RDF and 'D' Company in particular, presented the highest number of other ranks to temporary commissions from the ranks of all eleven RDF battalions throughout the entire war.⁶⁴ Members of 'D' Company were perhaps the most educated group of men to serve in the RDF throughout the war. Their education stood to them and when combined with combat experience and learning as the war progressed, made them excellent officer candidates. This relationship between education and promotion to officer rank may well add strength to Evans argument that, initiative, discipline, education and training were interconnected.

There is also statistical evidence to suggest learning from experience. Table 4.5 presents the overall decline in the casualty rates of both officers and men of the 86th Brigade over time between 'V' Beach (25 April), Gully Ravine (28 June) and Scimitar Hill (21 August).⁶⁵ At brigade level, there is a gradual drop in percentage death rates of both officers and other ranks. The 1st RDF followed that trend exactly. One explanation of this drop in deaths rates and by implication a rise in survival rates, might be that learning how to stay alive and gaining of battle experience occurred in the battalions over time, despite the loss of experienced officers and NCOs.

⁶³ "War Diary 30th Brigade W095/4296," (London: Public Records Office).

⁶⁴ Burke, Tom. "Commissions from the Ranks of the R D F During the First World War, a Point on the Learning Curve.," *The Blue Cap, Journal of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association* 17, (2011). p.21.

⁶⁵ 'V' Beach (25 April), Gully Ravine (28 June) and Scimitar Hill (21 August) were the three main battles the 1st RDF participated in and were used in this analysis.

New points on the learning curve - what the RDF learned in Gallipoli

All RDF battalions underwent some form of learning experiences at Gallipoli. Captain G.W. Geddes narrative of the 'V' Beach landings described the events and made some interesting observations by way of lessons that could be used in future operations. For example, officers should view amphibious landing sites before such type of attacks are made. Proper maps should be made available. An Indian Army officer serving on the staff of the 29th Division, Captain C.A. Milward of the 53rd Sikhs noted that the maps they had were fifty-year-old survey maps and doubted if they were still accurate.⁶⁶ The weight of men's pack equipment was too heavy and should be lightened.⁶⁷

Prior to the attack on Gully Ravine on 28 June, there were some simple lessons learned that were used in the attack. For example in infantry / artillery co-operation, communications between shore and ship had improved after the breakdown at 'V' Beach suggesting some lessons were learned.⁶⁸ The 86th Brigade war diary noted at 11:38 a.m. on 28 June, 'signal C.F. (Cease Fire) sent to *H.M.S. Wolverine* being the pre-arranged signal informing them that the first line of 86th Brigade was passing over the trench J 11'.⁶⁹ The signal sent from shore to ship was by semaphore.⁷⁰ There were precautions taken to protect the men from their own artillery which may have been the product of a lesson learned from a previous operation. For example, because the sun came from behind the attacking infantry, men were given 'a triangular piece of biscuit tin to tie to their back' which reflected the sunlight.

⁶⁶ Hickey. *Gallipoli*. p.58.

⁶⁷ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." Report by Captain G.W. Geddes, 'X' Co. Commander, 1st RMF. There was no RDF officer available to write the battalion diary or make recommendations by way of lessons for future similar operations. Many men drowned when they went into the water carrying their equipment and packs.

⁶⁸For communications systems on 25 April, see Oglander. *Military Operations - Gallipoli*, vol. 1. p.147. Because there was no signal station set up on the day of the landings, no real time information about what was happening on the beach was relayed back to 29th Division headquarters. On the failure of such communications, the Official History noted that it was 'clear that a more certain means of forwarding orders and information should have been evolved beforehand.' p.251.

⁶⁹ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." 28 June 1915. The term 'J 11' was a grid reference on a map familiar to both infantry and naval gunners suggesting further co-operation in its establishment and use. The map and grid reference is in accordance with Infantry Training 1914 manual, Chapter X, Infantry in Attack, Section 121, 17, p.138.

⁷⁰ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." Communications between Capt. Geddes and Col. Tizard on board the *SS.River Clyde* on 25 April was by Semaphore. See report by Geddes on landings.

This greatly simplified the work of the artillery, not only from the point of view of ‘safety of the troops, but the expenditure of ammunition, of which there was not a superabundant supply’.⁷¹ The tactic was also useful ‘for marking captured trenches’.⁷²

After Gully Ravine, Brigades of the 29th Division were instructed to submit reports of action in ‘narrative form’.⁷³ Such reports with timings of action, difficulties experienced and incidences recorded were designed to create discussion and analysis at brigade conferences and thus contribute to the process of learning experienced by the brigade and its battalions. An example of such a report was that written by Brigadier-General Wolly Dodd on the unsuccessful raid carried out by the 1st RDF on 1 July during which the battalion suffered a loss of fifty-five men.⁷⁴ The report concluded by noting three main reasons for failures that were up for discussion from which lessons could be learned.⁷⁵

1. Inadequate artillery - preliminary and support. The Turkish line they attacked was ‘undamaged and full of Turks’.
2. The difficulty of control owing to the impossibility of seeing into the area assaulted.
3. The narrow frontage from which the assaulting troops had to deploy. Turkish fire tactics were noted. The majority of the 1st RDF casualties were caused by long-range Turkish machine gun fire.

Since most of their time in late August 1915 was spent either maintaining old or digging new trenches, the lack of time prevented the development of offensive tactics within the 1st RDF. Any lessons on offensive and defensive tactics that were learned proved to be basic and characteristic of the close trench warfare experienced by the RDF battalions on the peninsula. The following are some examples of learning in offensive tactics. The growing shortage of officers following the attack at Gully Ravine and as a result of lessons learned by putting inexperienced officers in the line of attack, lead the 86th Brigade to restrict the number of officers allocated to fighting troops for the attack on Scimitar Hill.

⁷¹ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. Pp. 49-50. Note. Not all men had a triangular disc to wear. The order for the wearing of ‘triangular discs of tin’ was made through a Corps Order dated 19 September 1915. Only 30% of the battalion was issued with these tins reflectors. See War Diary 30th Brigade WO95/4296 See also Gunning Diary Section 2. p.7.

⁷² "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "War Diary 10th Infantry Brigade January 1915 to June 1916, W095/1478," (London: Public Records Office). June 1915.

Not more than one officer per fifty other ranks was allocated to fighting troops in the brigade.⁷⁶ Again following Gully Ravine, to remove any land mines which may have been left by the Turks in their trenches after they had been driven out, future assaulting troops from 86th Brigade would be accompanied by one NCO and three men from the West Riding Field Co. R.E.⁷⁷ As a result of the closeness of the opposing trenches in places, bombs, when available, emerged as ‘a crying necessity’.⁷⁸ By October, the 1st RDF had developed ‘Bombing Parties’ as a tactical unit who were trained and used to clear areas where Turkish snipers operated from.⁷⁹

Following the 6th and 7th RDF failed attack on Kiretch Tepe Sirt Ridge, Captain P. Villiers Stuart of the 30th Brigade noted on the tactics used that contributed to the failure of the operation. The same problem of lack of artillery support was again highlighted. Lessons were learned from Captain Poole Hickman’s failed tactic of frontal attack. Captain Stuart noted that frontal attacks used, ‘against entrenched Turks begin to become very costly at about a range of 900 yards and it is very difficult to see where the fire is coming from... their (Turkish) system of trenches always seems to arrange for enfilading all advances’.⁸⁰ Future tactics would therefore take into consideration the lack of artillery support; the danger zone of 900 yards (823 meters) and how good the long-range Turkish fire was near that zone. Tactical planning would also consider how cleverly arranged the Turkish trenches were designed to trap oncoming attackers with enfilade fire. To solve the problem of not seeing the Turks, Captain Stuart recommended the use of periscopes.⁸¹

In terms of defensive tactics, in order to have continuity in defence and a unified response to any Turkish attack, belatedly on 24 December 1915, Standing Orders were issued from 29th Division H.Q. to the effect that when any attack along their line was reported, all battalions were instructed to, ‘Stand To with all available men until ordered to stand down’.⁸²

⁷⁶ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." June 1915.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Report of action on 28 June 1915.

⁷⁸ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.48.

⁷⁹ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 9 October 1915

⁸⁰ "War Diary 30th Brigade W095/4296."

⁸¹ Ibid. Note. The Turks used periscopes as early as August. See War Diary 86th Brigade W095/4310. August 1915.

⁸² "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310."

Prior to this instruction, only men in the front line were obliged to 'Stood To'. Despite the inconsistency and feeble responses of British artillery, the all-too-often inaccuracy of the firing which directly affected the infantry's ability to do their job, based on learning experiences gained over their short time on the peninsula, attempts were made to improve infantry / artillery co-operation some of which have been previously mentioned.⁸³ Nevertheless, there were further attempts to improve the relationship. For example in mid-October 1915, 9th Corps Headquarters issued instructions titled, '*Artillery Support in Case of an Attack*'.⁸⁴ For artillery identification purposes, the British / Turkish front had been divided into Sections and Sub-sections, namely the Left and Right Sub-Sections, which were covered by individual artillery batteries. The 86th Brigade's section of the front when in the line was covered by 'B' and 'D' Batteries 58th Brigade, R.F.A.⁸⁵ Thus, if the Turks launched an infantry attack in the Right Sub-Section for example, using 'a telephone or signal', the 86th Brigade would contact the 58th Brigade, R.F.A. with the message, 'AR Attacked' which would mean "'A' Section. Right Sub-Section attacked'. The 58th Brigade, R.F.A. would then fire on that section to repel the attacking Turks.⁸⁶ Each battalion was issued with a set of instructions on how to carry out the procedure for calling in artillery support, be specific in identifying which battalion was calling in the artillery, and to give the artillery brigade, 'as near as possible' an idea of the location of the trenches being attacked with as short a message as possible. For example, if the 1st RDF wanted artillery support, the C.O. sent the message by a telephone or signal, 'Support C/52 and C/53' which meant he wanted artillery fire on map grid Sections C/52 and C/53.⁸⁷ Thus a language of location identification emerged between the infantry and artillery and all battalion commanders had to learn the system. Later in November, company commanders as well as battalion commanders were given the authority to call in artillery.⁸⁸

⁸³ For comment on artillery support to the RDF at 'V' Beach see War Diary 86th Brigade WO95/4310. Report of landings by Co. Commander 1st RMF and Official History p.231. For support of 6th and 7th RDF at Suvla Bay see Drury Diary p.113; Cecil gunning diary Section 2. Pp.1-2. For feeble British artillery support see, War Diary 1st RDF WO95/4310, 4 Nov 1915 and War Diary 1st RDF WO95/4310, 21 Oct 1915. For old and defective artillery weapons see War Diary 30th Brigade WO95/4296 and Drury Diary p.16. For defective ammunition see War Diary 1st RDF WO05/4310, 3 October 1915.

⁸⁴ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 2 November 1915.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 12 October 1915.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 2 November 1915.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 21 November 1915.

The co-operation between infantry and artillery was epitomised in the artillery's Forward Observation Officers (F.O.Os). In a memo to the O.C. of the 1st RDF on 2 November 1915, the Brigade Major of the 86th Brigade explained the roll of the Brigade's Forward Observation Officers:

The chief object in having a F.O.O. in our present Sub-Section is in order that Battalion Commanders may have an opportunity of keeping in touch with the artillery supporting them and of being able to actually point out any particular target on the ground to an artillery officer, and to discuss with him any questions affecting both arms.⁸⁹

The system depended on working telephone communications systems. Turkish and British shelling regularly destroyed telephone lines connecting battalion, brigade and divisional headquarters. Telephone lines were accidentally damaged. Consequently, from simple lessons learned, men were warned to be aware of the whereabouts of telephone lines and to take care of them.⁹⁰ By late September 1915, the R.E. and signals men of the RDF installed duplicate lines between company headquarters and battalion headquarters.

Again based on a learning experience, further attempts at improving infantry / artillery co-operation were made when an exercise was carried out to improve the response time between infantry calling in artillery and artillery responding to the call, and indeed the accuracy of the firing. On 9 November, 29th Division H.Q. issued *General Service Memorandum No.17* which outlined the exercise designed to improve the response time between infantry and artillery.⁹¹ However, no matter how the system worked and the men on the ground tried their best to improve infantry / artillery co-operation, the shortage of shells still prevailed and challenged their attempt to improve. As Gillon noted, the 'shortage of guns and gun ammunition was all through the campaign a bar to complete success'.⁹²

Perhaps the first equipment lesson learned by the 1st RDF was following the 'V' Beach landings.

⁸⁹ Ibid. War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusilier. 2 November 1915.

⁹⁰ "War Diary 30th Brigade W095/4296."

⁹¹ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 9 November 1915.

⁹² Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.49.

The 86th Brigade diary noted, ‘after landing, men were handicapped by the weight of their pack...there is no doubt that men were drowned owing chiefly, I think, to the great weight they were carrying – a full pack, 250 rounds of ammunition and 3 days rations’.⁹³ The RDF never again took part in an amphibious landing so this lesson was never used. However, in the three assaults the 1st RDF took part in following the landings, full packs were not carried into battle in order to improve men’s manoeuvrability in tight trenches.⁹⁴

According to Moorhead, initially battalions had no periscopes for trench fighting.⁹⁵ However, following the 6th and 7th RDF attack on Kiretch Tepe Sirt, Captain Stuart’s recommendation that, ‘Periscopes should be provided for trench warfare, 1 per Platoon is suggested’, was picked up by 30th Brigade headquarters. By early September 1915, periscopes were issued to the troops in the front line.⁹⁶ Drury noted that his 6th RDF had received the suggested ration of one periscope per platoon.⁹⁷ Other improvements in equipment reported in use at battalion level in September 1915 were the use of the Barr and Stroud Range Finders.⁹⁸

The nature of the close warfare in Gallipoli, the limited availability of weapons and ammunition to suit that warfare, incentivised the efficient use of the limited resources of material available. It encouraged the development of home-made weapons, frugality in the use of ammunition and care of weapons. The product of this inventiveness and frugality came about through experimentation and lessons learned by the RDF battalions over time. For example on the care of weapons, front line soldiers had a habit of leaving their rifles on the parapet fully cocked and ready for instant use. In late September 1915, a Standing Order from brigade came round to the 6th and 7th RDF battalions forbidding this practice as it weakened the striker springs on the rifles.⁹⁹ On the development of home-made weapons, initially the British had ‘no hand grenades and trench-mortars’. Faced with this challenge, ‘ordnance workshops set to work to design and make’ their own hand grenades in Alexandria.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." Report of landings by Company Commander 1st RMF.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 21 August 1915. The weights of men’s packs was an issue that regularly occurred on the Western Front.

⁹⁵ Moorehead, Alan. *Gallipoli* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1956).p.108.

⁹⁶ "War Diary 30th Brigade W095/4296."

⁹⁷ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." p.121.

⁹⁸ "War Diary 30th Brigade W095/4296.". This was an instrument used for estimating distances to a target.

⁹⁹ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." p.147.

¹⁰⁰ Moorehead. *Gallipoli*. p.108.

On the Gallipoli peninsula, the Royal Engineers developed hand bombs made out of jam-tins that were flung by hand or catapult into the Turkish lines. The 7th RDF used these at Kiretch Tepe Sirt. The fuses were, 'small Bengal lights of different colour and intense brilliance' sent from Egypt.¹⁰¹ The 29th Division, 'had only a ration of 100 per division per day'.¹⁰²

Due to shortages of ammunition, battalions learned how to conserve ammunition. In early September, a notice appeared in 30th Brigade orders about the excessive use of ammunition, which was 'difficult to replenish'. Inexperienced men, particularly New Army arrivals, seemed to be un-necessarily firing off too many rounds of ammunition at the slightest sign of attack. In order to redress this occurrence, based on what the brigade had learned, recommendations were made for the efficient and not the panic use of ammunition. For example, firing should be selective as distinct from indiscriminate. Firing at night, 'should be withheld until the enemy is close, when experience teaches us that rapid fire and the bayonet is always successful. The control of fire not only saves ammunition but establishes a complete moral superiority over the enemy and finally makes them waste their own ammunition'.¹⁰³ Skills were identified and used wisely. For example, again by late September, RDF drafts who had received specialist training in machine gunnery, bombing or signalling back in the UK, were quantified so as to pool this resource and put them to efficient use.¹⁰⁴

Feedback learning in the form of Standing Orders in RDF battalions from brigade to battalion began to appear from late September 1915 onwards following a period of gaining experience and learning in aspects of trench life. For example in late September, 30th Brigade issued one such order to the RDF battalions that covered the safe movement of troops titled, '*Protection of Troops*'. Troop movement along mule tracks by day in 'Indian Formation', a single line, in full view of the Turks was to be avoided at all costs.¹⁰⁵ When large bodies of troops had to move, the route had to be reconnoitred, 'with a view to getting as much cover from view as possible'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.48.

¹⁰² Ibid. p.52.

¹⁰³ "War Diary 30th Brigade W095/4296."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. War Diary 30th Brigade.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Disclosure of bivouacs was to be avoided. Standing Orders were issued ordering the prevention of the use of brushwood and trees which gave off large amounts of smoke when used for cooking fires. Any breaking of this 30th Brigade order was 'severely dealt with'.¹⁰⁷ Lessons were learned in the supply of food. As a substitute for fresh fruit which decayed rapidly, an experiment was conducted with the supply of dried fruit comprising of prunes, raisins and currants.¹⁰⁸

As stated, there were little or no maps issued to officers, a point the 86th Brigade diary noted. 'The maps issued were indifferent, and painted but a poor picture of the topographical features as we found out later'.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, from eventual familiarisation and learning about the landscape which they occupied, trench maps were developed incorporating a grid system for place identification used by both infantry and artillery. Improvements came with the issue of a 1:20,000 scale Turkish map of the peninsula issued on 30 July 1915 by Major-General Braithwaite, C.G.S, Mediterranean Expeditionary Force which, 'for the sake of uniformity', English names were substituted in places for Turkish names. For example, Kuchuk Kemikli was named Nibrunesi Point at Suvla Bay which was the bay in Squares 116 and 105.¹¹⁰ Place names were allocated after men who died nearby or regiments who took the place from the Turks such as Gurkha Ravine.¹¹¹ The 1st RDF named a blockhouse at Suvla 'Dublin Castle'.¹¹²

Trench design improved from the a single trench to a system of front, support, reserve and communication trenches with front line trenches dug in traverse similar to those on the Western Front.¹¹³ Communication trenches were made more passable by widening them out.¹¹⁴ The widening of trenches may well have come about from the lessons learned at Scimitar Hill where the troops could not quickly get out of their crowded front lines because the trench was too narrow.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." Report of landings by Company Commander 1st RMF.

¹¹⁰ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310."

¹¹¹ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." Report of action on 28 June 1915. These were the maps used by both infantry and artillery.

¹¹² "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 7 October 1915.

¹¹³ Ibid. 23 September 1915.

¹¹⁴ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310."

Furthermore the narrowness of the trenches at Scimitar Hill made it difficult to carry a wounded man back, it was almost impossible to use a stretcher hence the widening.¹¹⁵

Intelligence was gathered either through raids, of which the 86th Brigade carried out very few, or through night patrols and listening posts. Night patrols proved challenging and the tactic of surprise was hindered because the Turks used dogs to give early warning in their front line.¹¹⁶ Through intelligence, as a tactic, patrols learned to be aware of the Turkish dogs. The intelligence gathered by the 86th Brigade was on the Turks themselves and their equipment. On the Turks themselves, one intelligence report in September expressed a belief that the Turkish troops opposite the brigade were Arabs.¹¹⁷ Another report informed them of the clothing and possible age of the Turks facing them.¹¹⁸ The 86th Brigade learned that some Turkish units were more active than others and at different times.¹¹⁹ Interestingly they learned that Turkish morale would increase on Moslem festivals. Consequently warnings went out to front line battalions to be on the alert for possible Turkish attacks on Moslem festivals. One such warning was issued by 86th Brigade on 11 August 1915.¹²⁰ The 86th Brigade learned how to occasionally test Turkish morale through a form of psychological warfare. News had come through that Baghdad, Nasiryah and Euphrates had fallen into British hands. The 29th Division had this news translated into Turkish and in early August, using a bomb catapult; the message was thrown into the Turkish trenches by the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers.¹²¹

On Turkish equipment, the Turks too were inventive; they developed a 'Broomstick Bomb', which the 1st RDF found was defective and unreliable.¹²² Drury learned that the Turks used an eight second fuse in their bombs. He also reported that the Turks used, 'Martini rifles converted to charger loading and having a five round magazine'.¹²³

¹¹⁵ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." Letter written by Brigadier –General T. War to Brigadier General Aspinall-Oglander 19 March 1931.

¹¹⁶ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310."

¹¹⁷ Ibid. August 1915.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. In November, an 86th Brigade listening post fired on a Turkish patrol killing one. An intelligence report was written on the dead man's clothing. 'He was wearing a greatcoat, khaki puttees, thin socks and old thin boots. His age was about 30. There was nothing on him with the exception of a tin of grease.'

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 11 August 1915.

¹²¹ Ibid. War Diary 86th Brigade

¹²² "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 13 November 1915

¹²³ "Drury, Noel Capt 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Diary." p.104.

He examined captured, ‘Mauser rifles and bayonets, and hand grenades held to a hook on the belt by a short piece of brass chain’.¹²⁴

Challenges to learning

The loss of experienced officers depleted the RDF battalion’s bank of combat experience and was a setback to learning. The consequence in the depletion of experienced pre-war trained soldiers in the ranks of the 1st RDF was exposed when they attempted to take Scimitar Hill on 21 August 1915.¹²⁵ According to Wylly, by that time there were very few of the original experienced officers of the 29th Division left and few of the trusted sergeants and corporals.¹²⁶ Despite the mass of men at Major General de Lisle’s disposal, the operation failed.¹²⁷ The arrival of new inexperienced subaltern replacements was initially a step backwards on the battalion’s learning journey. The majority of the replacement officers who came to the battalions after the landings in April 1915 were from the New Armies. These soldiers were inexperienced and had little time to learn the tactical skills of combat, hence their high losses. According to Gillon:

The men and NCOs were relatively better than the officers, who lacked experience and thorough military grounding...The juvenile recipients of hastily bestowed commissions, on the other hand, who formed the bulk of the subalterns drafted out at this time, had everything to learn, and not always the means whereby to learn it.¹²⁸

In 1916-17, it was estimated that the average life expectancy of a newly joined Subaltern in the front line was, at best, one month.¹²⁹ Some 66% of 1st Lancashire Fusiliers officers and 53% of the 1st RMF officers were killed at Scimitar Hill, see Table 4.5.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.83.

¹²⁵ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." Brigade Order, 21 August 1915. The 87th and 86th Brigades of the 29th Division attacked Scimitar Hill and Hill 112 respectively. The attack of the 86th Brigade was led by the 1st RMF and 1st Lancashire Fusiliers. The 30th and 31st Brigades of the 10th (Irish) Division were kept in reserve. The 29th Division was brought around from Sedh-El-Bahr to assist at Suvla because of their experience.

¹²⁶ Wylly. *Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922. Neill's Blue Caps. 1914-1922.* Pp.53-54.

¹²⁷ The 29th Division fought alongside soldiers from inexperienced territorial units such as the 11th, 53rd and 54th Divisions and the 2nd Mounted Division sent out from Egypt.

¹²⁸ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division.* p.28.

¹²⁹ Clayton, Anthony. *The British Officer Leading the Army from 1660 to the Present* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2007). p.169. Lewis-Stempel has suggested six weeks. Lewis Stempel, John. *Six Weeks* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2010). p.5.

Of the eleven 1st RDF officers who were either killed in action or died of wounds or injured during the Gully Ravine attack, nine of them came from Service or Reserve Battalions as replacements after ‘V’ Beach.¹³⁰ For example, Lieut. H.G. Rogers came from the 9th Reserve Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry formed in Plymouth in October 1914. The same inexperience that was brought to the 86th Brigade with the New Army officer replacements was evident in the 6th and 7th RDF with their losses of almost the entire inexperienced officer corps of these battalions during August as shown in Table 4.6. The death of the 7th RDF’s Ernest Julien and Poole Hickman epitomised the relationship between the lack of combat experience and loss of life.

The loss of NCOs and consequential reduction in the bank of experience was also a setback to learning in the RDF battalions in Gallipoli. Table 4.4 presents the losses the 1st RDF incurred between September and December 1915. The same drip-by-drip loss occurred in the 6th and 7th RDF. Between 6 August and 30 September 1915, both battalions suffered a combined death loss of forty-two of their non-commissioned officers, fourteen of which were sergeants, the rest were corporals and lance corporals. This does not include the men who were evacuated that were wounded.¹³¹ It must be remembered too that even though they were NCOs, their level of battle experience was limited. Despite their initial training and enthusiasm to learn at the Curragh and Basingstoke, the reality of war and their lack of combat experience at every level of command eventually took its toll. Referring to the losses to the 10th (Irish) Division following the assault on Kiretech Tepe Sirt, Cooper concluded, ‘the 10th Division had been shattered; the work of a year had been destroyed in a week’.¹³²

Training in Gallipoli

Up to December 1915, there was practically no training done by the 1st RDF while on the peninsula, mainly because there was little time allocated to training. As stated, time was prioritised to consolidating defences. In addition there was very little reserve area to train in, consequently the advancement of battalion learning through training was negligible.¹³³

¹³⁰ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." June 1915.

¹³¹ *Soldiers Died in the Great War Parts 71 72 and 73*. See also "[Http://Www.Cwgc.Org](http://www.cwgc.org) the Commonwealth War Graves Commission". RDF casualty database compiled by author.

¹³² Cooper. *The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli*. p.102.

¹³³ Gillon. *The Story of the 29th Division*. p.47.

The word 'training' appeared for the first time in the 1st RDF diary on 26 /27 December 1915, not long before they left the peninsula.¹³⁴ For a brief period in September 1915, the 1st RDF went back to Imbros for rest and re-organisation. The training they carried out there was the usual drill and route marching, there was nothing new or innovative reported based on any lessons learned on the peninsula.¹³⁵ Induction training of New Army officers and other ranks occurred but it did not progress the learning of the instructing battalion. It was catch-up learning as distinct from progressive learning. Battalions of the 86th Brigade trained battalions from the 157th Brigade of the 52nd (Lowland) Division who had arrived on the peninsula in early June 1915.¹³⁶ Much of their induction training time was spent digging trenches.¹³⁷

Specialist weapons training was given to selected men. The newly developed Rifle Grenade was used by Captain Hawe of the 1st RDF for the first time on 10 October 1915 and selected men were trained in its use.¹³⁸ One particular lesson given was that the weapon should never be fired from the shoulder owing to the shock of the recoil. Instead, they were to be fired, 'against the back of wall of trench or floor or sandbags on traverse'.¹³⁹ It wasn't until late December 1915 that brigade size grenade classes were established on the Gallipoli peninsula. Each class held forty-eight men from battalions in the brigade. There was a separate class for the officers. A brigade machine gun class was also commenced in December 1915, 'for the instruction of officers and NCOs to enable battalions in a few days to carry out their own battalion classes'.¹⁴⁰ The learning the RDF battalions experienced in Gallipoli as outlined above was basic and a direct result of their experiences in trench warfare and trench life. It is interesting to note that many of the lessons on tactics, equipment, infantry – artillery co-operation, trench life and warfare were cited as lessons in a report issued by the War Office in London titled, '*Lessons of the Great War*'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 26 December 1915

¹³⁵ Ibid. 10 September 1915

¹³⁶ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310." June 1915.

¹³⁷ "War Diary 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, January 1915 to March 1916, W095/4310." 23 September 1915. In late September 100 men from the Newfoundland Regiment were attached to the 1st RDF 'for instruction.' They ended up digging and maintaining trenches.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 31 October 1915

¹³⁹ "War Diary 86th Brigade, January 1915 to February 1916, 1st R D F, W095/4310."

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ "Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War - Appendices. W033/1927," (The Public Records Office, Kew: The War Office London 1932). Appendix III - Gallipoli

The learning experienced by the non-specialist fusilier who made up the majority of the RDF battalion's ranks that served in Gallipoli was not very progressive and inconsequential. Furthermore, because much of their time was used in consolidation work, little if any of the lessons learned were turned into training exercises as feedback. However, no matter how basic or inconsequential their learning was, in the broader context of the regiments learning journey into the war after 1915, the experience gained and lessons learned had a value, as Gary Sheffield appreciated when he noted:

One factor that had a decidedly important influence on the fate of the Gallipoli campaign, but is rarely mentioned, is that it took place in 1915, at the very beginning of the British army's learning curve...At Gallipoli in 1915, the British troops lacked experience, artillery, ammunition, scientific gunnery, aircraft, Lewis guns, Stokes mortar, technical and tactical know-how – everything, in short, that contributed towards the success of the 1917-1918 offensives.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Sheffield. *Forgotten Victory. The First World War: Myths and Realities*. p.95.