

WORKSHEET

A HISTORY OF IRELAND IN 100 OBJECTS, A SELECTION LEAVING CERTIFICATE, ORDINARY AND HIGHER LEVEL HISTORY

Lamp from River Clyde, 1915

WORKSHEET 1

LAMP FROM RIVER CLYDE, 1915

Extract from *Forgotten Soldiers: The Irishmen Shot at Dawn* by Stephen Walker
(Gill and Macmillan, 2007), pp 32–4.

Tommy Davis, a young Irish recruit, witnessed the carnage that April morning. The son of a shoemaker from Co. Kerry, he was one of six children brought up in a one-room stone cottage in Ennis, Co. Clare... Although the Davis family were poor and the army obviously provided a much-needed income, there was another reason why young Tommy was attracted to the colours of the Crown... There was a family tradition of British military service. Tommy's grandfather had seen action with the British Army and as a young man was posted to India, an experience that would change his life... Decades later, as France and Flanders echoed to the sound of gunfire, his grandson Tommy would carry on the family tradition of soldiering. The new recruit joined the 1st Battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers and in 1915 set sail for the Dardanelles.

As Davis prepared to land at Gallipoli some weeks later he was on board the River Clyde, a ship packed with two thousand soldiers, mainly from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Royal Munster Fusiliers. The plan was that the vessel would run aground and quickly let the soldiers disembark onto barges and then go ashore. The ship had been specially prepared for the assault. Exits had been cut into its sides, gangways were in position and there were machine guns sandbagged on deck...

The plan ran into trouble within minutes. The barges could not get close enough to the River Clyde, and as the vessel came into the Turkish soldiers' line of fire the ships' exits came under sustained gunfire. A series of attempts to disembark simply led to many casualties. The bodies began to pile up on board, making an immediate assault on the shore virtually impossible... Captain David French, an officer with the Royal Munster Fusiliers, was hit by a bullet as he came ashore. He was given first aid and then watched as men from his own battalion struggled to follow him:

'I counted 42 men in one platoon, not a single man escaping. And still they came down the gangways. It was an awful sight but they were a brave lot. After a few minutes it became even harder for them to get ashore. After passing down the gangways and across the lighters under heavy fire they had to run along about 25 yards of jagged rocks—each side of the ridge now being covered with bodies...'

The poet A.P. Herbert, who served at Gallipoli, wrote:

*'The Flies! Oh God, the flies
That soiled the sacred dead.
To see them swarm from dead men's eyes
And share the soldiers' bread!
Nor think I now forget
The filth and stench of a war,
The corpses on the parapet
The maggots on the floor.'*

Questions:

1. What two reasons are given for Tommy Davis joining the British army?
2. What evidence shows:
 - (a) that there was a plan behind the use of the River Clyde in this attack?
 - (b) that this plan failed?
2. Looking at the two primary sources, those of Captain French and A.P. Herbert, used towards the end of this passage, explain one advantage and one difficulty for a historian in using such sources as historical documents.

WORKSHEET 2

LAMP FROM RIVER CLYDE, 1915

Extract from *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* by Timothy Bowman (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp 108–9.

Rebuilding battalions of the 10th (Irish) Division after their heavy losses at Gallipoli, appears to have caused some problems in terms of morale. Lieutenant Colonel H.F.N. Jourdain was very eager to obtain officers from reserve battalions of the regiment for the 5th Connaught Rangers, rather than officers from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who he had been sent, noting, 'The reason that I make this urgent request is that it is above all things necessary to get officers who have known the men with whom they have to deal, which is extremely necessary in an Irish Regiment.'

Captain David Campbell noted different problems with the 6th Irish Rifles, returning to the Regiment in May 1916 having been wounded at Gallipoli:

'I was given command of A Company (my original company) immediately I rejoined, and promoted to the rank of Captain. The Company, however did not give me all that enthusiastic a welcome. The officer I superseded 2nd Lieutenant Lucas had been in command for some 8 months and had built it from scratch with drafts which arrived from time to time from home and elsewhere. The drafts were young conscripts of various nationalities who had received perhaps a couple of months training. He was proud of them and it was obvious they were devoted to him.'

Questions:

1. What does this source show us about morale among the Irish troops at Gallipoli? Give reasons for your answer based on evidence from the source.

WORKSHEET 3

LAMP FROM RIVER CLYDE, 1915

Extract from *Ireland and the Great War* by Keith Jeffery (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 42, containing a summary of first-hand soldiers' accounts compiled by Henry Hanna immediately after Gallipoli.

The Irish Division got ashore at Suvla relatively unscathed. Touchingly, Hanna found that 'D' Company likened parts of the Mediterranean landscape to that at home around Dublin. One beach was a 'pebbly white strand like that at Portmarnock'; another part was 'like Dollymount', while behind the foreshore were low clay cliffs 'rather like the shore at Killiney Bay'. But in the Battle for Chocolate Hill, which overlooked the beaches, and where the men found themselves advancing over 'rocks and shrub, resembling the lower slopes of Ticknock' in the Wicklow Mountains, and, a week later, in attempting to seize the high Kiretch Tepe Sirt ridge to the north of the landing ground, the Irish formation took heavy casualties. 'D' Company, 'which had landed 239 strong', was now 'reduced to 108 all told'. Bursting with enthusiasm of youth, the poet Francis Ledwidge, who was with the Inniskilling Fusiliers at Kiretch Tepe Sirt, wrote that 'it was a horrible and a great day. I would not have missed it for worlds.'

Questions:

1. How does the detail in this source help to explain Ledwidge's unusual closing comment, that 'it was a horrible and a great day' that he would not have missed for the world?

WORKSHEET 4

LAMP FROM RIVER CLYDE, 1915

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH TASK TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' WEB-RESEARCH SKILLS

Log onto the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org) and follow its instructions on how to search for casualties. Look for the list of World War I casualties from the regiments mentioned in the sources and accounts above, or look for casualties during the dates mentioned above. Try to find out how many soldiers with your surname, or from your home place, died in World War I. Write a summary paragraph (of no more than 12 lines) of your main findings.