**GALLIPOLI DAY – 25th April 1915**

The Battle Honour “Gallipoli” was awarded to The King’s Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) in recognition of the 1st Battalion’s actions in that campaign as part of the 29th Division.

As trench warfare on the Western Front turned to stalemate by the end of 1914, enthusiasm grew for a strategic operation that would turn the German front by knocking out Turkey. However, following the British and French navies’ abortive attempt to force the Dardanelles straits to capture Istanbul in early 1915, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) was assembled to seize the protective forts defending the approaches. General Sir Ian Hamilton, the MEF Commander, decided on a three-pronged assault: the main effort to capture the Peninsula with the 29th and Royal Naval Division (RND); the French to create a diversionary landing to the South, whilst the Australians and New Zealanders landed to the North. The KOSB Battalion was grouped with the Plymouth Battalion of the RND and elements from the 2nd Battalion South Wales Borderers to form a task force whose role was to prevent Turkish reinforcements from interfering with the main Divisional landings.

In the dim light of dawn with visibility down to just 100 yards, operational surprise was achieved as the 922 strong battalion landed at “Y” Beach at 0445 on the 25th April, having been “sardined” in four trawlers, acting as improvised landing craft. Negotiating the craggy potholed boulder shoreline, the force disembarked without opposition and scrambled up the steep cliffs to form a defensive line on the dominating ground overlooking Gully Ravine; in the centre, the KOSB were deployed with three companies up and one in reserve. The ground before them was broken up by dense scrub land and an intermittent scattering of trees. At 1100 the Turks opened fire with an artillery barrage which, accompanied by rifle fire, lasted well until early evening; after a brief respite, the enemy counter attack resumed again at 1900 hours. Throughout the night, the Battalion withstood a series of fierce and sustained assaults on their position which was held only by the skilful and enthusiastic use of the bayonet; many acts of bravery went unrecorded, although Sergeant Bidgood was recognised by the award of a D.C.M. for holding a key hill feature on his own until relieved. Shelled without artillery to answer, save for some sporadic naval gunfire support, bombed without grenades with which to retaliate and blind without verey lights to illuminate their attackers, the KOSB held on grimly, locked in a protracted and bitter hand to hand contest. A German officer, attached to the Turks, was heard to call out in vain “You, English. Surrender! We ten to one.” Stung by this double affrontery, a Borderer sliced the Hun’s helmet in two with a single blow from his entrenching tool.

The next day, the Force Commander realised that without ammunition resupply and without the planned link up of the troops pushing North from X Beach, he would be forced to abandon his position; at 0930 on the 26th, an orderly withdrawal commenced with the evacuation of all casualties, the rear guard being provided by a KOSB company under the watchful command of Major “Jock” MacAlester, the acting Commanding Officer, who was awarded the DSO.

The price paid for the battle at Y Beach was immense; 296 Borderers were either killed or wounded, including the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel A.S. Koe, who died from his wounds the next day on his 50th birthday. However, the objective of absorbing the attention of a large proportion of the Turkish reserves had been achieved and the MEF had established a hard won foothold on the Peninsula. The KOSB were redeployed within the Divisional Sector and continued to take part in the Gallipoli campaign until withdrawn on the 9th January 1916. Reflecting on the landing at Y Beach, the Royal Navy Liaison Officer, Lieutenant Commander Keyes, remarked that “the way the KOSB held on for these two days and their final bayonet charges…no other battalion has done anything finer in a day when nearly every man in the Division deserved a V.C.”