

‘Familiarising the Foreign’

NEW ZEALAND SOLDIERS’ OBSERVATIONS ON LANDSCAPE DURING THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN



My dug-out is quite homely now — a bunk of sand bags, ‘tree feathers’ as I call twigs and leaves for a bed, an old scrim tiffin sack for a blanket, my great coat on, a dead Australian soldier’s great coat for a coverlet, a pack full of leaves for a pillow and I get some sleep — al fresco. I wash in a pint of water at night. Save it and wash all over with a sponge in the morning or rather half of me one day and the other half the next, in the same water and then perhaps the water left does to wash a pair of socks!¹

William George Malone, 1915

LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM MALONE was, by all accounts, notoriously unsentimental — a man short of word and sharp of mouth, with a generous appreciation for discipline. While preparing to embark from Wellington, New Zealand, to Egypt in September 1914, he decried the farewell ceremony in Newtown Park as ‘[t]oo much speechifying and praying’.² Less than a year later, he was felled by friendly fire at Gallipoli during the battle of Chunuk Bair. Yet in the brief time he spent at the mouth of the Hellespont, the reflections in his diary underwent several transformations. Most poignantly, his discussion of the terrain in which he fought changed from brief, no-nonsense descriptions of enemy positions to a deeper appreciation of the landscape that had become his home. Gallipoli, it seemed, had changed — and he was not the only one who perceived it. The diaries, letters and artistic renderings of many soldiers reflect these changing perceptions. This article explores those changes by analysing the written and artistic accounts of 15 New Zealand soldiers from an environmental perspective. I argue that the foreignness of the wartime landscape was transformed through a number of mental and physical constructs as part of an overall process of acclimatisation. The environment became a source of comfort and reassurance amidst the conflict.

Most of the historiography on the Gallipoli campaign focuses on high-level events and military operations. As Roberto Rabel argued, many of these ‘official histories’ were commissioned by the state as ‘explicitly commemorative’ and ‘implicitly nationalistic’, legitimising the ‘imagined community’ for which soldiers were asked to sacrifice.³ More recent works, such as those of John Thomson and Les Carlyon, continue in this commemorative trend. Thomson’s *Warrior Nation*, for instance, was dedicated to ‘the front-line warriors of the nation’ and claimed that those same front-line soldiers all fought ‘for causes that were convincing at the time, but which to modern generations may seem unworthy of such a sacrifice’.⁴ This conception of the soldier as a paragon of patriotic virtue is epitomised in Ormond E. Burton’s *The Silent Division*, which provided — courtesy of its title — one of the most recognisable

popular characterisations of the individuals who comprised the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.⁵ It is an example of what John Tosh and Sean Lang called a 'foundation myth' — 'a story, usually much-treasured, about the foundation of a group of people' which presents 'a simplistic, usually rosy, version of events'.⁶ This myth, which is codified in yearly Anzac Day ceremonies, provides little information on the motivations and experiences of individual soldiers.

This is not to deny the increasing diversity of New Zealand war history. Deborah Montgomerie has highlighted a plethora of recent works under the broad category of 'social history' that analyse wartime experiences from the bottom up. She argued that there need not be a clear-cut distinction between military and social histories of war, citing the diverse entries contained in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History* as an example.⁷ Both Montgomerie and Rabel suggest that the future of war history lies in gendered, racial and class-based analyses of warfare as part of a wider exposition on the intersection of war and society.⁸ Yet neither note that the environmental history of New Zealand's wars has been largely overlooked.

This article builds upon several schools of thought within recent war history scholarship. The first revolves around geographies of remembrance, whereby locations such as war memorials and battle sites are given meaning through the mental frameworks of those who commemorate them.⁹ Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips's *The Sorrow and the Pride* provided a survey of New Zealand war memorials, while Scott Worthy analysed the various meanings that were ascribed to them by the public, veterans, relatives of fallen soldiers and the state.¹⁰ The planting of memorial oaks to honour the deceased, as discussed by Eric Pawson, fulfilled a similar purpose. Through the imposition of social and cultural constructions, these trees represented 'a seemingly blank canvas, to be coloured by the paintbox of memory'.¹¹ These accounts demonstrate the personal and constructed nature of meaning, which is equally applicable to the way the Gallipoli landscape was perceived by the soldiers who fought upon it. However, their focus is on the transformation of landscapes in New Zealand as a result of war, rather than the wartime transformation of battlefields.

The second school of thought examines warfare through the accounts of front-line soldiers. Christopher Pugsley seamlessly wove together microhistorical and macrohistorical narratives in his discussion of the Gallipoli campaign, while Nicholas Boyack analysed in detail the motivations and experiences of soldiers in the Great War.¹² The latter in particular was dismissive of the 'mythological' motivations assigned to soldiers by popular accounts, suggesting instead that their reasons for going to war were as varied as the men themselves.¹³ One of the most common motivations, the desire to visit the Old World, is congruent with the 'tourist' analogy developed by Australian historian Richard White. White argued that the way that most soldiers wrote about their experiences at the front was reminiscent of tourists writing home to their families. The horrors of trench warfare, he claimed, could only be endured by maintaining a pretence of aloofness — by being 'the observer, but never the participant'.¹⁴ Bart Ziino augmented White's thesis by suggesting that the idea of 'home' was the overarching metaphor within which tourist-like perceptions

resided. Home was both a source of comfort which shaped the way the war was experienced, and the ultimate destination for the soldier after the war.¹⁵ Memories of home also served as a powerful contrast to the brutal world of the trenches, according to Christine Berberich.¹⁶ In contrast, this article takes a slightly different approach, suggesting that the 'tourist' and 'home' metaphors were complementary parts of a process of acclimatisation.

The emerging field of environmental history provides the third school of work which informs this article. William K. Storey's analysis of the environmental and technological factors of the Great War argued that human decisions were 'inextricably linked' to 'food, manpower, geography, and the ways in which people imagined the landscape'.¹⁷ In his brief treatment of Gallipoli, he suggested that English troops wrote of a 'hostile environment' and 'personal degradation', which they mitigated by assigning familiar names to landscape features. This reflected an overall wartime trend that saw soldiers gradually coming to perceive the landscape as 'foreboding'.¹⁸ Similarly, Dorothee Brantz claimed that the 'death and destruction' embodied in the environment of the Western Front 'made combat all the more miserable'.¹⁹ Peter Hoffenberg's analysis of Australian soldierly observations on landscape also emphasised unease, suggesting that ultimately soldiers were able to understand and assimilate the environment in which they fought by viewing it as 'a twentieth-century mirroring of early migration to Australia and occupation of the seemingly unoccupied and pre-historical continent'.²⁰ Displacement and discomfort also shaped Judith Bennett's study of soldiers' experience of the islands of the South Pacific in World War Two. Bennett argued that the 'alien landscape' and its 'arsenal of diseases' exposed a 'psychological vulnerability' that was only alleviated by 'the emotional links with their homelands and loved ones'.²¹

This article serves as a counterpoint to Sandy Callister's analysis of New Zealand Great War photography. She argued that the landscape at Gallipoli was viewed through many lenses, including the 'gaze of the soldier witness' and the 'imperial gaze'. The soldiers' photographs were simultaneously a retelling of 'the routine of war and the mundanity of camp life' and of 'complicity in the practice and representation of imperial warfare'.²² Callister noted, however, that interpretations of photographic representations 'must remain open-ended and suggestive' without a written guide from the photographer explaining what each photo meant to him or her. The same applies to artistic conceptions of the landscape. While artwork provides a visual account that is absent from text-based descriptions, its interpretation is invariably based upon the perceptions of the viewer rather than the artist. Therefore, paintings will be used in this article in conjunction with, rather than independent of, written accounts. These written accounts will also be used to test out some of Callister's 'suggestive' interpretations.

When Major Herbert Hart stepped ashore at Anzac Cove on 26 April 1915, his first sight was 'a great pile of dead waiting to be buried'.²³ His observation was both prosaic and brief; amidst the chaos and carnage of the first days of the campaign, there was little spare time to describe the land itself. This pattern is observable throughout the writings of many New Zealand soldiers.

The land was first seen, quite simply, as ‘terra incognita’ — an unknown entity eschewed within reminiscence in favour of the more immediate concern for survival. What attention was given to the terrain was mainly to augment the description of the landing operation itself — a charge up a gully or a march along a ridge. These passing descriptions, however, quickly gave way to the immediate transformations wrought by the occupation — the trappings of the human presence, from military hardware to tins of bully beef. Yet a sense of aloofness permeated these early writings, as if the soldiers sought to distance themselves from the conflict. They were, as White argued, writing through the eyes of a tourist.

Upon first approaching the Dardanelles, many soldiers described a landscape both alien and forbidding. Lance-Corporal Claude Comyns, an eloquent and prolific writer, noted that ‘[t]he air was absolutely still; there was no sign of life on the shore; a thin veil of mist hung over the promontory and the surface of the water was as smooth as glass’.²⁴ Corporal Alexander Aitken’s first impression of the ‘black mass and ridgy back of the Gallipoli Peninsula’ was ‘silent and subdued’; the ‘rising mass’ of the land was ‘felt rather than seen’ in the pre-dawn gloom.²⁵ Private Russell Weir spoke of ‘[s]teep hill country, of robust-looking cliffs’, and of a division ‘exhilarated’ and ‘anxious to get ashore’.²⁶ To Colonel John G. Hughes, the experience was an unceremonial rebirth into a new world where ‘[t]he officers and men went ashore with only the clothes they stood in’. The land in front of him was ‘a stretch of country not more than two miles of ... coast with a depth of about a mile’.²⁷ Private Cecil Malthus wrote in his memoirs of ‘how different, how primeval, how impenetrable in the darkness were the *deres* and scrub-covered slopes’.²⁸ The tension is evident in their testimonies; these soldiers, waiting in suspense to disembark upon the peninsula, wrote of an unfamiliar land that held grim promise.

Those who did not take part in the first attack were in a better position to employ the tourist perspective. Private Daniel Curham marvelled at his ‘grandstand view of the British fleet shelling the Cape Helles end of the peninsula’.²⁹ Trooper Dennan spent the first day of the landings on a supply ship watching coastal batteries and troop disembarkments.³⁰ Malone observed ‘transports steaming in close to the shore’ and ‘shells ... bursting all along the Turkish position’.³¹ Lieutenant Frederick M. Spencer, a medical officer observing the first wave through a pair of field glasses, wrote that he ‘could make out troops moving about on the beach’. He observed the first wave ‘cutting paths up the hillside, and more troops up and over the far side of the first ridges’.³² For Lance-Corporal C.S. Wells it was a ‘great sight ... [one] worth while going a long way [to see]’.³³ Phrases like ‘grandstand view’ and ‘great sight’ emphasise the sense of disconnection from the landscape and the battle that had begun to rage upon it.

It was while stepping ashore that the terrain was first observed in detail. Comyns described his landing zone as a ‘rugged & difficult part of the coast’ comprising ‘broken ground ... thick scrub and our own anxiety’. He associated the land itself with the foe upon it; ahead of his position was ‘[a] ridge, which was lined by the enemy’s trenches’.³⁴ Lance-Corporal Ernest Williams also combined his description of the land with the enemy. His first manoeuvre

saw him moving along 'a fairly steep ridge covered with thick vegetation ... in which the enemy's shrapnel was playing in a frightful manner'.³⁵ J.D. McLeod's landing involved fighting his way through 'a series of steep ridges, rising straight from the beach, mostly covered with scrubby [*sic*] bush, partly base clay and sandstone cliffs'. He thought it was '[m]arvellous how [the] Australian landing hastily gained a footing in these ridges'.³⁶ Malone, upon landing, found a respite for the Wellington Infantry Regiment 'up in a Gully, narrow and steep [and] full of scrub', after which he embarked upon 'an awful climb ... up the gully' to report to his acting brigadier.³⁷ These descriptions reflect the immediacy of the land surrounding the soldiers; the terrain was rough and harsh, almost an enemy in itself. Additionally, the unknown quantity of the land can be seen in the almost utilitarian descriptiveness employed; the soldiers were still separate from the terrain, and it was perceived through the lens of the manoeuvres being undertaken.

The same sense of aloofness is observable in many of the paintings of Horace Moore-Jones, a sapper sent to Gallipoli to map the peninsula. In *The Terrible Country towards Suvla*, two tiny figures are swallowed by the patchwork of rock and sand that lies before them. They stand in an elevated position, from where the impressive view suggests a feeling of reverence and respect for the untamed landscape. Moore-Jones's soldiers are tourists, soaking up the view as holiday-makers might. This use of a singular or small group of isolated figures is common across many of Moore-Jones's Gallipoli paintings, with several other plates suggesting the aloofness of the soldiers from the challenging and unfamiliar landscape.³⁸ Callister draws a similar conclusion regarding photographs of Gallipoli; the landscape 'serves as a recurring motif, but the cliffs, the beach enclaves and the sweeping panoramas of distant hills suggest a landscape devoid of human presence'.³⁹ The bulk of the land stands separate from them, foreign and unknown, and they in turn establish their relationship with it from a position of deferential unfamiliarity.

For others, the landscape was a side-note during the initial landings. Lance-Corporal Benoni Sandilands noted simply that he had '[I]anded via Destroyer and Barge ... & pressed up Walker's Gulf on South'.⁴⁰ Wells's landing was 'pretty quiet'; the diary entry for that day simply states that he '[I]anded on the Peninsular [*sic*] at 10 o'clock [*sic*] PM and walked about 2 miles to a gully and camped for the night'.⁴¹ Landed at 2am, Sergeant George Bollinger was 'taken up a small gully until daylight' on 'a tramp that I thought was never going to end'.⁴² Sergeant Joe Gasparich 'didn't have time to think much about anything' when he landed, although he did note with surprise 'the barrenness of the place'.⁴³ Caught up in the exhilaration and fear of their first steps upon the peninsula, these soldiers spared little attention for environmental concerns.

The soldiers soon began to perceive the ephemera of the human presence on the land. Malone, a stickler for order and cleanliness, observed that '[t]he beach was crowded with all sorts of beings, men, mules, donkeys, horses, ammunition supplies, naval beach parties'. He would later lament that '[a] battlefield is a much littered and untidy thing ... [a] mess and litter of rifles, ammunition, equipment of all sorts ... rubbish, tins and odds and ends of food, not to say filth'.⁴⁴ Comyns described the supply lines as a 'great scene of activity'; packs,



Figure 1: *The Terrible Country towards Suvla.* An inhospitable stretch of sharp hills and deep valleys, devoid of any signs of human habitation.

Against this foreign landscape, the two diggers at the bottom right seem small and cowed.

Source: Horace Moore-Jones, 'Plate No. 10: The Terrible Country towards Suvla', *Sketches made at Anzac during the occupation of that portion of the Gallipoli peninsula by the Imperial Forces*, London, 1916.



Figure 2: *Anzac Cove: The Landing Place.* Note the human presence on the landscape: the equipment stacked on the beach, the command posts stretching along the base of the hills from the left, the dugouts littering the slopes near the centre. Gallipoli has been transformed, and the lone digger surveying the land from his elevated position suggests a sense of mastery over the landscape.

Source: Horace Moore-Jones, 'Plate No. 2: Anzac Cove: The Landing Place', *Sketches made at Anzac during the occupation of that portion of the Gallipoli peninsula by the Imperial Forces*, London, 1916.

equipment and supplies were 'heaped up' on the beach, waiting to be 'hauled up to the top of the cliff'. He noted humorously that the scene was 'practically a large town'.⁴⁵ Sergeant John Skinner noted that the beach was 'filling up with boxes of bully beef, biscuits and ammunition',⁴⁶ while Spencer observed that 'pontoons had been erected on the beach for landing stages' during the landings 'so that our chaps got ashore dry from the surf boats'.⁴⁷ Moore-Jones made special note of 'the roads and tracks along the cliffs' that had been 'cut by the engineers and fatigue parties' in the early days of the campaign.⁴⁸ Within days of the first landings, the landscape was changing, and the soldiers paid special attention to those changes in their writings.

Not all of the alterations were pleasant. Comyns wrote that '[t]he sight of the beach was pitiful and will ever stand before my eyes. The graves of my comrades who had met their death the day previous were marked all along the beach.'⁴⁹ Skinner observed 'a great number of wounded men ... resting on stretchers or simply on the sand. A few were set to one side. They had blankets over them. You knew what that meant.'⁵⁰ Trooper Harry Browne, whose post-war reflections discuss the battle of Walker's Ridge, paid special attention to the land in which his comrades had fallen. 'We have tender thoughts as we leave the precipitous hill', he wrote, 'on the far side of which many an Australian and New Zealander lay in the sun, until the armistice in May enabled us to bury what was left of them. Along a certain bank is a rough little wooden cross and it is inscribed "Sacred to the memory of an unknown member of the N.Z. Exped. Force".'⁵¹ These soldiers expressed a strong connection between the land and those who fell upon it.

The first major transformations wrought by human hands were born of necessity. Within hours the troops were digging trenches and clearing the slopes of scrub. McLeod described how the slopes had been 'cleared of cover to decoy attackers ... and [reveal] the hidden machine guns on them'.⁵² Comyns and his battalion 'had to immediately dig ourselves in against the shrapnel fire'.⁵³ Hughes, as a camp commandant, 'had to feed and find shelter for the Headquarter staff (one hundred odd)' in 'Wellington Terrace and its row of dugouts'.⁵⁴ Bereft of the tools needed to construct dugouts, Malone humorously reflected on how he appropriated 'a number of picks and shovels' from the battalions of Generals Birdwood and Godley 'to enable [his] men to dig in'.⁵⁵ Trooper William East spent his first night at Gallipoli building 'bivouacs' — 'groundsheets laced together ... propped up with sticks and biscuit tins'.⁵⁶ Private Vic Nicholson relayed how his post had 'developed from an open trenchline into a fortification with sealed-in trenches and overhead protection'.⁵⁷ The soldiers had begun to shape the terrain under their feet, suggesting that they were changing from mere observers to participants in the environment. It was when stalemate began to set in that their participation was fully realised.

Between the beginning of May and the end of August, the Gallipoli campaign ground to an impasse. Having gained little ground beyond the strip of earth occupied during the initial landings, the New Zealand soldiers had spent far more time on that strip than was originally intended. But, in the words of Emily Dickinson, 'we grow accustomed to the dark', and over time

the soldiers began to mentally and physically acclimatise to the landscape in which they fought. The physical transformations continued apace, matched by several mental adaptations: the men constructed their 'bivvies'; features of the landscape were assigned familiar names; lulls in the fighting allowed time for observation and reflection; contrasts between the front and the rear allowed for moments of respite; and, in time, the soldiers themselves became elements of the landscape through metaphor and metonym. What began as a foreign land, touched upon in an aloof and tourist-like manner, was transformed into a home.

The physical alterations to the land were immense, and were noted by many soldiers. 'Daylight showed us how complete had been the transformation made by the months of War', wrote Comyns in early May.⁵⁸ To McLeod, the '[w]hole hillside [had become] a network of dugouts, appearing like a gigantic rabbit warren'.⁵⁹ Major Edward P. Cox made a similar observation, writing that '[t]he country here [was] now practically a mass of excavations & "dug outs"'.⁶⁰ Spencer, awestruck by the transformation, wrote: 'my word it's great what's been done on these ridges. Everywhere is a maze of trenches, firing trenches, communication trenches, supports, and saps connecting different posts.'⁶¹ To Bollinger, '[t]he lighted bivouacs on the hillside represented a city'.⁶² The landscape had evolved from a foreign land into a network of human construction.

It was this feeling that Moore-Jones captured in his painting titled *Anzac Cove*. Unlike many of his paintings which are relatively devoid of inhabitants, *Anzac Cove* is littered with signs of the campaign. From the waterfront runs Watson's Pier, through which foodstuffs and stores were brought and piled in copious amounts on the beach. Further inland the command posts are snugly ensconced against the mountainside. Signs of habitation also appear along Walker's Road and the 'Lanes and Burrows in which the "Boys" lived'.⁶³ The land had been changed to accommodate its temporary guests, suggesting that the foreignness of the terrain was mitigated through human effort. This utilisation of human agency, combined with the various by-products of human occupation, pushed back the boundaries of the unfamiliar in the soldiers' relationship with the land.

A patchwork of familiar labels evolved during the months of occupation to categorise the land. Major Fred Waite noted after the war, in a rather illustrating fashion, that '[i]nto this desolate country ... came legions of foreign soldiers who peopled every scrubby ridge and winding gully', leading to 'a multitude of Australian and New Zealand names appear[ing] spontaneously'.⁶⁴ The names chosen were typically one of three kinds: familiar place names from back home; descriptive terms based on physical or military characteristics; and the names of soldiers from the campaign. Bollinger, for example, made many references to the 'thickly scrubbed' terrain of 'Otago Gully',⁶⁵ while Hughes prided himself on the dugouts of 'Wellington Terrace'.⁶⁶ McLeod appended 'Casualty Corner' to a particularly renowned section of Shrapnel Gully.⁶⁷ Browne expressed 'tender thoughts' for the 'precipitous hill' that was 'Walker's Ridge'.⁶⁸ The terms were well known enough to roll off the tongues for some soldiers, as evidenced by Hughes's description of a cheer across the

Anzac line: '[t]he cheer was taken up by the troops on our right at Pope Hill and Courtney Post right along to the Australians at Lone Pine along our left to Walker's Ridge — where the mounted men let go — behind the Artillery on Plugges Plateau and right down to the beach.'⁶⁹ By placing an interpretative framework over the top of the landscape, these soldiers were able to couch the peninsula in more familiar terms.

The names used by Moore-Jones to annotate *Anzac Cove* similarly suggest a process of familiarisation with the land. This is most evident in his affectionate notations in the areas of the terrain where 'the "Boys" lived'. However, he also posited English names for most of the landmarks, many of which — such as Shrapnel Gully and Hell Spit — represent clear attempts to label the land in a manner reflecting the shared experiences of the soldiers upon it. Some of the names he chose, such as Queensland Point, highlight Moore-Jones's attempt to overcome the foreignness of the landscape through the use of recognisable geographical terminology.⁷⁰

Nowhere was a sense of familiarity clearer than in the construction and personalisation of the 'bivouacs'. Spencer was passionate about 'my bivvy', going so far as to refuse to leave it when the rest of his division were moved to Monash Valley.⁷¹ Comyns thought it was a 'wonderful sight' to 'see the little "bivvies" on the side of the gully'.⁷² Malone, despite his renowned eschewal of excess, wrote passionately about the many residences he built for himself during the conflict. 'I am digging out a home', he reflected at the end of May, 'part dug-out part sand-bag. So no roof. A lovely look out to beach and sea.' 'I am perched on a ridge say 400 feet above sea level', he later elaborated, '[s]hrubs round about and steep cliff to my left and track leading down to the ridge on my right It is a delightful spot in very sharp contrast to the fighting going on.' He wasted no time in constructing a new home after his regiment was moved to Helles to reinforce the British position. 'My "Home" is nice and dry ... quite snug. A stone wall, two boxes for sideboard etc. and can now sit on the side of my bunk in the bank with gorse blooming all round me.'⁷³ Malone's occasional use of inverted commas in describing his 'home' suggests that he was well aware of the absurdity of the term, but the sense of attachment that he and his fellow soldiers had for their 'bivvies' is unmistakable. The idea of home was, as Ziino suggests, a source of comfort and reaffirmation, but it was also a part of the process of acclimatisation.

The passage of time and the lulls in the fighting allowed many soldiers the luxury of observing the landscape in detail. Comyns sent many postcards home as the campaign progressed. 'I had the luck to strike a few views of the Dardanelles & I am just sending you these to give you an idea of what sort of place it is', he wrote to his mother. 'This is Gaba Tepe where the Australasian troops made the landing ... [y]ou can see ... how high the cliff was.'⁷⁴ The image on the front of the postcard matches Comyns's assessment of the cliff, which is reinforced by the fact that he has marked the landing location on the beach below with an 'X'. Malone and his regiment marvelled at the abundant flora at Cape Helles. 'We soon settled down at our bivouac in green fields', wrote Malone, 'with elms and walnuts on the boundaries, a running stream of clayey [*sic*] water and wild flowers ... dog roses, poppies, big white daisies

and many yellow, purple, lilac blue and white flowers, also some tawny reds'.⁷⁵ 'We are now bivouaced in the midst of beautiful rural country', agreed Williams, 'very pretty with poppy, brier and other wild flowers, with trees and vines'.⁷⁶ Cox was captivated by the 'abundan[ce] in wild flowers vineyards & cypress groves', and wrote that 'as a great admirer of natural scenery, I cannot, even amid the tumult of war, pass this by without comment'.⁷⁷ Here again, the tourist analogy is appropriate; the landscape served as both a medium to convey their experiences to those back home and a temporary distraction from the carnage.

For some, Gallipoli became a land of contrasts. The beauty of Cape Helles and the battle that raged upon it were prime examples. Malone commented on the 'dog roses, poppies, and other [wild flowers] strange to me' at the same time that 'big guns and rifles were firing away in our front'.⁷⁸ 'Swallows (how graceful a bird he is) flit about and so far all is quiet in the firing line', remarked Williams, '[one] does not realise that the Allies have 100 guns behind their lines, and that a battle is imminent which will decide the issue of the present campaign'.⁷⁹ 'Behind the Isle of Samothrace the sun gloriously sets each night', Browne wrote. 'Peace on that side — inland war. Peace to the seaward'.⁸⁰ Observation of nature amidst war provided a respite for these soldiers.

Relief was also found by physically immersing oneself in the ocean. 'I am arranging every day to send some men to [the] beach for a swim and a few hours [*sic*] spell from the trenches', recorded Malone.⁸¹ Comyns, 'coming from the firing line', used his time off to do 'some fancy diving'.⁸² Williams remarked in early May that 'bathing is being freely indulged in' during lulls in the fighting.⁸³ Yet there were risks involved too. Hughes stated that '[t]he bathing was perfect — warm buoyant sea'; however, 'if more than half a dozen went in at one time [a] burst of shrapnel would sweep the spot'.⁸⁴ This made the breathing space of the sea a sobering experience for some. 'This afternoon we went to the beach for a wash', wrote Bollinger, 'but [we] had to go such a long way to be free from shell fire [that] all the shine was taken off the wash'.⁸⁵ While the sea may have provided a mental breather from the terrain above it, there were still many reminders of the conflict.

For many soldiers, the troops themselves seemed like elements of the landscape. To Hughes, the soldiers were 'pebbles on the beaches of Gallipoli' — a powerful metaphor for the natural, almost insignificant quality he believed they had assumed.⁸⁶ For Bollinger, however, the soldiers were 'moving about like rabbits in burrows on the face of this steep hill', reflecting the crouched and subterranean nature of trench warfare.⁸⁷ McLeod recorded similar sentiments to those of Bollinger, albeit with greater linguistic prowess: '[i]n ancient days, so history says, men had cave dwelling habits; and now once more, on this steep shore, we live in holes like rabbits.' The trenches, he reflected, were 'like a gigantic rabbit warren'.⁸⁸ These floral and faunal personifications portrayed the soldiers as having become a part of the landscape through the course of the occupation.

As the months passed, the previously hot and humid climate of the Dardanelles dropped to a freezing cold. Within weeks, the land was blanketed in white. 'Several inches of snow fell last night & this morning all day long

a driving snow fell', wrote Bollinger in November. 'We were miserable. No one had contemplated this. Trees, shrubs & everything is white down to the shores of the Aegean.'⁸⁹ Wells complained that the weather was 'bitterly cold and it makes one shiver to think what it will be like in the winter'. More pragmatically, he expressed concern over the effect that the snow had had upon the man-made supply lines; the tracks, which had become greasy and slippery, were making it hard for the mules to deliver rations to the front line.⁹⁰ Leonard Leary similarly struggled through 'a snowstorm that lasted three days' that rendered 'the track up from the beach ... so muddy and slippery that the mules couldn't bring up enough rations and water'.⁹¹ The snow undid some of the transformations wrought by human occupation, returning a sense of foreignness to the landscape. Yet Bollinger also spared a sentence for how the cold evoked memories of home: '[t]his morning was very bitter + reminded me of New Plymouth.'⁹²

By October the leadership were debating the prospect of evacuation from the peninsula. The actual departure, which took place in December, elicited a number of observations from the soldiers. These observations were closely tied to the transformations that the human presence had wrought on the land and the fact that they were now being abandoned. Leary's march to the transports took him 'along the sides or bottoms of gullies where a few days before hundreds of men had been living in their dugouts'. He reflected that 'it seemed strange to see all those bivouacs empty and silent — like passing through a deserted city'.⁹³ The 'deserted city' and the various items being left behind were sources of sadness for Wells. 'It was a crying shame the stuff that was burned and broken on the Peninsular [*sic*] after we left', he wrote. 'Why it just about makes a chap cry.'⁹⁴ The fact that the transformations wrought upon the terrain drew such poignant reflections upon being surrendered demonstrates just how much mental investment had been placed in the land itself. It also demonstrates the extent of that transformation — what began as 'terra incognita' had become its exact opposite, a 'city'.

'Terra incognita' was rendered familiar through a variety of mental and physical constructs designed to tame the land for occupation. There was no set pattern for acclimatisation — soldiers perceived, and reconciled with, their environment in different ways. Nevertheless, the soldiers discussed in this article all demonstrated a gradual shift from the foreign to the familiar. Above all it was time that facilitated this process; the stalemate of the campaign allowed the soldiers the luxury to move from aloof descriptions of their surroundings to a more in-depth appreciation of the land that had become their home. This process was more immediate, and more hands-on, than the process of historical comparison suggested by Hoffenberg.

The 'tourist' and 'home' metaphors suggested by White and Ziino are loosely congruent with the findings of this article. When faced with an unknown landscape on the other side of the world, one of the coping mechanisms adopted by these soldiers was the comforting detachment of the tourist. Yet as the campaign ground on, their detachment from the landscape was replaced with a growing sense of familiarity. In a sense they remained tourists; however, their active participation went deeper than mere tourist observations. These

soldiers were developing means to cope with their situation — giving familiar names to nearby landmarks, contrasting the deadly front with the peaceful rear, building homes out of mud and stone. There was an intensely personal experience driven by the individual will to live, and facilitated by the need to find comfort in whatever way they could. Thus, home was more than something far away that pushed them onwards, as Ziino argues — it was something that they carved out of the landscape itself. It did not lend itself to fear, as Storey and Brantz suggest, but to reassurance.

The observations analysed in this article demonstrate elements of both Callister's 'gaze of the soldier witness' and the 'imperial gaze'. However, her claim that photographs of soldiers performing routine tasks such as cooking and 'building a home' were merely representations of the mundane misses the transformative nature of these routines. Building a home, for example, was a source of comfort — an attempt to make the best of a bad situation.⁹⁵ Additionally, while photographs of military encampments, stacks of equipment and boats unloading troops may have explicitly or implicitly reinforced the imperial vision of the campaign, they were also a coping mechanism. These meanings, merely suggestive in photographic form, emerge more clearly through written accounts. The detachment of the tourist, observing the war through the written word or the lens of a camera, was a form of acclimatisation.

This article can also be viewed as a starting point for new research into soldierly perceptions of landscape. It does not claim to be an exhaustive environmental history of war, or even of the Gallipoli campaign. While there are undeniable patterns of perception in the writings discussed in this study, they are merely a tiny subset of the thousands of personal observations that were recorded during the campaign. There are many avenues of research yet to be explored. Did differences in gender, race, rank, nationality, peacetime employment, education or home town result in different perceptions of, and relationships with, the wartime landscape? Were these perceptions influenced by an interest in natural history, as was shared by many British officers before the war, and can they be linked to nineteenth-century landscape conventions such as the picturesque and the sublime? Are there any differences between the immediate reflections in diaries and letters, and memoirs written well after the event? And were officers more or less likely to view the landscape through Callister's 'imperial gaze'? This is a rich field of study which holds great promise for future analysis.

MATTHEW CUNNINGHAM

Victoria University of Wellington

NOTES

1 'The Gallipoli Diary of William George Malone', in Jock Phillips, Nicholas Boyack and E.P. Malone, eds, *The Great Adventure: New Zealand Soldiers Describe the First World War*, Wellington, 1988, pp.40–41.

2 *ibid.*, p.19.

3 Roberto Rabel, 'War History as Public History: Past and Future', in Bronwyn Dalley and Jock Phillips, eds, *Going Public: The Changing Face of New Zealand History*, Auckland, 2001, pp.55–73.

4 John Thomson, *Warrior Nation: New Zealanders at the Front, 1900–2000*, Christchurch, 2000, pp.12–13, 38–74; Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, Sydney, 2001. See also Harvey Broadbent, *Gallipoli: The Fatal Shore*, Camberwell, 2005; Tim Travers, *Gallipoli 1915*, Charleston, 2001.

5 Ormond E. Burton, *The Silent Division: New Zealanders at the Front 1914–1919*, Sydney, 1935.

6 John Tosh and Sean Lang, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, New York, 2006, pp.3–6.

7 Deborah Montgomerie, 'Reconnaissance: Twentieth-Century New Zealand War History at Century's Turn', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 37, 1 (2003), pp.62–79.

8 *ibid.*, pp.69, 73–74; Rabel, pp.65–71.

9 They form part of a growing international body of work on war memorialisation; see, for example, Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 3rd edn, Melbourne, 2008; Ken Inglis, 'A Sacred Place: The Making of the Australian War Memorial', *War and Society*, 3, 2 (1985), pp.99–112; Ken Inglis, 'Entombing Unknown Soldiers', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 23 (1993), pp.4–12; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge, 1995; Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance*, Cambridge, 2003.

10 Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials*, Wellington, 1990; Scott Worthy, 'A Debt of Honour: New Zealanders' First Anzac Days', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 36, 2 (2002), pp.185–200; Scott Worthy, 'Communities of Remembrance: The Memory of the Great War in New Zealand, 1915–1939', MA thesis, The University of Auckland, 2001; Scott Worthy, 'Communities of Remembrance: Making Auckland's War Memorial Museum', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39, 4 (2004), pp. 599–618; see also Peter Stanley, 'Quinn's Post', in John Crawford and Ian McGibbon, eds, *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War*, Auckland, 2007.

11 Paul Cloke and Eric Pawson, 'Memorial Trees and Treescapes Memories', *Environment and Planning, Society and Space*, 26, 1 (2008), pp.107–22; Eric Pawson, 'The Memorial Oaks of North Otago: A Commemorative Landscape', in Geoff Kearsley and Blair Fitzharris, eds, *Glimpses of a Gaian World: Essays in Honour of Peter Holland*, Dunedin, 2004, pp.115–31.

12 Christopher Pugsley, *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story*, Auckland, 1984; Christopher Pugsley, *Anzac: The New Zealanders at Gallipoli*, Auckland, 1995; Nicholas Boyack, *Behind the Lines: The Lives of New Zealand Soldiers in the First World War*, Wellington, 1989; Nicholas Boyack, 'A Social History of New Zealand Soldiers in World War One, based upon their diaries and letters', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1985.

13 Boyack, 'A Social History'.

14 Richard White, 'Europe and the Six-Bob-a-Day Tourist: The Great War as a Grand Tour, or getting civilised', *Australian Studies*, 5 (1991), pp.122–39; Richard White, 'The Soldier as Tourist: The Australian Experience of the Great War', *War & Society*, 5, 1 (1987), pp.63–78.

15 Bart Ziino, 'A Kind of Round Trip: Australian Soldiers and the Tourist Analogy, 1914–1918', *War & Society*, 25, 2 (2006), pp.39–52.

16 Christine Berberich, "'I was meditating about England": The Importance of Rural England for the Construction of "Englishness"', in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, eds, *History, Nationhood & the Question of Britain*, London, 2004, pp.375–85.

17 William K. Storey, *The First World War: A Concise Global History*, Lanham, 2009, pp.2–3.

18 *ibid.*, pp.73–76, 161–65.

19 Dorothee Brantz, 'Environments of Death: Trench Warfare on the Western Front, 1914–18', in Charles E. Closmann, ed., *War and the Environment: Military Destruction in the Modern Age*, College Station, TX, 2009, pp.68–91.

20 Peter H. Hoffenberg, 'Landscape, Memory and the Australian War Experience, 1915–18', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36, 1 (2001), pp.111–31.

- 21 Judith Bennett, *Natives and Exotics: World War II and Environment in the Southern Pacific*, Honolulu, 2009, pp.291–92.
- 22 Sandy Callister, *The Face of War: New Zealand's Great War Photography*, Auckland, 2008, pp.29–41.
- 23 John Crawford, ed., *The Devil's Own War: The First World War Diary of Brigadier-General Herbert Hart*, Auckland, 2008, p.59.
- 24 Claude Lellan Comyns, Diaries and Letters 1914–1915, MS-Papers-1417 (hereafter, Comyns), Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington, 25 April 1915.
- 25 Alexander Aitken, *Gallipoli to the Somme: Recollections of a New Zealand Infantryman*, London, 1963, pp.21–22.
- 26 Maurice Shadbolt, *Voices of Gallipoli*, Auckland, 1988, p.36.
- 27 John Gethin Hughes, Gallipoli 1915–1916, MS-Papers-4019 (hereafter, Hughes), ATL, p.5.
- 28 Cecil Malthus, *Anzac: A Retrospect*, Christchurch, 1965, p.113.
- 29 Shadbolt, p.42.
- 30 Trooper Dennan, Journal 1914–1918, MS-Papers-4019 (hereafter, Dennan), ATL, 25 April 1915.
- 31 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, p.32.
- 32 Frederick Montgomery Spencer, letter 24 April 1915, 'Lemnos Grecian (sic) Archipelago 24/4/15', Papers 1914–1919 (hereafter, Spencer), ATL.
- 33 C.S. Wells, Diaries 1915–1916, MS-Papers-1384 (hereafter, Wells), ATL, 29 September 1915.
- 34 Comyns, 26–28 April 1915.
- 35 Ernest Percival Williams, Diary 1915, MS-Papers-3914 (hereafter, Williams), ATL, 25 April 1915.
- 36 J.D. McLeod, Diary Jan 1917–May 1917, MS-Papers-1382 (hereafter, McLeod), ATL, 27 May 1915.
- 37 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, p.34.
- 38 Horace Moore-Jones, 'Plate No. 10: The Terrible Country towards Suvla', *Sketches Made at Anzac During the Occupation of that Portion of the Gallipoli Peninsula by the Imperial Forces*, London, 1916. See also Plate No. 4: The Historic Positions; Plate No. 6: The Australian Lines, Extreme Right; Plate No. 7: The Outposts Nos 1, 2 and 3, Anzac Left; Plate No. 8: The Positions Looking North over Shrapnel Gully; and Plate No. 9: The Sphinx, a Rest Camp.
- 39 Callister, p.32.
- 40 To be fair, Sandilands's writing is notorious for its brevity in general. See Benoni Sandilands, Diary 11 May–10 Aug 1915, MS-Papers-1405 (hereafter, Sandilands), ATL, 11 May 1915.
- 41 Wells, 9–11 November 1915.
- 42 George Wallace Bollinger, Diary 11 Aug 1915–11 Feb 1916, MS-Papers-1419 (hereafter, Bollinger), ATL, 16 August 1915.
- 43 Shadbolt, p.80.
- 44 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, pp.33, 47.
- 45 Comyns, 28 April–1 May 1915.
- 46 Shadbolt, p.69.
- 47 Spencer.
- 48 Horace Moore-Jones, *Complete Index to the First Series of Sketches Made at Anzac*, London, 1916, p.11.
- 49 Comyns, 28 April 1915.
- 50 Shadbolt, p.69.
- 51 Harry Ernest Browne, Gallipoli Diary (unpublished), MS-Papers-3519 (hereafter, Browne), ATL, p.1.
- 52 McLeod, 27 May 1915.
- 53 Comyns, 6 May 1915.
- 54 Hughes, p.6.
- 55 Malone was evidently not fond of said leadership, who he felt could '*plan all right*' (his italics) but had 'no idea of order, method etc'. It was upon them that he laid the blame for the cluttered affair on the shore. Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, pp.33–34.
- 56 Shadbolt, p.76.
- 57 *ibid.*, p.90.
- 58 Comyns, 8 May 1915.
- 59 McLeod, 27 May 1915.

60 Edward Percy Cox, 'Gallipoli Diary', *New Zealand Electronic Text Centre*; available from <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-CoxDiar-t1-body-d8.html>; accessed 4 February 2011.

61 Spencer.

62 Bollinger, 8 November 1915.

63 Moore-Jones, 'Plate No. 2: Anzac Cove: The Landing Place', *Sketches Made at Anzac*; Moore-Jones, *Complete Index to the First Series of Sketches*, p.10.

64 Fred Waite, *The New Zealanders at Gallipoli*, Christchurch, 1919, p.317. Waite provides the most thorough index of formal and informal place names that I have found; see Waite, pp.318–24.

65 Bollinger, 12 September 1915.

66 Hughes, p.6.

67 McLeod, 28 May 1915.

68 Browne, p.1.

69 Hughes, pp.8–9.

70 Moore-Jones, *Complete Index to the First Series of Sketches*, p.10.

71 Spencer, 16–22 June 1915.

72 Comyns, 23 May 1915. He made this reflection at the very end of a diary entry detailing a day spent burying his dead comrades, as if trying to console himself with something familiar.

73 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, pp.39–40, 43–44, 48.

74 Comyns, postcard 1.

75 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, pp.43, 49.

76 Williams, 6 May 1915.

77 Cox, 'Gallipoli Diary'.

78 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, p.43.

79 Williams, 6 May 1915.

80 Browne, p.1.

81 Phillips et al, *Great Adventure*, p.39.

82 Comyns, 26 May 1915.

83 Williams, 2 May 1915.

84 Hughes, p.5.

85 Bollinger, 8 September 1915.

86 Hughes, p.6.

87 Bollinger, 12 November 1915.

88 McLeod, 27–31 May 1915.

89 Bollinger, 28 November 1915.

90 Wells, 22–28 November 1915.

91 Leonard Leary, *Reminiscences 1915–1919*, MS-Papers-4022 (hereafter, Leary), ATL, p.8.

92 Bollinger, 28 November 1915.

93 Leary, p.9.

94 Wells, 17 December 1915.

95 Callister, pp.31–32. She comes close to stating this when she points out that the photographs 'reinforce life not death: men standing or sitting, chatting, having a cup of tea or smoking a pipe and posing for the camera'.