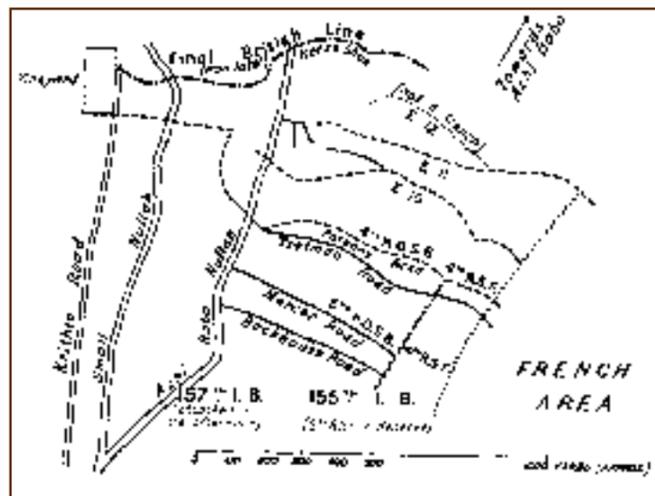


THE FATAL 12TH JULY

The K.O.S.B. were heavily involved in the Gallipoli campaign. In April the **1st Battalion** were involved in the first landings at Cape Helles, suffering considerable casualties. For the next 8 months they took part in various actions in the peninsula. Then it was decided to send, as reinforcements, the Lowland Division which included the 1/4th and 1/5th K.O.S.B. It was the fate of the **1/4th K.O.S.B.** that particularly concerned local people for this was a Territorial Battalion, recruited from across the Borders.



Attack of 155th Brigade, 12th July, 1915, 7.35 am

When war broke out on 4th August 1914, the 1/4th K.O.S.B. had just returned from their summer training camp. They were immediately recalled to the H.Q. in Galashiels and on 12th August left for Cambusbarron near Stirling to join what would become the Lowland Division. [Meanwhile, back home, recruits continued to sign up and became part of the Reserve Battalion, commanded by Sir Richard Waldie Griffiths of Hendersyde. As part of their training they practised trench digging on

Gala Hill and did a route march to Yetholm and Morebattle, among other things. But their departure on active service was delayed by an outbreak of measles!]

Instead of being sent to the Western Front, on 21st May the 1/4th K.O.S.B. were sent to Liverpool to embark for the campaign in Gallipoli. They had a lucky escape, for the day after they journeyed south, a troop train carrying the 7th Royal Scots was involved in a horrendous rail crash near Gretna. With a short stop-off in Egypt, they finally arrived at the British base at Mudros, and from there they crossed to **Cape Helles** on the Gallipoli peninsula on the 14th June. Their first fatal casualty was Private J. Fairgrieve from Kelso who was killed on the 18th by shellfire. On the 22nd they moved up to the front line for five days, their first practical experience of trench warfare.



Piper Charles Street of Kelso, killed 12th July, 1915

An attack was planned for 12th July towards the Turkish strongpoint at **Achi Baba**. The 1/4th K.O.S.B. were to be in the first two waves with the 1/5th following behind them. Their orders were to capture three Turkish trenches on the approach to Achi Baba. Unfortunately, the lie of the land meant that only the first Turkish trench was visible; for the rest the attackers had to rely on information gleaned from prisoners and from air reconnaissance. The advance was preceded by an artillery bombardment [mainly from the French guns as the British were short of shells.] Then, at 7.35 am the K.O.S.B., with a cheer, went over the top. It was a warm sunny day. The Borderers quickly overran the first Turkish trench, and then the second; but as they continued forward, with mounting casualties, they could find no sign of the third trench. It did not exist.

They were out in the open and now coming under fire from their own artillery as well as the Turks, so their C.O. Lt. Col. McNeile gave the order to retreat. Unfortunately, the soldiers had been ordered to attach pieces of shiny tin to their backpacks to help the artillery observers to identify their position. This now made them an easy target for the Turkish artillery. In the ensuing confusion, under fire from both sides, they suffered heavy casualties. **Out of 700 men, they lost 331 killed including 12 officers, and 209 wounded, with 13 taken prisoner.** The 1/5th K.O.S.B. and the 4th Royal Scots in the second wave also lost heavily. The 1/4th K.O.S.B continued to serve in the Gallipoli peninsula until the end of the campaign suffering a steady drain of casualties due to the fighting and to disease.

The Kelso district lost some forty of its young men killed in the Gallipoli campaign, mostly on the 12th July. Tragically most of the bodies were never recovered, so they were listed as "missing in action". How many people must have cherished a lingering hope that perhaps – just perhaps – their son or husband might yet turn up alive? **It was not till the following June that the War Office announced officially that they must all be "presumed dead".**



British troops going over the top at Gallipoli



Kelso and Jedburgh K.O.S.B. leaving Gala