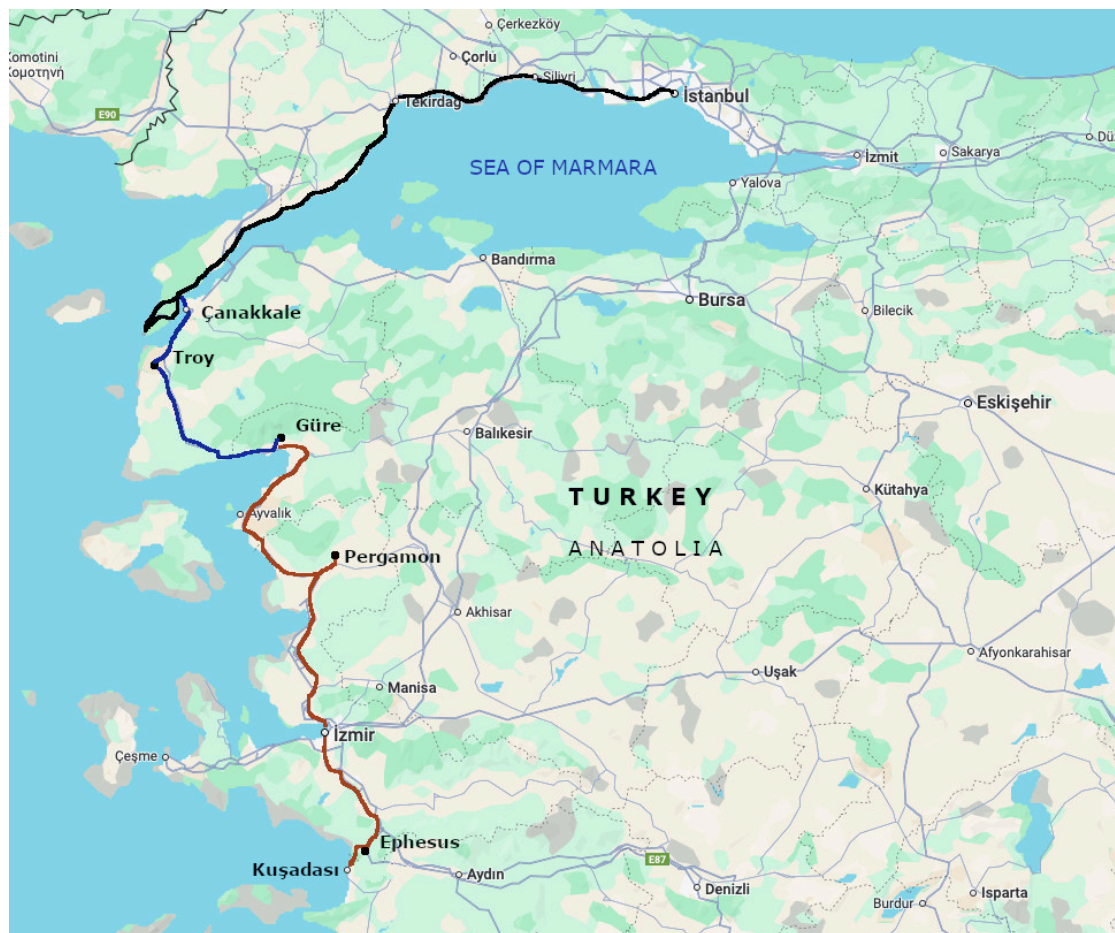


PART TWO

ANATOLIA



Map courtesy of Google

2 – THE DARDANELLES, TROY AND GÜRE

Thursday, 10 October

As I had intended to wake up at six o'clock this morning, but woke a little earlier, I had plenty of time to wash, shave, do my exercises and repack before going down to have breakfast at seven, just as the dining room was being opened. As there was no scrambled egg available this morning, I chose some other bits and pieces, including slices of sausage.

I was therefore ready by half past seven, when we scrambled aboard our coach and drove through the busy streets of İstanbul towards our next destination: Çannakale on the far side of the Dardanelles strait. This turned out to be a long journey through the ugly outskirts of İstanbul, which went on forever; even after we left the city behind, we could see modern high-rise apartment blocks lining the motorway. Eventually we came to the Marmara Sea, which we skirted on our way westwards, then south-westwards, towards Gallipoli and the Dardanelles. Eventually the apartment blocks disappeared and we found ourselves being driven through some pleasant countryside, with the sea on our left. We stopped a couple of times for breaks and eventually drove into the small town of Gelibolu (the Turkish version of Gallipoli) and came to a halt at a restaurant close to a ferry port. Here we were brought through the premises and shown to shaded tables outdoors, where there was a fine view looking out to the sea and a long modern bridge crossing the Dardanelles strait. We were given quite a good lunch: a bowl of soup, then a main course with a choice of fish, meatballs (a speciality in this region) or chicken with rice and salad. I chose the chicken and drank water from a bottle that I was obliged to buy (I should have taken a bottle from the fridge in the coach), and we ended the meal with a refreshing slice of melon.



The bridge over the Dardanelles

When we had all finished eating, we got back into the bus and continued driving along the edge of the narrow peninsula, stopping briefly to admire and photograph the impressive bridge.



The stone plaque at the Ariburnu or Letter X Cemetery, Dardanelles

When we reached the bottom of the peninsula, we swung around and drove along the peaceful and almost deserted western coast, stopping at the Ariburnu or Letter X Cemetery, where we got out to read an inscription on stone written by Atatürk, and to take a look at rows of gravestones bearing the names of many young men who had been killed in the fierce battles during World War I. Although I had not really been looking forward to this part of the holiday, I found this graveyard and its peaceful surroundings, now bathed in bright sunshine, very moving. In the coach, Meltem had been telling us about the attempts of the British to sail into the Black Sea via the Dardanelles (closed by the Ottomans in 1914) and the carnage caused by naval mines blowing up their ships. This, plus the killing of countless British, Australian, New Zealand and Indian troops by gunfire, resulted in the deaths of about 130,000 soldiers and many more wounded – nearly half a million in total. The 500,000 Ottoman troops had been decimated, with almost 86,700 men killed. It was difficult to imagine such terrible atrocities happening in such a beautiful and calm corner of Turkey. Meltem told us that some Irish soldiers had been killed during the action, and that the tombstones were not necessarily placed where the bodies had been found. Dead bodies had simply been thrown into pits all over the area.

After we had wandered around, reading some of the names of soldiers on the gravestones – many of whom had been teenagers or were in their early twenties – we clambered aboard our coach and stopped at Anzac Cove a short distance away, where more troops had been gunned down. Here, at a low wall beside the beach, we were photographed as a group and invited to drink a toast to the soldiers who had been slaughtered. We also accepted delicious chunks of Turkish Delight that were offered to us.



Above: Anzac Cove; below: Green Hill Cemetery and Conkbayırı Hill, Dardanelles

We then returned to our coach and were driven another short distance to the Green Hill cemetery, where we lingered for a while, then drove up to Conkbayırı Hill, where we looked at a monument, a tall flagpole bearing the Turkish flag (which we had seen from below), and a statue of a soldier.



On the ferry crossing the Dardanelles from Eceabat to Çanakkale

When we had finished looking at these and had admired the surrounding scenery, we returned to our coach and were driven at speed down to the coastal town of Eceabat, where we succeeded in catching the ferry across the sea to the coastal town of Çanakkale in Anatolia. The little ship was full of vehicles and people, all tightly packed aboard; during the short journey I wandered around, mixing with the locals, and took a few photographs. Here I saw young children laughing and running around, teenagers chatting or staring intently at smartphones, stocky adult men talking together, and women wearing colourful clothing, some with their hair covered and others wearing yashmaks.



The wooden horse used in the 2004 film Troy, Çanakkale

In front of us could be seen the large town of Çanakkale spread along the coast. When we docked and drove on to the mainland, we had left Europe behind and now were in Asia, even though we were still in Turkey. Winding our way through heavy traffic, we were driven to the seafront, where we got out to look at the large black wooden horse that had been used in the 2004 film *Troy*, starring Brad Pitt; my friend Colm and I had seen it while on holiday in Helsinki. As the film company no longer needed the horse after the film had been made, they had offered it to the people of Çanakkale, near to where Troy stood. We dutifully took photographs of the rather strange-looking horse, got back into our coach, and were driven to our plush hotel, the Kolin, in the suburbs.

After Meltem had given us our keys, she whisked us off through a series of long corridors to our rooms. Mine was a large and luxurious affair containing both a single and double bed, and a fine bathroom. As I felt quite exhausted by now (no doubt because of such a short sleep during the previous night), I relaxed, sent some photos to friends, then went down for dinner in a separate section that had been reserved for us in a huge dining room. I helped myself to food in the main area and brought it to a table where some of my new friends were. Although the food was tasty, it was a little too cold for my liking. I chatted to a man sitting beside me, who asked me about my travels. Meltem joined me later and chatted with us.

As I was feeling so tired by the end of the meal, I returned to my room, where I made myself a cup of tea, then sat down to write my diary. Afterwards I had a shower and finally went to bed.

Friday, 11th October

An account that begins with a description of the god Apollo descending from the heights of Mount Olympus with his bow and arrows, and firing them at King Agamemnon's troops, can hardly be classified as fact. However, this description occurs at the very start of Homer's great and very famous poem *The Iliad*. The subsequent events that one reads in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, both of which may not have been penned by Homer at all, can be considered so fantastic as to lean heavily on the supernatural. However, it has been established that the setting at least is real: the seaside town of Troy, though the battle (if any) may have been fought elsewhere. The businessman and amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, born in Mecklenburg in 1822, read *The Iliad* at an early age and, later in life, had set off to Anatolia in order to find the lost city of Troy. He was fortunate to meet the English amateur archaeologist Frank Calvert, who encouraged him to dig on some land in Hisarlık owned by Calvert's family, which he believed was the correct site of Troy. In 1870, Schliemann began by digging a trench and, in 1873, discovered nine buried bodies. Realizing that he had found what he had been looking for, he subsequently discovered various precious objects, including gold. He ultimately managed to smuggle his Trojan treasure out of the Ottoman Empire into Greece, and then to Germany, where it eventually ended up in the Ethnographic Museum in Berlin.

I was nineteen years of age when I bought and read the 1974 Penguin Classics editions of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, translated by E. V. Rieu and, when I later discovered that Schliemann had found and excavated the site of ancient Troy, I developed a wish to visit the site sometime in the future. This wish was about to come true today, for we were to be driven to the nearby archaeological site this morning.

I woke after a good night's sleep just before seven o'clock and, when ready, went down to the dining room for breakfast. I joined Frank, who had been sitting behind me on the coach, and fell to chatting. This morning I ate scrambled egg, some vegetables and bread, then a little cake, all washed down with a cup of tea. I then returned to my room, where I got myself ready to leave, and was down in the lobby just before nine o'clock.



The entrance of the archaeological site of ancient Troy

We set off in the coach shortly afterwards and drove towards the archaeological site of Troy, passing the tip of the Dardanelles, which we could see in the distance. We soon reached our destination and stopped in the car park. As the place looked

quite empty, I guessed that we were the first tourist group to arrive. Once Meltem had let us through the entrance gates and we had passed another large replica of the Trojan Horse, we began making our way along a wooden walkway, ascending and descending steps as they went over and around the ruins.



A general view of the archaeological site, Troy

There were nine levels in all, the oldest at the very bottom, and most of them consisted of rubble and the remains of stone walls – the result of Schliemann's careless excavations. The lowest cultural stratum, known as Troy I, dated from 3000 to 2500 BCE, and it took a lot of imagination to recognize the shapes of a city wall, a tower, and a long row of houses. During this period, the inhabitants made their tools using copper, stone and bone. Vessels and pottery had been used, and all pots were shaped by hand, without the use of a potter's wheel. This first town, which had had ten building phases, was eventually wiped out by a great fire.



Part of the fortification wall of Troy I, 2920 BCE

The second settlement, Troy II (2500–2300 BCE), was built directly on top of Troy I. It was surrounded by a powerful fortification wall, and one of the mud brick dwellings on this level is believed to have been a palace. There were two main gates: one on the southeast, and the other on the southwest. The various findings from this level indicate that the inhabitants of Troy II had quite a high standard of living, and

the treasure found by Schliemann of bronze, gold, silver, and an alloy of gold and silver belongs to this period. Troy II was burned down by a warrior nation.

Although the settlements of Troy III, IV and V (2300–1700 BCE) were bigger and had a larger population, they were not as advanced as the previous ones. As Schliemann removed all the walls of these periods, there are hardly any remains left today, and so we do not know what brought each of the periods to an end.

The findings of Troy VI (1700–1250 BCE) indicate a break with the past and a course of gradual change and development. The powerful fortifications and the free-standing houses show us that these people were highly advanced in military engineering, masonry, and town planning. All that can be seen now are the remains of the fortification wall and a few houses. Five gateways gave access to the city, and towers were added to the wall for protection. As one of the gates had been enlarged and later blocked up, it is possible that the Trojan horse mentioned in Homer's account might have been brought into the city during this period – the theory being that the gate had to be widened to bring the wooden horse in. Troy VI was brought to its end by a violent earthquake.

Troy VIIa (1250–1180 BCE) was rebuilt by the survivors of the earthquake. The south gateway, which was repaired, continued to be the principal entrance to the citadel. In almost every house large storage jars were set deeply into the ground and covered with heavy stone slabs. These were regularly used for the storage of solids and liquids. As it appears that a large number of people had sheltered in the fortification from fire and an invasion, and as skeletons, spear and arrow heads were found here, it is possible that this level was the Troy of Priam that was besieged and captured by the Achaeans, then destroyed by fire. During the period of Troy VIIb (1180–1000 BCE) the citadel was reoccupied by the survivors. This stratum was also destroyed by fire.



The sanctuary of Troy VIII–IX, dating from about 700 BCE

Troy VIII (1000–85 BCE) was the first Greek settlement in the city. During this period, Greek culture was dominant and the stratum was a typical Greek colony. A religious area just outside the western part of the Troy VI city wall was built during this period. It is recorded that the Persian king Xerxes stayed here and sacrificed 1,000 oxen to the gods on his way to Greece. Xerxes had a bridge of ships built over the Dardanelles, but it was destroyed by the strong current. Two new bridges were built later: one for the animals, the other for the soldiers. Alexander the Great, on his

way to the Battle of Granicus, stayed in Troy in 334 BCE, and ordered one of his commanders to build the Temple of Athena.



The Odeon of Troy IX

The top stratum, Troy IX (85 BCE–CE 400 or 600) is a Hellenistic and Roman city. This last settlement, which is the most visible one today and is known as Novum Ilium, made great progress during the early Roman era. The Roman emperors chose the Trojans as their ancestors; Augustus showed great interest in the city, enlarging and beautifying the Temple of Athena. The town now spread all over the ridge, and was bigger than it had ever been during its long history. To supply water for the city, pipes and aqueducts were built. In the excavated area, a Roman Odeon (music theatre) and a Bouleuterion (council chamber) could be seen. There was also a Roman bath opposite the Odeon and a few marble pieces from the Temple of Athena.

We wandered around, stopping at various places, and listened to what Meltem had to say about the various areas, though there was a sameness about all the points of interest in this archaeological site: piles of stones, bricks and rubble. The uppermost stratum, with its fine Odeon, was the only part that looked vaguely interesting. Nonetheless, I was delighted to have seen this famous place at long last. We were surprised to be told that the sea was now fourteen kilometres away from the ancient town – we could just about see it in the distance. At one point, when we approached the final section, a group of Korean tourists stopped to look at the Roman ruins and disappeared almost immediately. By now more visitors had begun to arrive.

Back at our starting point, we walked over to the souvenir shop, where I bought a nice guidebook to the Topkapı palace for 299 *lira* (about €10) and also a pretty necklace that I saw displayed at the other end of the shop. We were then driven to a nearby restaurant, where we were shown a couple of books that were for sale: *Gallipoli – A Turning Point* and *A Revised Edition: Troy*, both by Mustafa Aşkin, who was in the restaurant, ready to sign copies that we had bought. As they looked interesting and seemed to be well printed, I bought the two books for 550 *lira* (about €19) from an elderly man in the little shop next door, who put an official stamp on the inside of each one and took my debit card for the transaction. Outside, I found Mr Aşkin seated at a table and handed him my two books. He asked me my name, wrote ‘To Charles in Gallipoli 10.10.2024’ and ‘To Charles in Troy 11.10.2024’ on the title pages, then signed both copies. Afterwards I joined our group, asked for a small glass of Turkish tea, then sat down to drink it with Frank and some of the others.

When we had all finished, we returned to the coach and set off for the town where we would be staying tonight: Güre. During the journey Frank, who was now sitting beside me, began to ask me about myself and so I told him about my work, hobbies, where I lived, and so forth. He seemed to be fascinated by what I had to say. Although two of the ladies were now sitting in the seat behind the driver, we still had a good view of our surroundings, though the scenery in this part of the country was rather bland. Generally speaking, the motorways were of good quality, though there were occasional bad patches and sections closed to traffic because of repairs. Meltem talked to us over the loudspeaker system and, as she had done from the very first day, continued to voice her opinions about the corruption in high places here, which she blamed on the government under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. However, she refused to use his name, referring to him instead by the words ‘My Lover’. Later, when she had finished explaining things to us, she played some music over the loudspeakers by holding the microphone close to her phone; the medley included some well-known songs sung by the Beatles, including *Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da*, which some of us sang along to.

We eventually reached the seaside town of Akçay at about two o’clock, and stopped in the main street. We tumbled out, walked along a narrow alleyway that ran parallel to the street, turned right, and found ourselves approaching the beach, which overlooked the nearby Greek island of Lesbos. Here we were greeted by a man in a restaurant, who showed us to seats and tables in a shaded area outdoors,. Waiters then appeared with trays of *tapas* and invited us to choose what we wanted to eat. Frank chose prawns and I chose yogurt with small portions of vegetables in it. I drank water and, as the waiter had mistakenly brought two glasses and two bottles of the local beer, although only one beer had been ordered, Frank poured a little of his beer into my glass. Later, when he had finished his glass, he opened the other bottle and, once again, poured some of the beer into my glass. When we eventually paid the bill, I did not have enough money for my portion as by now I had almost run out of cash.

When everyone had finished, Frank and I ambled along the beach, chatting. En route, I repeated a funny story that my father had told me many years previously about a talking budgie competition, which had Frank in fits of laughter. Back at the restaurant and the coach, he told me how much he had enjoyed talking to me.

We now drove to the Ramada Hotel, where we would be staying tonight. It was not too far away, near the town of Güre. The foyer was quite plush and the young members of staff were very helpful and friendly. My room, which was quite comfortable, looked out over the swimming pool.



Pedestrian path near Güre

While the other members of the group swam in the pool or had sauna baths, I attended to a few things in my room, then went out for a walk along the road near the hotel. Although it was a rather unremarkable road with a fair amount of traffic on it, it was good to be away from all the usual tourist trappings and to sample a little of the real country and its surroundings. The first thing that I noticed were the unusual pedestrian pavements, which I photographed, and the cycling paths beside them. Here and there were ordinary houses, some of which were rather large. On one side of the road was a very rundown house with a small field beside it, in which some sheep could be seen and heard. When I turned off the road and wandered down a lane, I found more houses, some of which did not look particularly impressive, for the area was a rather untidy. When I eventually reached a major junction, I turned around and made my way back to the hotel.

In my room once again, I had a very welcome shower, started to write my diary, then made my way down to the rather noisy dining room, where I sat down beside a lady in our group named Breda, and chatted to her. We were soon joined by Frank and a man named David, whom we had both befriended. However, as the amount of noise in the dining room was too much for me, I left early, on the pretext of telephoning somebody, and returned to my room. After I washed my teeth, I wrote more of my diary and contacted an elderly friend of mine who expressed the wish to be put in contact with Frank as she had seen one of my photographs of him. When I eventually finished writing, I finally went to bed. It had been a very interesting day.