

The Diaries and Letters of Lt Col W. G. Malone August 1914-August 1915

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In December 1936 the British Official Historian of the Gallipoli campaign, Brigadier Aspinall-Oglander wrote to W. B. 'Barney' Malone, a son of Lt Col W. G. Malone:

I am deeply indebted to you for the opportunity [to read the diaries of your father]. It is really a wonderful document and cannot but inspire anyone who knows the circumstances . . . with the utmost admiration for the writer. The whole story bears the stamp of absolute truth, and the man stands out convincingly as not only a great strategist, a great tactician, and a great leader of men, but as an extraordinarily loveable character (as indeed any leader of men must be), his sternness offset by an extraordinary knowledge of human nature, deep sympathy for his men, a sensitive appreciation of their difficulties, and a determination never to set them a task which he would not and could not do himself. . . . But I am so very distressed that I did not see this diary 10 years ago, when I first started writing the Official History. It would have saved me many pitfalls.¹

The Library has had a typescript of the diary for some time, and has now received the original and many of Malone's letters written in the same period.

Aspinall-Oglander's comments amply testify to the importance of the diaries to military historians, and the letters although essentially private contain many references to military concerns which reinforce those in the diary. It is astonishing in retrospect to note that no other use was made of them until 1964, when Robert Rhodes James made extensive use of them in his definitive account of the Gallipoli campaign, listing them in his bibliography as a major collection.²

New Zealand historians became aware of the existence of copies of the diary in the early 1980s and Michael King made use of them in *New Zealanders at War*,³ but the first historian to see and use extensively the originals of both diary and letters was Christopher Pugsley in his *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story*.⁴ Jock Phillips also used the diary in his *A Man's Country*,⁵ and substantial extracts from diaries and letters appear in *The Great Adventure*,⁶ a collection of New Zealand soldiers' writings on the First World War.

The value of the papers to military historians is principally to clarify what happened in actions at Anzac, where Malone was a participant and eyewitness, and responsible through his decisions and action in determining the outcome of those actions. His battalion did not land at Anzac until late on the day of the landing of 25 April 1915, and were first engaged in an effort to reinforce and hold the gains made