

## COMMAND AND CONTROL OF FIRE SUPPORT AT ANZAC

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Raised from the flush of volunteers that flocked to enlist in August 1914, the Anzac artillerymen were a mixture of part timers of the Australian Citizen Force (CF) and the New Zealand (NZ) Territorial Force and men with no previous military experience, hastily formed into artillery brigades (the equivalent of a modern artillery regiment) each of three batteries containing four guns.

*Field Artillery Training (1912)* covered the tactical employment of batteries within a divisional setting, and focussed on manoeuvre warfare. Here they would wheel into line, and engage the enemy either from direct or indirect fire positions close behind the infantry firing line. Given the nature of the artillery engagement, and that the position of the divisional artillery commander - Commander Royal Artillery (CRA) - had only been established in 1907, and formalised in 1912, the command and control of artillery at divisional level was not clearly defined, and not at all at corps level.

*Field Artillery Training* stipulated tactical employment of the artillery was the responsibility of the divisional commander, and the CRA executed his orders as they related to the guns. Broadly, it was envisaged that where the division was operating as an entity the CRA would 'allot tasks to each field artillery brigade or zones in which he thought their fire could be employed effectively.' In situations not directly controlled by divisional headquarters, the artillery and infantry 'should be formed temporarily into groups under one commander.' In such cases, the CRA would place artillery units at the disposal of the group commander.

While the CRA's duties were outlined, they were inconsistency applied. Bidwell and Graham contend 'Some divisional commanders allocated their field artillery brigades to infantry brigades and ignored the CRA ... Others tended to deploy and control the artillery as they deployed infantry brigades, using the CRA as a channel of command like a brigade commander ... Yet others kept their artillery as a reserve under the CRA until the battle developed, confusing fire reserves with gun reserves.' Lieutenant Colonel Brooke noted 'our pre war conception of this appointment [CRA] seems to have visualised primarily the role of an artillery adviser to the general officer commanding the division, and to have considered the occasions on which he would exercise direct command of the artillery as exceptional'. Thus the functions of the CRA, and the command and control of the divisional artillery were not fully developed when war broke out.

The artillery of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) comprised three components: the 1st Australian Divisional Artillery of three 18-pounder Field Artillery (FA) Brigades (nine batteries) under the CRA, Colonel Talbot Hobbs - a pre-war CF officer; the New Zealand and Australian (NZ&A) Divisional Artillery comprising the NZFA Brigade of one 4.5-inch howitzer and three 18-pounder batteries under Lieutenant Colonel Napier Johnson - a British regular who also acted as the CRA; and the 7th Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade (7th IMAB) of two mountain batteries (each of six 10-pounders) which were allotted as ANZAC Corps Troops. Sitting over the top was the ANZAC BGRA, Brigadier General Charles Cunliffe-Owen, however he had no command responsibilities, no staff, and no communications. In effect, he was the artillery advisor to the GOC ANZAC, Lieutenant-General Sir William Birdwood. Command and control of the

Australian and New Zealand artillery brigades remained with Hobbs and Johnston respectively, working under the direction of their divisional commanders.

The task of the ANZAC landing was to seize the Sari Bair Range, directly inland from Anzac Cove. Landing adjacent to the cove, the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade was to occupy a position extending from Chunuk Bair on the main range and down along Third Ridge to Gaba Tepe, three kilometres south of Anzac Cove, providing a screen to cover the landing of the main body. Following behind, the 2nd Australian Infantry Brigade, echeloned slightly north to include Anzac Cove, would move up the main range, pass through the left hand corner of the screen, and occupy the highest features - Hill Q and Hill 971. This done, and the remainder of the force landed, the Corps would then advance east and take the Mal Tepe ridge.

Opposing them in the landing area were four platoons, each of 81 riflemen, of the *2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment*; one 1200 metres north of Anzac Cove, one above the cove, one in reserve 900 metres inland, and the fourth 1200 metres south of the cove. Supporting them was the *7th Mountain Battery*, of the *3rd Battalion, 9th Artillery Regiment (3/9th Artillery)* with four 75mm mountain guns located on the 400 Plateau at the lower end of Second Ridge, 900 metres inland from Anzac Cove. Two 87mm 'Mantelli' field guns, one of which was inoperable, were at Gaba Tepe, while further south was a six-gun coastal battery of 150mm howitzers, but their firing positions and the lack of effective forward observation prevented them from firing inland.

In reserve were the *8th Mountain Battery, 3/9th Artillery*, south of Maidos on the other side of the peninsula. Additionally, the *39th Artillery Regiment* located at Boghali, five miles east of Anzac Cove, could be released, but only on the orders of Liman Von Sanders, GOC *5th Army*.

Dispensing with a preliminary bombardment, Birdwood decided on a silent landing in the pre-dawn darkness. Once ashore, initial fire support would be provided by the Royal Navy's 2nd Naval Squadron, which was organised by Cunliffe-Owen. The arrangements were discussed in detail with all concerned, including ship's captains; signals, aircraft and gunnery officers; and army unit commanders. The primary target was the Ottoman artillery, and the secondary was Ottoman troops. HMS *Ark Royal* was to send an aircraft aloft to provide observation, though it was limited in its ability to communicate with the ships, while HMS *Manica* would provide a tethered observation balloon linked to the ship by telephone.

To control the naval gunfire support ashore, two flank radio stations were established on the beach to pass fire tasks from the forward brigades to the ships, while three army observers, designated as observation officers, employed telephone cable to link their observation posts with the radio stations. Until these shore resources could be emplaced, and as a means of identifying the forward troops, the infantry carried red and yellow flags to mark their positions; they were to be waved if fire was required and held steady when it was effective, illustrating the limitations on communications at the time.

The provision of artillery support was less detailed. First ashore was to be the 7th IMAB attached to the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade with the task of taking post on the 400 Plateau to support the screen on Third Ridge. Otherwise, the orders simply detailed the landing sequence for the remaining artillery brigades and their ammunition columns. No tasks were given, nor were any command and control arrangements specified, other than the 3rd AFA Battery would be under command of the 3rd AFA Brigade until its parent headquarters (1st AFA Brigade) had landed.

Achieving surprise, the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade quickly overran the isolated Ottoman platoon above Anzac Cove, punching a gaping hole in the light Ottoman screen, and quickly

moving inland captured three of the Ottoman mountain guns on the 400 Plateau. Ahead their objective lay undefended, but the brigade commander halted the advance on Second Ridge, 1600 meters short. He then diverted the 2nd Brigade to the south, where both began digging in. There they lay unmolested for almost six hours, when after midday five Ottoman battalions, supported by nine mountain guns, counter attacked the 14 Anzac battalions then ashore, driving the Anzacs off Baby 700, the high feature dominating the Anzac firing line. These decisions had a significant impact on the artillery for the remainder of the campaign, confining them to a shallow beachhead in tortuous terrain.

Landing the Anzac guns was plagued with problems. The intention was the two Indian mountain batteries would land about 8.30am to support the covering force. But it was 10.00am before the first, 26th (Jacob's), arrived, and around noon before it came into action on the 400 Plateau, and was driven out of action around 2:30pm by the Ottoman mountain guns firing from superior positions along Third Ridge. Other than that, the Anzac infantry had no fire support throughout the day. The second battery, 21st (Kohat), landed at 6pm, but did not get into action that day. The remainder of the artillery fared worse. Hobbs, Napier Johnstone, and the commanding officers of the 2nd and 3rd AFA brigades were ashore by late morning, searching for gun positions, but confusion reigned in disembarking the guns. Largely disregarding the disembarkation orders, several of the Australian guns came ashore willy nilly, whereupon at the direction of the GOC 1st Australian Division they were immediately sent back to their transports. It wasn't until 3:30pm that one gun of the 4th AFA Battery landed, and went into action on the southern headland of the cove at 6pm.

The only naval gunfire support provided was from HM Ships *Triumph* and *Bacchante* firing on the 87-mm field gun at Gaba Tepe, and by HMS *Majestic* on the northern flank against a threatening Ottoman attack. The lack of information on the locations of the forward troops precluded the use naval gunfire support during the Ottoman counter attacks, and was exacerbated by problems with observation. The flat trajectory of naval guns, together with the greater lethal radius of their large-calibre shells, added further complications in providing close fire support.

Disembarkation of the artillery began again on 26 April, but the narrow, cramped beachhead and the tortuous terrain made finding gun positions difficult. While the landing of two NZ batteries was relatively orderly over the next twenty four hours, that of the Australians was confused and disorganised. Guns were apparently dispatched on the initiative of battery commanders as floats and lighters became available, rather than being called forward by brigades and batteries, or in accordance with the disembarkation program. On reaching the shore almost half were returned to their transports, while the remainder were sent to the few gun positions available, leading to the fragmentation of batteries. Under these circumstances control largely devolved to batteries and sections, or even single guns, and not necessarily within the same brigade. On the right flank Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Rosenthal - 3rd AFA Brigade - only had two guns, one each from the 1st and 2nd AFA brigades. It wasn't until that evening one of his own batteries came under his control.

It wasn't until 7 May, thirteen days after the landing, that three New Zealand batteries and five Australian batteries of the 2nd and 3rd AFA brigades were ashore, but not all guns could be found suitable firing positions. The remaining units - one NZ and four Australian batteries - had been despatched to Cape Helles to support the British, where they remained until after the August Offensive.

Meanwhile on 2 May an attempt was made by the NZ&A Division to regain Baby 700. Fire support was provided by eight battleships and cruisers coordinated by Cunliffe-Owen, together with two howitzers, five 18-pounders and four mountain guns placed under command of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade, and two howitzers, two 18-pounders and two mountain guns under command of the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, with communications between the guns and each infantry

brigade headquarters to be arranged by Napier Johnston. The original intention may have been for the infantry brigade commanders to nominate the artillery targets to be engaged, but the NZ&A Division's war diary contains an order for all guns to fire in accordance with the divisional Operation Order. In the event the fire support was inadequate, and for a variety of reasons the attack failed.

As ANZAC settled into trench warfare, the artillery command and control arrangements evolved. At Corps level Cunliffe-Owen concentrated on the arrangements for naval gunfire support. At best the ships could only fire from flanking positions rather than in true enfilade, which combined with the closeness of the opposing trench lines further limited their ability to support the troops. On 9 May he set out the system for naval gunfire support whereby targets would be identified by the forward brigades, and requests for fire sent to the flagship via division and corps. Observers ashore would control the subsequent fire. He also warned that the ships could not fire close to the ANZAC lines. Thus the artillery would take on the close targets, with the naval guns taking on targets in the 'outside zones.' In this role, despite its limitations, naval gunfire proved useful in depth, on the flanks, and against troops in the open.

Ashore, Birdwood had divided the defence into four Sections: the 1st Australian Division occupied the southern two (1 and 2), and the NZ&A Division the northern pair (3 and 4). An infantry brigade was assigned to each, however, command and control issues vexed the gunner commanders. Their problem was that in the confined spaces of the beachhead, with the limited arcs available from each field gun position, and with the advantage of firing in enfilade when the front lines were as close as they were, it was often a gun or battery in the other division, or in another brigade area, that could best provide the required support. For example, the 1st NZFA Battery on Russell's Top in Defence Section 4 fired in enfilade across the Australian line on the 400 Plateau in Defence Section 2.

Additionally, struggling to find firing positions individual guns and sections were moved around throughout May, until suitable locations were settled. Even then, not all batteries were co-located, or with their parent brigade. The 8th AFA Battery of Rosenthal's 3rd AFA Brigade was complete in pits immediately behind the infantry firing line at Lone Pine, but was controlled by the 2nd AFA Brigade. The 7th AFA Battery was spread across three locations until 7 June, when they coalesced into two, with one section on McCay's Hill, and the other on the next ridge south. Moreover, the Indian Mountain batteries were broken up amongst the two infantry divisions - for example, two sections of 21st (Kohat) Battery were behind the infantry firing line on Bolton's Ridge, while its third was in depth on the Razorback, both supporting the 1st Australian Division.

On 3 May Hobb's BMRA recorded that the need for the 'Artillery of [the] whole line of defence being under one control or at least all HQ being close together is very apparent and has been [the] cause of difficulty all through - there is no one person who knows what all guns are doing or can do - The terrain must be divided almost [in]to areas for single guns - Better communications between [the] batteries and [the infantry is] most necessary to prevent delay[s] caused by request[s] for fire coming through Aust Div and NZ and A Div also [unreadable] to Div Art[illery]- There are too many sieves.' He thought the allotment of guns to defensive Sections would improve matters as the guns of one Section would not be able to fire into another without special permission.

Consequently, by 11 May a senior artillery officer was assigned to assist the infantry brigadier. Rosenthal's 3rd AFA Brigade - 7th and 9th AFA batteries - assumed responsibility for Defence Section 1, and George Johnston's 2nd AFA Brigade - the 4th, 5th, and 8th AFA batteries - supported Section 2. Elements of the NZFA Brigade were similarly allocated, with three mountain guns, a section of 4.5-inch howitzers and the 2nd NZFA Battery supporting Section 3, and three mountain guns, the 1st NZFA Battery, and a section of 4.5-inch howitzers supporting Section 4. On 15 May plans were drawn up denoting the arcs of fire and zones for each gun position.

Through May and into June, a system was gradually established that provided the defence with responsive fire support. Hobbs' headquarters, which had previously been physically separate, integrated with the 1st Australian Division HQ. Within each Defence Section, a network of observation officers and associated 'lookout men' was established, and worked closely with the trench garrisons to identify targets and pass information, and the guns registered the key targets within their zones.

Command of the artillery remained at division, but control was delegated to the extent that the artillery allotted to each Defence Section was authorized to fire on Section targets within ammunition restrictions. Thus, infantry commanders could make their requests for fire direct to the FA brigade headquarters supporting them, and in ordinary circumstances these would be met without further reference. Within each division, support from guns in the other Defence Section had to be sought through the relevant FA Brigade Commander. Requests for support from the howitzers, the mountain guns, and the guns of the other division had to go through the division, although direct requests to the batteries could be made in emergency. This was all supported by a sophisticated telephone network, with cable eventually being laid in triplicate.

With the arrival of a 4.7-inch gun and two 6-inch howitzers in June Hobb's formed an ad hoc Heavy Battery under his control, and as British howitzer batteries arrived in July they were allotted to each of the two divisions, controlled by the respective CRA using the arrangements for fire support placed already in place.

Following the August Offensive, and an expanded beachhead, the Anzac batteries at Cape Helles returned to Anzac. This led to the NZ&A Divisional Artillery, now with two FA brigades, each comprising one howitzer and two 18-pounder batteries, being responsible for the newly captured area to the north, supporting both the NZ&A Division and the British 54th Division. The 1st Australian Divisional Artillery retained responsibility for the old Anzac area, although guns from one division could support the other under the previous arrangements.

When the 2nd Australian Division arrived, which like the 54th Division had no artillery, the GOC was advised that for immediate fire support two NZ guns and those of the 5th and 6th AFA batteries were available 'to assist' him. If he required additional support, thirteen 18-pounders, one 10-pounder, one 6-inch howitzer, and two 4.5-inch howitzers were available by applying directly to the division concerned, with the request repeated to HQ ANZAC.

Arrangements for naval gunfire support were refined, and while routine requests went through Cunliffe-Owen at HQ ANZAC, in emergencies a Defence Section commander could go direct to the warship through Signal Station W6. In a November reorganisation, Hobbs minimised the split battery positions, and placed all AFA batteries under the command and control of their parent AFA brigade. At the same time a Corps circular designated specified batteries to provide immediate and additional support within each Defence Section. While the artillery of the divisions would remain at the disposal of the CRA, under the orders of the Divisional Commander, a limited number of guns were allotted to the infantry commanders in the Defence Sections for immediate support. The infantry commanders would be in direct communication with the guns allotted to them, and obtain further fire support through artillery channels. Whether that additional support could be provided depended on the overall situation at the time, but artillery brigade commanders were given latitude to employ guns that were available in the interim between receiving the request from the Defence Section and getting instructions from the CRA. These arrangements remained extant until the evacuation in December.

Pre-war doctrine focussed on manoeuvre warfare and the tactical employment of batteries, with command and control at the divisional level embryonic in its development. Faced with trench warfare, and operating under difficult circumstances, the Anzac artillery commanders were forced to adapt and create arrangements at divisional level that made best use of the different types of guns allotted to them, but which were flexible enough for the responsive control of fire support to meet the situation at hand.

The lesson for today's gunners is the need to be innovative and adaptive to the circumstances confronting them, with flexible arrangements to meet changing operational environments. While the provision of fire support is a command responsibility, the experience at Anzac reinforces the view that control does not need to be centralised in all situations - where quick responsiveness is required, it should be delegated to the level best able to provide it. Moreover, in training various command and control arrangements ought to be practised regularly in order they can be implemented quickly depending on the situation, rather than having to develop them by trial and error after the campaign starts.