**8.** Lance Corporal Walter Eric Cecil Yeoman, age 23

Lance Corporal Walter Eric Cecil Yeoman lived with his brother Robert and his father Walter (both gardeners) and mother Louisa in South Park, Penshurst. His grandfather had been the gamekeeper on the estate, and lived in South Park Keeper’s cottage. The family had latterly moved to Reigate.

Walter joined the Somerset Light Infantry. This became part of Kitcheners New Army, 5th Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment in 1914. It was the first Irish regiment to fight in the Dardanelles Campaign and witnessed some particularly bloody battles on the Helles peninsular.

The ill fated Dardanelles Campaign had started as a strategic bid to secure the route to the Black Sea, and attack “Germany’s soft underbelly”. Whilst it diverted Ottoman resources, it also failed in its main objective. Tactically it was an inept campaign plagued by inaccurate information and poor planning. The Ottoman troops had the advantage of the high ground and offered heroic resistance. On ‘V’ beach near Anzac Cove in April the 57th Turkish regiment fought on until every single member was either dead or wounded.

The weather, both hot and cold, led to epidemics of dysentery and other diseases, leaving the allied troops weak and demoralised. The campaign ended in late December 1915 with the final evacuation of allied forces, leaving around 50,000 troops dead and well over 100,000 wounded.

On 6th August 1915 Walter’s brigade accompanied Australian and New Zealand units in a landing at Anzac Cove and the subsequent battle of Sari Bair. The Brigade saw a great deal of fighting during its first weeks in action, including hand to hand fighting around Hill 60, the last major offensive of the Battle of Gallipoli, which is when Walter Yeoman was lost.

A comrade wrote “he died as he had lived, a noble boy.’ He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial at Cape Helles.

The Turkish leader on that day at Hill 60 was a young Mustafa Kemal, later to become Ataturk, the architect and first leader of the new Turkey. His moving words of 1934 are written on the Helles Memorial,

“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives. You are now lying in 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 in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away 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.”