Going Down Another “Genealogical” Rabbit Hole:

-The Story of Andrew Easton Wands (1893-1915) and the Battle of Gully Ravine and the “Butcher of Helles”

By William J Anhorn K.C. ICD.D

The Mad Hatter Historian

“Mad Matter: "Have I gone mad?"
Alice: "I'm afraid so. You're entirely bonkers. But I'll tell you a secret. All the best people are.”

From Lewis Carroll ….“Alice In Wonderland”



About the Author:

William J. Anhorn was born and raised in Medicine Hat, Alberta and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree (Political Science) from the University of Calgary and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Alberta.

He returned to his hometown of Medicine Hat in 1976 and practiced law for over 35 years as a senior partner with the law firm of Pritchard and Company. He retired in 2012 and he and his wife Joan Elaine Anhorn (Medlicott), a retired teacher, continue to reside there.

Always having had a keen interest in writing and more recently genealogy, he has researched and written a series of articles on his own family and his extended family (Medlicott/McIvor) and their family history.

He is also passionate about history including the history of Medicine Hat and has researched and written several articles in relation to the history of his "hometown".

He currently is a member of the Alberta Genealogical Society (Medicine Hat Branch) and the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District. He is Past Chairman of the Historical and Heritage Resource Management Committee of the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Company.

He is a frequent contributor to the Alberta Genealogical Society newsletter, 'Relatively Speaking'.

His articles can be found on his website at http://wjanhorn.ca

Introduction:

In one of my most recent articles, I made reference to the fact that one of the many pitfalls that the amateur genealogist encounters as they pursue their craft or hobby, is going down the proverbial "rabbit hole". When collaborating or commiserating with fellow artisans, this is found to be common malady. But where did the phrase "going down a rabbit hole" originate and what does it actually mean?

In the earlier article entitled, "**Through the Looking Glass"- The Story of the Munro and Glass Families from Scotland and the Quest to find the Antecedents of James Glass**, I made specific reference to one of Lewis Carroll's earliest works and it may not come as a complete surprise, that the term "going or falling down a rabbit hole" was introduced in the 1865 popular novel, "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*".[1] In that story, Alice literally falls down the hole of the White Rabbit, taking her to Wonderland, which was a bizarre and absurd universe, with a multitude of strange and unusual characters.

Although the phrase may have been used from time to time in common parlance over the next 100 years or so, it did not rise in popularity until the advent of the Internet. As pointed out by several authors and columnists[2], it took the Internet to develop the "phrase" as an online metaphor, which means being caught in a virtual time warp, where one of two things invariably happen.

First, we become interested in a particular topic and a quick 'Google' search leads us to one article on the subject, which leads to another link, which leads to another article and before we know it, we have spent hours reading all we can about the subject, all the while wondering when we look up, where the time went.

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[1] Note that any reference to "**Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**" and "**Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There**," by Lewis Carroll are in the **public domain**. The works were published before January 1, 1923, and are in the **public domain** worldwide because Carroll died in 1898, more than 100 years ago.

[2] See, Kathryn Schultz, "The Rabbit Hole" The New Yorker Magazine June 2015

Alternatively, we will look up a certain fact or subject and in doing so, become distracted by another completely unrelated topic which piques our interest and as Alice in Wonderland would say, we become "curiouser and curiouser" to borrow a phrase from the book and down another "rabbit hole" we go.[3]

In another article entitled, **"Putting the Cat Among the Pigeons"-Another Chapter in the Story of the Genealogical "Cold" Case Originating from Medicine Hat,** I began, as part of this research, to document the family of **Thomas Wallace,** who had emigrated to Edmonton, Alberta from Scotland around 1914. The family and several generations become firmly established in Alberta.

In carrying out my research for this project, it was necessary for me to create a Wallace family tree on ancestry.ca for purely my own research purposes, in order to keep the various descendants of Thomas Wallace in some semblance of order.

I have always been interested in the study of history and in particular, the history of WWI. This keen interest in one of the darkest times in world history was no doubt inspired by my research into the family history of my wife's family-Medlicott.[4] While looking through some old photographs, I found pictures of her grandfather Thomas Medlicott and her great uncle Edward Medlicott.

Both of them were members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and served gallantly overseas in the Great War. Unlike so many others, they both returned safely home from the war, but with their own "scars" both physically and emotionally.

Most recently, I had occasion to travel to France and Belgium and to visit such historic WWI sites as Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Hill 60, Ypres and the infamous Menin Gate.

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[3] See, Elaine Zelby, History of the Idiom "Down the Rabbit Hole" Medium.com January 28th, 2019

[4] Thomas Medlicott was a member of the 175th battalion CEF that was composed of volunteers from Medicine Hat and the surrounding area.

Only in visiting such places does one fully appreciate the full nature and extent of the carnage and the terrible loss of life that occurred when so many young men, who heeded the patriotic call, paid the ultimate sacrifice. One of the things I noticed, as I walked through the row upon row of white headstones in the many Canadian and British war cemeteries we visited, was the number of men that gave their life in love of country, at such a young age.



In doing my research of the Wallace family, I came across a close relation, a nephew of Thomas Wallace. His name was **Andrew Easton Wands**, the son of John and Elizabeth Wands, who was born in 1893 in Wishaw, Scotland.

What caught my attention was the date of his death -June 28th 1915, when he would have been just 22 years of age. Another interesting fact was where he died-Dardanelles, Gallipoli.

These facts coupled with my interest in WWI caused me to become “curiouser” and “curiouser” about the circumstances surrounding the untimely death of this young man and quite understandably, I went down another “genealogical rabbit hole”.

It was nonetheless an enlightening journey as I became familiar with an interesting but not often discussed part of the history of WWI. It is a part of history, which has been largely overlooked, and which has been the subject matter of much academic debate and which for me, was all quite interesting.

Let me explain.

The Gallipoli Campaign[5]

Like many, although I had heard of "Gallipoli" in a vague sense, as being part of the British involvement at the start of The First World War, I did not fully appreciate its historical significance.

The Gallipoli Campaign was a military campaign in the First World War that took place on the Gallipoli Peninsula, which is today in modern Turkey, from February 17th 1915 to January 9th 1916.



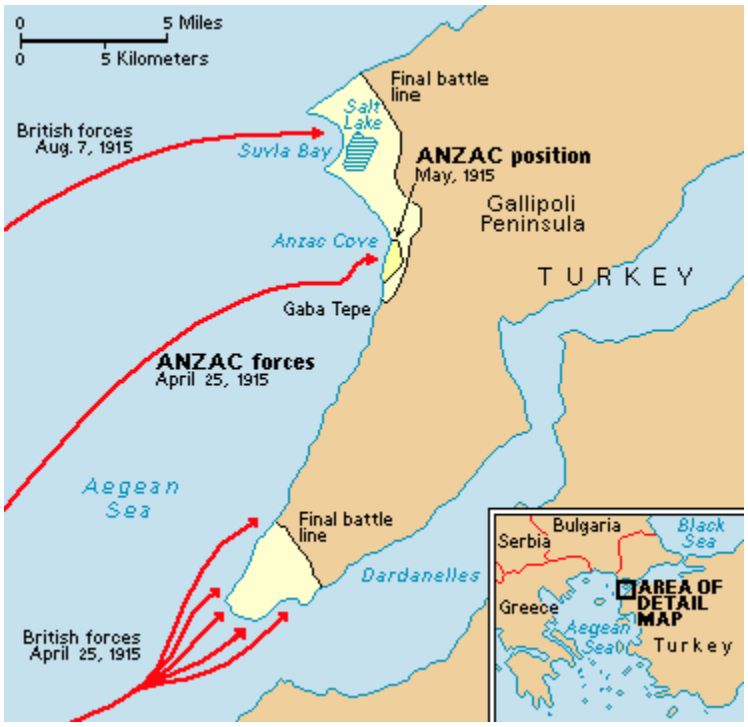
[5] See, Wikipedia, Gallipoli Campaign

The Allied powers, which included Britain, France, and Russia, sought to weaken the Ottoman Empire, one of the Central powers that were aligned with Germany, by taking control of the Bosporus Straits, and the area known as the Dardanelles. This would expose the Ottoman capital at Constantinople, which is modern day Istanbul, Turkey to bombardment by Allied battleships and this would cut it off from the Asian part of the Empire.

With Turkey defeated, the Suez Canal would be a safe and a year-round Allied supply route, which would utilize the Black Sea and open up warm water ports in Russia, thereby creating a further front against Germany and thereby hopefully, end the war.

This military effort by Britain and its allies became a debacle and a crushing defeat with thousands of young men lost as a result.

A Mediterranean Expeditionary Force made up of primarily British, Australian and New Zealand army units under the command of Sir Ian Hamilton landed on the beaches of Cape Helles on April 25th 1915.



Although Canada played a significant role during WWI as part of the British Commonwealth, it is of some historical significance that no Canadian troops participated in the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. However, 1076 men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment landed in Gallipoli on September 20,1915.[6]

[6] Newfoundland and Labrador did not become a Province of Canada until March 31st, 1949, but with the declaration of war (1914) and as a member of the British Empire, Newfoundland joined the war effort by creating the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.



A monument honoring the participation of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment on the Gallipoli Peninsula during WWI[7]

A prominent hill called “Aachi Baba" which offered a panorama view far above the beachhead was considered to be the principal target of the operation in addition to a small village inland called “Krithia”.

The initial attack led by Hamilton along with his second in command, Aylmer Hunter- Weston was a huge failure and several subsequent attempts over the course of the next several months resulted in heavy casualties without any tangible military success. These are referred to as the First, Second and Third Battles of Krithia.

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[7] The Gallipoli Newfoundland Memorial is located next to Hill 10 Cemetery in the former Sulva Bay sector of the Gallipoli peninsula, Türkiye. The photo is courtesy of Steven Wright from the UK who recently toured the Gallipoli Peninsula and provided the photo of this monument honoring the participation of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in WWI. Steven Wright co-authored a book about those men and women from Todmorden, England who paid the ultimate price for freedom during the Great War. It is entitled, “*The Fallen Sons of Todmorden, 1914–1920*.”.

On June 28th, 2015, the Battle of Gully Ravine took place and with massive casualties on both sides.

The Battle of Gully Ravine (Sığındere)

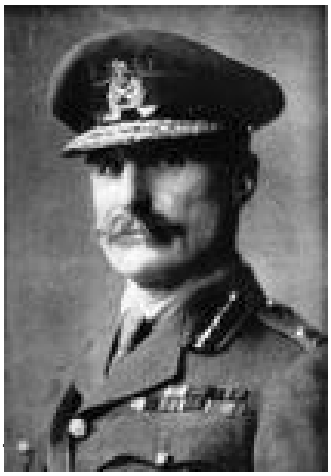
The British battalions made up of the 4th and 5th regiments of the Royal Scots, had modest success on June 15th 1915 in capturing a small “trench” occupied by the Turks by utilizing a full “over the top” bayonet charge capturing the area but at a cost of over 60 lives.

This rare success brought several congratulatory letters from every level of command up to General Sir Ian Hamilton, the overall Commander of the Dardanelles operations, as well as, The Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

Emboldened by their earlier success, the next major advance was on June 28th, 2015 and the Royal Scots (RS) in conjunction with the newly arrived 52 (Lowland) Division, including members of the 7th RS, took part in the another major attempt to gain Achi Baba and the village of Krithia. Although RS achieved its immediate objective, without any artillery support, it was at a terrible cost of 34 killed, 156 wounded and 80 missing and believed dead.

Unlike previous Allied attacks at Cape Helles, the Gully Ravine action was relatively successful at achieving its objective, though at a typically high cost in terms of human lives lost on both sides.

As a result of this engagement, the Commander of the British forces, Commander Ayler Hunter-Weston was nicknamed the “Butcher of Helles”[8] largely due to his utter disregard for the welfare of his troops and incompetent battle plans, including broad frontal assaults during the daytime. He claimed he was "blooding the pups" when he made the inexperienced 156th Brigade of the Scottish 52nd (Lowland) Division



[8] see, “Butcher of Helles” on Wikitree for a summary of his life/photo

attack without artillery support during the Battle of Gully Ridge, where half the brigade became casualties, of which over a third were killed.[9]

Although there is no way of knowing with complete accuracy, every indication would suggest that Andrew Easton Wands, aged 22 years, being a member of the 7th Royal Scots, died at the hands of the "Butcher of Helles" on June 28th, 1915 during the Battle of Gully Ravine.

As evidence, reference is made to the following taken from the UK, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honor, 1914-1919, Volume I at p. 366

WANDS, ANDREW EASTON, L.-Corpl., No. 7689, 8th Battn. Highland L.I. (T.F.), attd. 1/7th Royal Scots (T.F.), *s.* of the late James Wands, of 65, Glasgow Road, Wishaw, by his wife, Elizabeth. dau. of Andrew Easton; *b.* Wishaw, co. Lanark, 18 Aug. 1914; educ. Berryhill School there; was Craneman G.I.S.W., Wishaw; joined the 8th Highland L.I., 1908, and served five years, rejoining, 15 Aug. 1914, after the outbreak of war; was attached to the 1/7th Royal Scots, and left with them for the Dardanelles 22 May, 1915, and was killed in action at the capture of the Sagir Dere, Gallipoli, 28 June, following; *unm.*

The thoughts of a quick and decisive victory over the Turks were quickly dashed with successive battle losses in July/August 2015 and the effort to capture "Achi Baba" was finally abandoned and the struggle to gain victory was redirected further down the coast. (Anzac Cove)

In the meantime, the British and Allied forces experienced over 4,000 casualties and the Turkish Forces suffered over 10,000 casualties and the irony of it all, was that the panoramic hilltop remained in Turkish hands.

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[9] For more information, see "A Slashing Man of Action": The Life of Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston MP by **Elaine McFarland**

Later, Lord Kitchener[10] having taken over command of the Allied forces on November 13th, 1915 quickly surveyed the situation and reported back to the War Committee.

He reported that, "*the country is much more difficult than I imagined, and the Turkish positions…are natural fortresses which, if not taken by surprise at first, could be held against very serious attacks by larger forces than have been engaged.*"

Winston Churchill, who at the time was the head of the Royal Navy, was the principal architect of the Gallipoli Campaign, which included an initial naval attack followed by a land invasion. The naval attack was a complete failure. Undeterred, the land assault took place on April 25th, 1915 at Gallipoli. However, a month-long delay allowed the Turks along with German military support to call up reinforcements and build up their defences, with the element of surprise being completely lost.

The outmanned Allied forces were decimated by the Turkish Forces and the Battle of Gallipoli "*became a slaughter and quickly morphed into a bloody stalemate that lasted for 9 months".*[11]

After Lord Kitchener's assessment, he immediately ordered the full-scale evacuation of Gallipoli, after coming to the conclusion that the military operation was a lost cause.[12] The last of the troops were evacuated in January 1916.

It has been estimated that each side in the conflict sustained over 250,000 casualties each with 46,000 Allied soldiers being killed and 65,000 Turkish forces dead.

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[10] Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCMG, GCIE, PC (24 June 1850 – 5 June 1916) was an Irish-born senior British Army officer and colonial administrator who won notoriety for his imperial campaigns, most especially his scorched earth policy against the Boers and his expansion of Lord Roberts' internment camps during the Second Boer War and later played a central role in the early part of the First World War.(Source: Wikipedia)

[11] See, "Churchill's World War Disaster"-History.com posted September 3, 2018.

[12] See, Today in WWI-"Kitchen Visits Gallipoli" November 15th, 2015 Other Sources include: Eugene Rogan, The Fall of the Ottomans; Lyn Macdonald, 1915; Nigel Steel & Peter Hart, Defeat at Gallipoli.

As history will tell, there is likely no other place on earth, where so many men from so many different nations died in such a small part of the world over such a short period of time, for what was later considered as one of the most ill-conceived and poorly planned military efforts in modern military history.

For his part, Churchill, rightly or wrongly, became the scapegoat for the debacle, which haunted his political career for years. He was immediately "sacked" from the Admiralty and demoted to an obscure cabinet post.

Yet despite all that, he was able to "rise from the ashes" and became a prominent leader in Britain during WWII.

Years later[13]Mustafa Kemal who was a commander of the Turkish forces and who later became the President of Turkey would write:

"*Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives … you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side now here in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."*

Andrew Easton Wands is one of those "lost sons" who is remembered at Helles Memorial in Gallipoli, Turkey, a structure which was erected in honour of those whose remains lie elsewhere and now, his only remaining connection to this world is a scant inscription on a marble panel in a far away land.

[13] See, The Battle of Gallipoli: Winston Churchill's Greatest Mistake. The National Interest .org July 2018

Andrew Wands

BIRTH	unknown
DEATH	28 Jun 1915
MEMORIAL SITE*	Helles Memorial Gallipoli, Çanakkale, Turkey ** A structure erected in honor of someone whose remains lie elsewhere.*
PLOT	Final resting place unknown. Name listed on Panel 173 to 177.
MEMORIAL ID	56022784 · View Source

LEST WE FORGET!



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