

# Australian Military History Sinai, Palestine & Syria WW1

The Battle of Beersheba  
And a Summary of the final campaign.

Jerry MacKen 2025

# 19 April 1917

- The Agreement of St.-Jean-de-Maurienne was an agreement between France, Italy and Great Britain, which emanated from a conference in a railway car at Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne on 19 April 1917.
- The meeting was attended by British and French Prime Ministers, David Lloyd George and Alexandre Ribot, and the Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Paolo Boselli and Sidney Sonnino.
- Evidently all three countries regarded the issues as very important.
- Italy wanted more confidence about their share of the spoils from the defeat and breakup of the Ottoman Empire.
- Britain & France presumably wanted Italian help in the defeat particularly as Russia was collapsing and disappearing from the Caucasian front.



Italian sphere of influence in Turkey according to the agreements of 1917 in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. Document signed by Balfour.

Italy got a map with a signature on it and a clause about equitable adjustment if the areas actually seized from the Ottomans were not equal.

# May 1917

- Sir Philip Chetwode (portrait) had succeeded to the command of Eastern Force soon after the second battle of Gaza
- The mounted strength on the front was now three complete divisions of three brigades each.
- Anzac Mounted Division was made up of the 1st and 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade;
- Australian Mounted Division (the name having been changed from “Imperial” at the request of the Australian Government) of the 3rd and 4th Australian Light Horse Brigades and the 5th Yeomanry Brigade;
- the third was the new Yeomanry Division.
- All three Divisions had British artillery batteries
- The mounted work was divided to give each division a month’s work over the wide No-Man’s Land on the flank, a month’s rest on the beach at Belah, and a month’s hard training at Abasan.
- Most of the Australians agreed that this was the most distressing period yet. Water was scarce, the heat oppressive, and the dust perpetual and suffocating.





# April to October 1917

From **April to October 1917** the Ottoman and British Empire forces held their lines of defence from Gaza to Beersheba. Both sides constructed extensive entrenchments, which were particularly strong where the trenches almost converged, at Gaza and Beersheba.

They overlooked an almost flat plain, devoid of cover, making a frontal attack virtually impossible. The trench lines resembled those on the Western Front, except they were not so extensive, and they had an open flank.

Both sides reorganised their armies in Palestine during the stalemate and appointed new commanders. The Yildirim Army Group was established in June, commanded by the German General Erich von Falkenhayn.





# 23 May 1917

- The main line of communication south from Beersheba to Hafir el Aujah and Kossaima was attacked on 23 May 1917 when substantial sections of the railway line were demolished by Royal Engineers of the Anzac and Imperial Mounted Divisions.
- This raid was covered by the two mounted divisions including a demonstration towards Beersheba.



Part of 15 miles of railway line blown up in May 1917 by the Anzac and Imperial Mounted Divisions' and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade' engineers assisted by troopers.

# May 1917

- Chetwoode wrote:
- “By suitable arrangements,” he wrote, “ and the rapid carrying forward of the railway from Gamli or Shellal towards Ifteis when the moment comes, we can place a force in position on the high ground between Irgeig and Taweil el Habari, which should at once cause the evacuation of Beersheba, or, if not, would place us in a most favourable position to attack that place while holding off any enemy coming to its assistance from the direction of Hareira.
- Once established on the high ground between Beersheba and Hareira, and with Beersheba in our possession, we can attack north and north-westwards, always from higher ground, always with observation, with water at Beersheba, with water at Esani, with water at Shellal, Fara, and Gamli, with rail-borne water east of Shellal, and with the only prospect, which no alternative course affords, of finding a flank on which we can use our great preponderance in mounted troops; not an ideal flank, for east of Towal Abu Jerwal the country becomes mountainous and rocky, but still a flank which should afford us great opportunities, with water at Tel en Nejile, fourteen miles to the north, and the possibility of cutting the enemy's railway behind him; with water at Sheria and Hareira, a little salt, but good enough for animals, and with a strong pivot on our left flank from Abbas to the sea, on which to swing our right forward towards Nejile, and to force the enemy by manoeuvre to abandon Gaza.
- We must also remember that any fight here must be a fight for water as well as for the enemy's position, and that if we merely take his position we shall be tied down to another tedious advance, with the necessity of providing water mile by mile until we can attack his next position in rear. If, however, we can attack him in such fashion as to compel him to withdraw his full line beyond the Wady Hesi, we shall find water on the line Tel en Nejile-Wady Hesi at once.

# May 1917

- “There is,” he said, “one essential.
- Divisions must be divisions and mounted divisions mounted divisions.
- The notes are based on a minimum requirement, in the existing situation, of seven divisions and three mounted divisions (each of three brigades).
- But they are based on these formations being up to strength, fully armed and equipped, and provided one of the most important matters of all—with first reinforcements, actually in the country, which should amount to 20 per cent. of infantry if possible, and should not in any case or at any time fall below 10 per cent
- Unless we have a sufficient and a regular income, it is impossible to make any reasonable plans involving expenditure.”



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01531.023

RAFA, SINAI? 1917. LEFT TO RIGHT STANDING: MAJOR NICHOLAS, GENERAL J. R. ROYSTON DSO CMG, LIEUTENANT COLONEL (LT COL) TODD DSO, LT COL MAYGAR VC, MAJOR C. C. DANGAR MC, LT COL SCOTT DSO; SITTING: CAPTAIN WILFRID KENT HUGHES MC. (DONOR J. DERHAM)



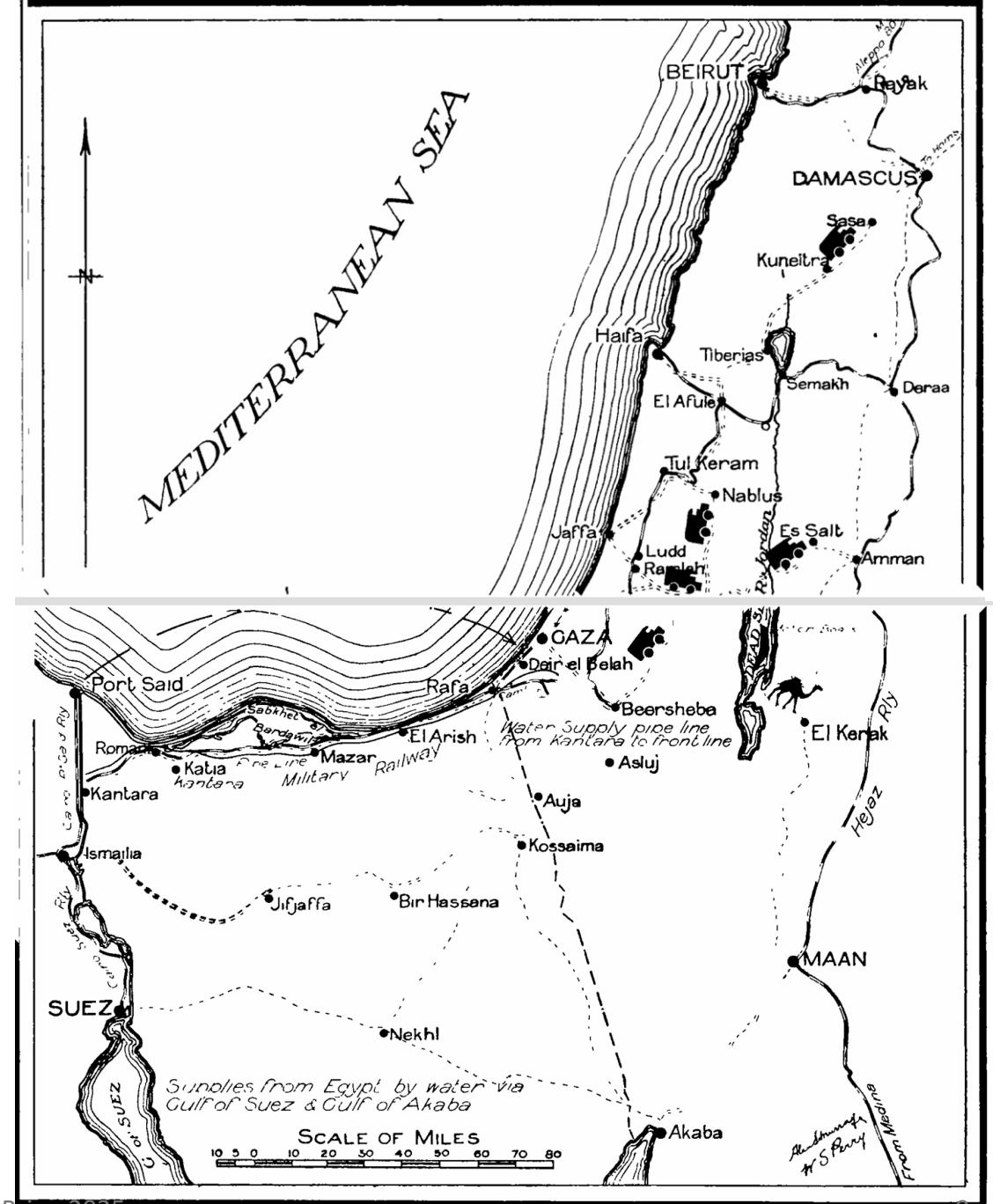
# June 1917

- Edmund Allenby (portrait) was appointed in June to command the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.
- Allenby created two separate headquarters, one stayed in Cairo to administer Egypt, while his battle headquarters was established near Khan Yunis.
- “ I could not count the times I have shaken hands with Allenby,” said a light horse brigade-major a few months after the new leader’s arrival. “Between the Canal and Gaza I never set eyes on Murray.”
- He also reorganised the force into two infantry and one mounted corps.
- Desert Mounted Corps, made up of the three mounted divisions, was formed under Chauvel



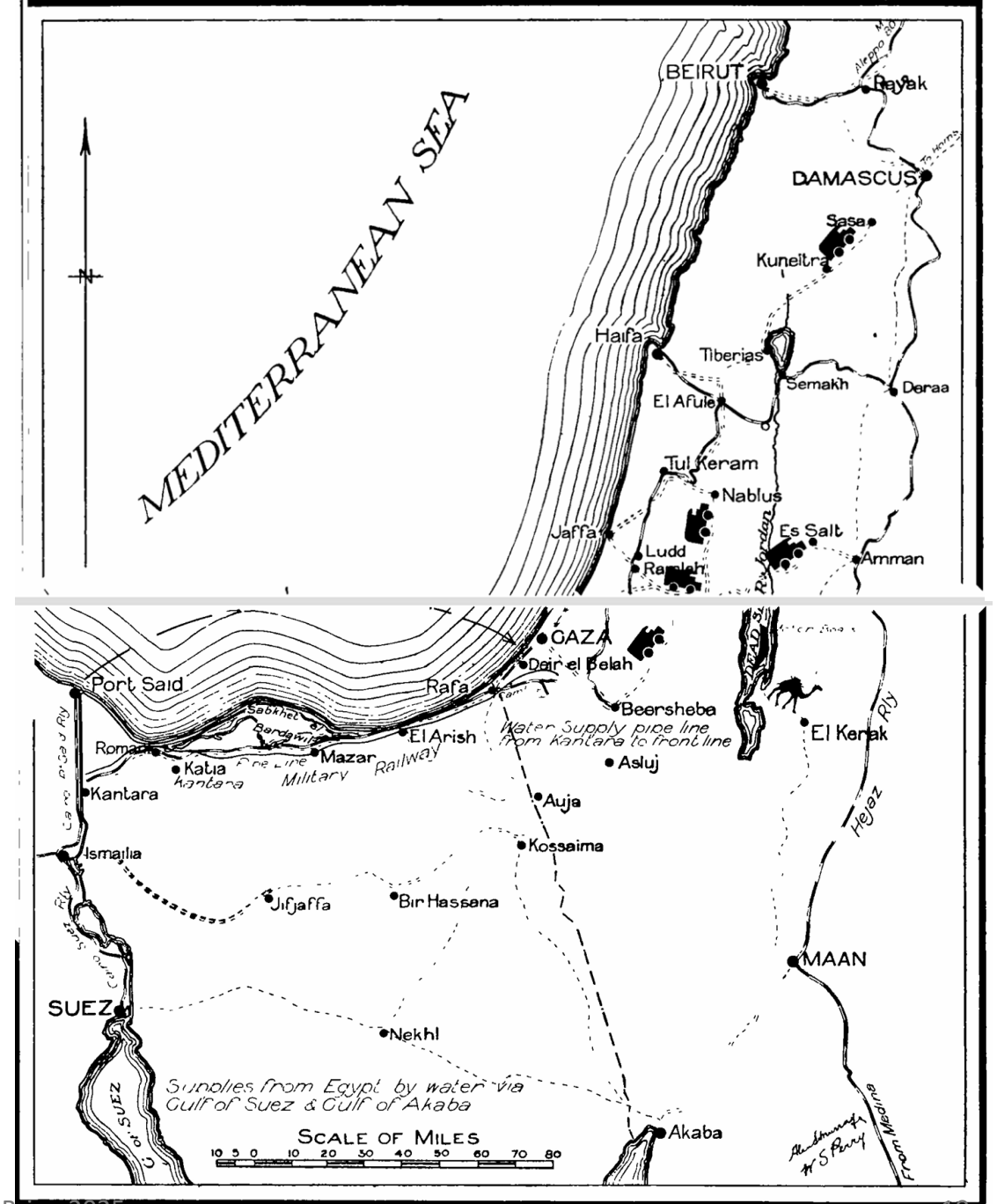
# June 1917

- Nor did the new Commander-in-Chief stop at the forward British positions.
- Shepherded by the mounted troops and the light car patrols, he pushed boldly out day after day on to the wide No-Man's Land between the two forces on the Beersheba flank.
- Within a few weeks he knew the ground thoroughly from the sea to Beersheba; and every officer and man in his force, applauding his work and inspired by his example and thoroughness, was uplifted with a fresh confidence and resolve.
- Allenby introduced into the army a new and incalculably improved moral tone.
- What had hitherto been a rather casual military adventure with no definite goal was suddenly converted into a stern, clear-cut campaign with nothing short of the complete destruction of the Turkish force in Palestine and the capture of Jerusalem as its immediate objective.



## June 1917

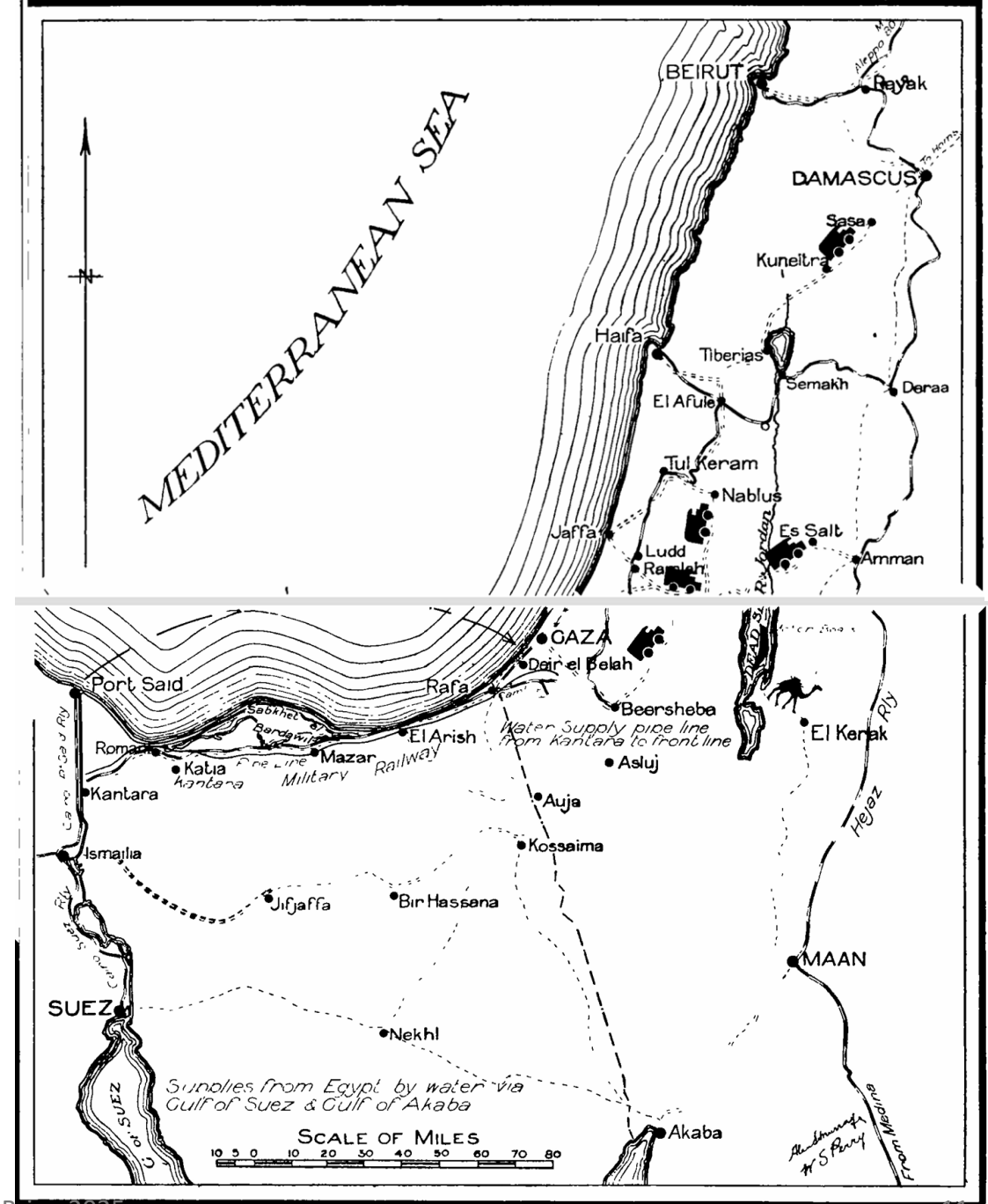
- Allenby's plan of attack was to throw the XX Corps of infantry, four divisions strong, together with Desert Mounted Corps and the Camel Brigade, against the Beersheba flank.
- At the same time the XXI Corps was to move against the Gaza end of the line.
- This meant that the bulk of the British army would be committed to live and fight on an area which at midsummer was still quite waterless, and which was also without railways or prepared roads for the transport of munitions and supplies.
- The attack would only be successful if it came as a complete surprise to the enemy.





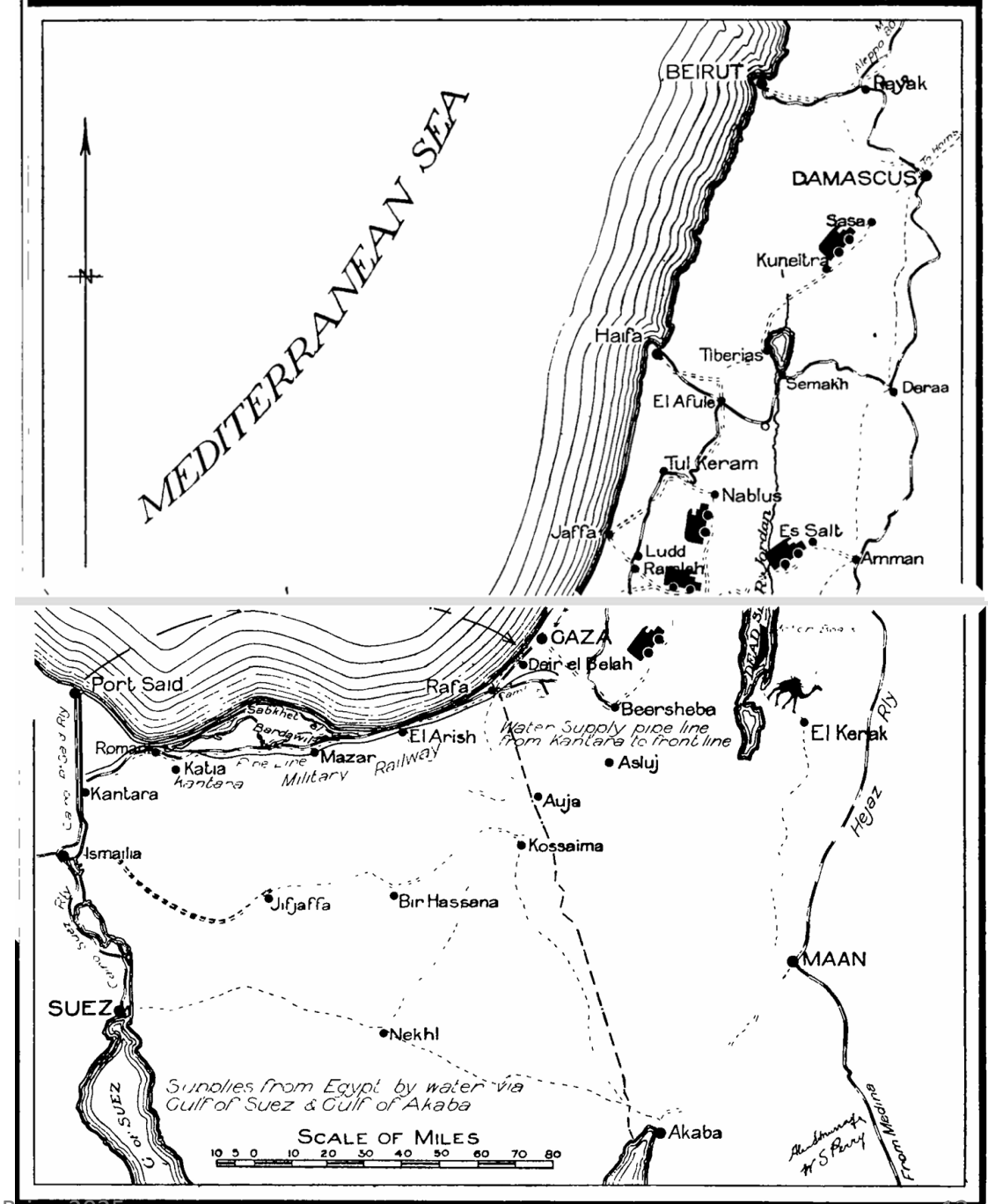
# June 1917

- The broad-gauge railway from Egypt had some time since reached Belah. 226 kilometres from Kantara and only eleven miles from the enemy's stronghold at Gaza.
- Pipelines from the Sweet Water Canal were in July at Rafa, giving the troops a daily supply of hundreds of thousands of gallons of filtered, chlorinated water.
- The rapidly growing army now made up a grand total (including Egyptian labourers) of close upon 200,000 men, some 20,000 camels, 46,000 horses, 15,000 mules, and a few thousand donkeys all dependent for foodstuffs upon outside sources and upon water which locally was to be found nowhere on the surface, and away from the coast scarcely to be found at all.



# June 1917

- The base at Kantara, which was developed to a great inland port, capable of berthing several ocean-going liners simultaneously. Thirty miles of metalled roads were laid down, various bases, which had hitherto been scattered over northern Egypt, were concentrated there, and a marked improvement made in the handling and despatch of supplies to the advanced army.
- Allenby was already extending railways and pipe-lines as far in the direction of Beersheba as was possible without disclosing his intentions to the enemy. A branch railway was thrown out for twenty-eight kilometres to Gamli.
- At the same time a two-foot-six-inch light-gauge line was laid from Belah for nineteen kilometres along the British side of the Guzze.
- The pipe-line was carried from Rafa to Shellal, supplying General Headquarters and the El Fukhari district on the way; another pipe-line was run inland from the Khan Yunis wells through Abasan and Abu Sitta to Abu Bakra. A group of springs in the Wady Ghuzze at Shellal had been developed and yielded nearly 300,000 gallons a day.



# June 1917

- Especially opportune were the reinforcements in aircraft which were for the first time equal, if not superior, to those of the Germans.
- The new material was limited, and part of the air force, including the Australian No. 1 Squadron, was still obliged to use obsolete machines.
- But the new battle-craft were sufficient at once to make the Germans respectful at a critical time in operations, when Allenby was anxious above all things to keep enemy pilots and observers from spying over the British lines.
- After a few fights, in which the Germans were decisively beaten, the foe became very shy and hurried in his reconnaissance and failed entirely to observe the drift of the British army towards the right flank.



# 8 July 1917

- Lieutenant C H Vautin of No 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC), with leading German aviator Oberleutnant Gerhardt Felmy.
- This photograph was taken after Vautin was forced down, while on photographic reconnaissance near Gaza, and taken prisoner of war (POW) by the Germans.
- This photograph was dropped to the No 1 Squadron AFC airfield as proof that Vautin was unharmed.

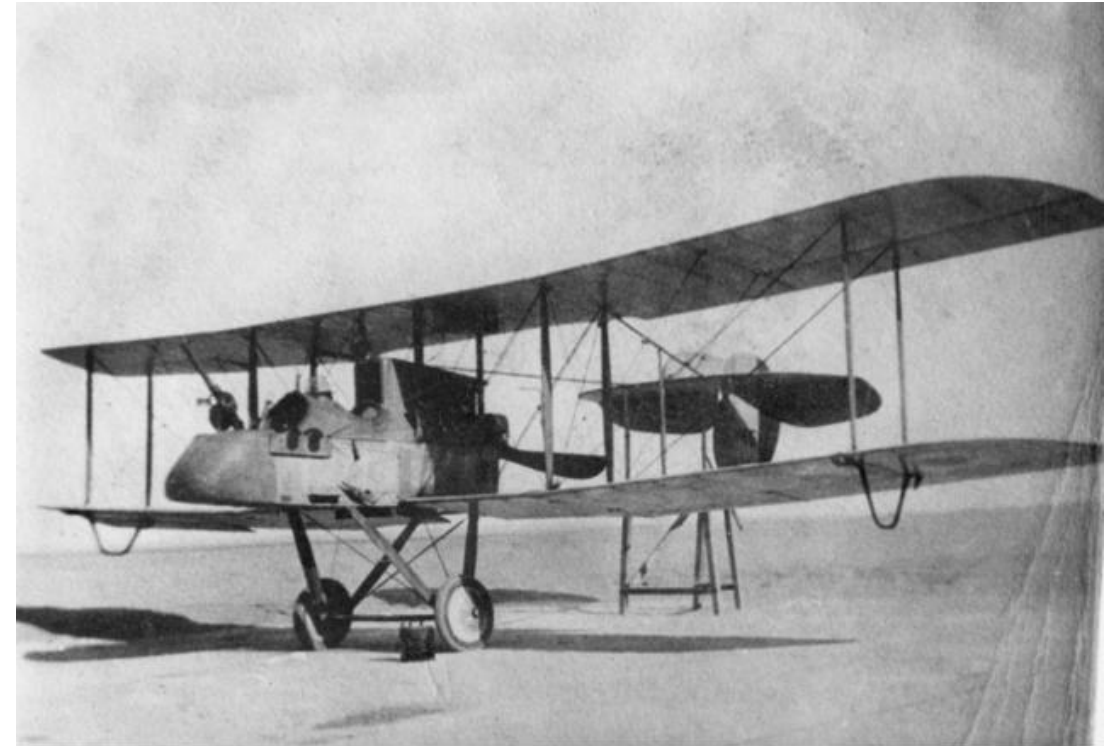


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A03757

# 8 July 1917

- THE ONLY DE HAVILLAND FIGHTER WITH NO 1 SQUADRON AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS (AFC), 1917.
- THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT IN WHICH LIEUTENANT CLAUDE VAUTIN WAS SHOT DOWN BY THE GERMAN FLYING ACE FELMY.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00588.024

# 12 August 1917

- The drafting began with Weizmann's guidance to the Zionist drafting team on its objectives in a letter dated 20 June 1917.
- He proposed that the declaration from the British government should state: "its conviction, its desire or its intention to support Zionist aims for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine;
- no reference must be made I think to the question of the Suzerain Power because that would land the British into difficulties with the French; it must be a Zionist declaration."
- A month after the receipt of the much-reduced 12 July draft from Rothschild, Balfour proposed a number of mainly technical amendments.

148 Piccadilly,  
W. 1.  
July 18th, 1917.

Dear Mr. Balfour,

At last I am able to send you the formula you asked me for. If His Majesty's Government will send me a message on the lines of this formula, if they and you approve of it, I will hand it on to Zionist Federation and also announce it at a meeting called for that purpose. I am sorry to say our opponents have commenced their campaign by a most reprehensible manoeuvre, namely to excite a disturbance by the cry of British Jews versus Foreign Jews, they commenced this last Sunday when at the Board of Deputies they challenged the new elected officers as to whether they were all of English birth (myself among them).

Yours sincerely,  
(Signed) ROTHSCHILD.

II.

Enclosure to (1).

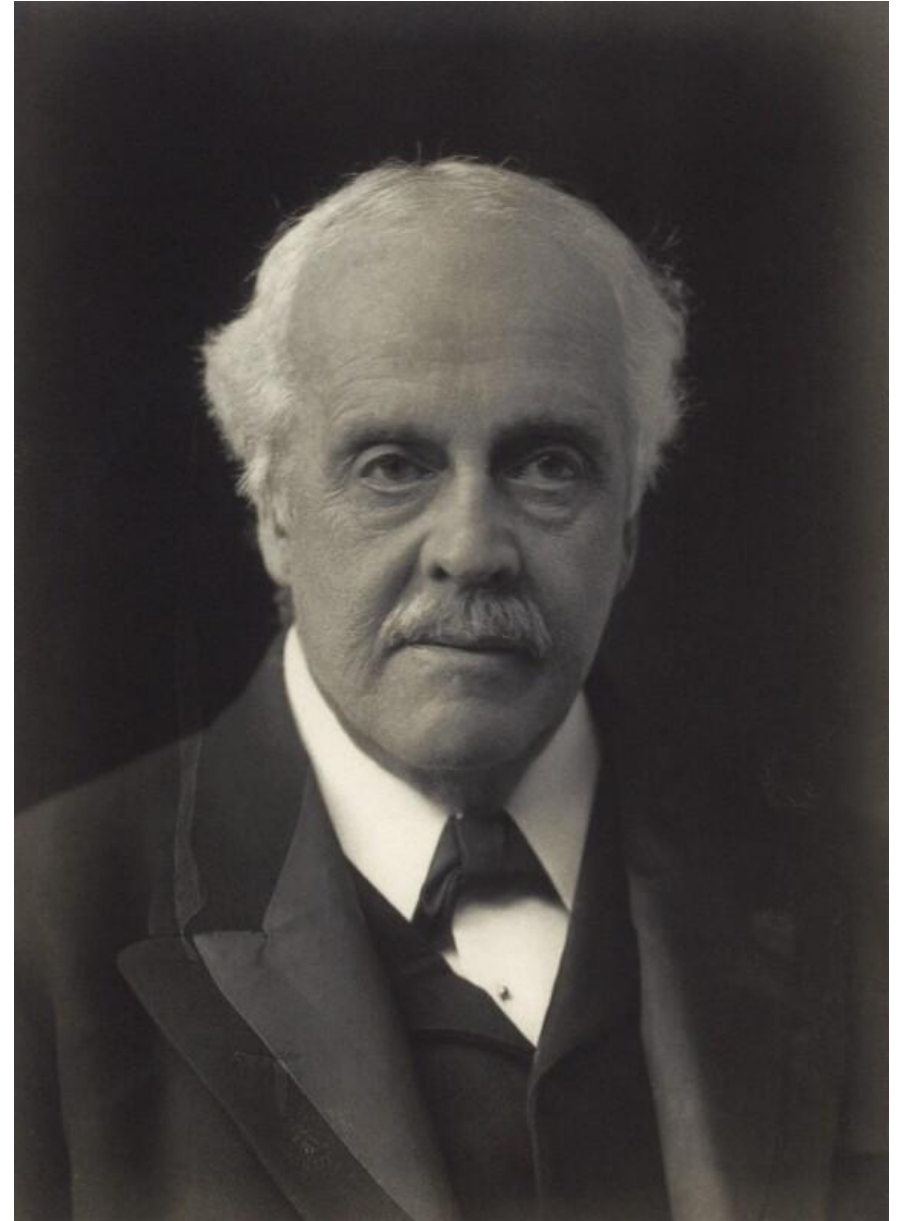
Draft Declaration.

1. His Majesty's Government accepts the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the National Home of the Jewish people.
2. His Majesty's Government will use its best endeavours to secure the achievement of this object and will discuss the necessary methods and means with the Zionist Organisation.



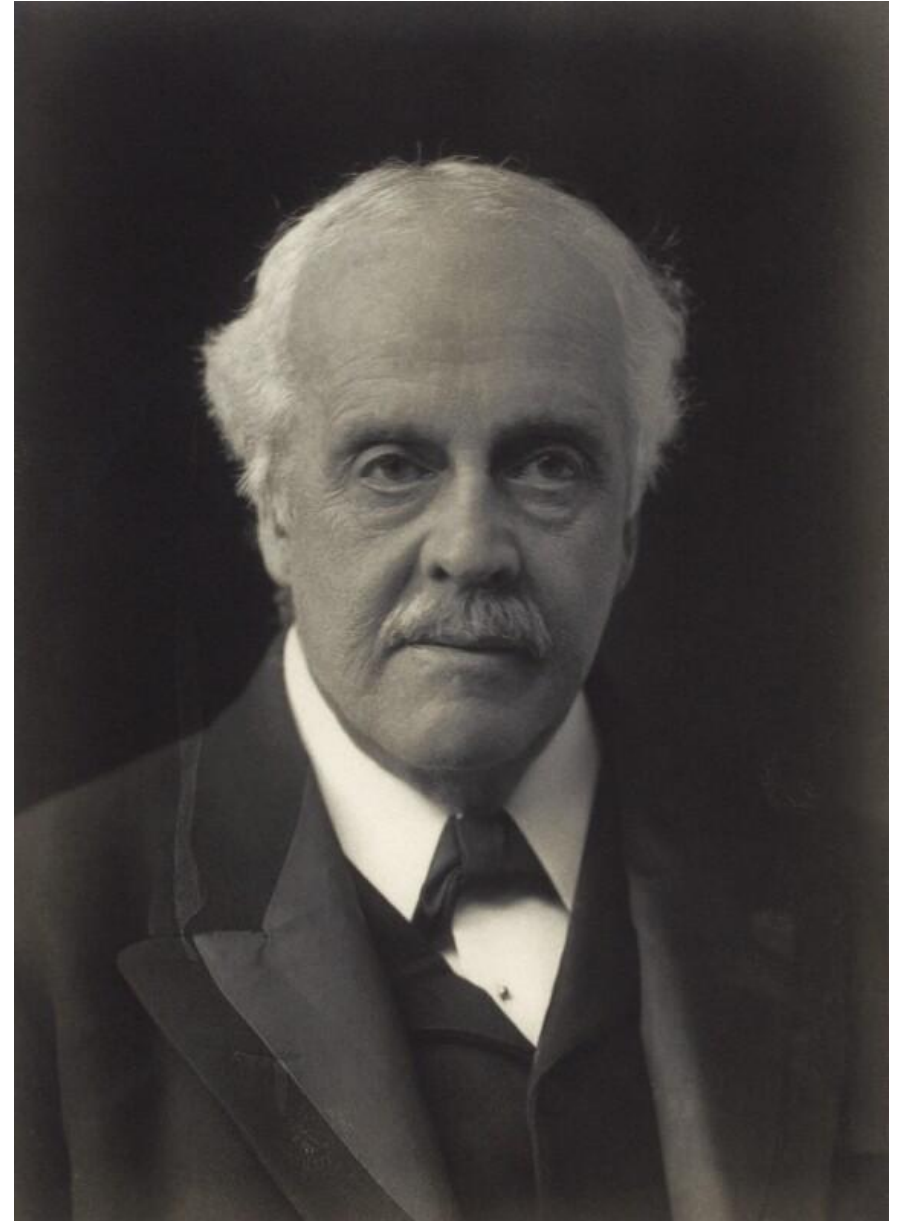
# 3 September 1917

- "With reference to a suggestion that the matter (Support for Zionism) might be postponed, [Balfour (photo)] pointed out (to the War Cabinet) that this was a question on which the Foreign Office had been very strongly pressed for a long time past.
- There was a very strong and enthusiastic organisation, more particularly in the United States, who were zealous in this matter, and his belief was that it would be of most substantial assistance to the Allies to have the earnestness and enthusiasm of these people enlisted on our side.
- To do nothing was to risk a direct breach with them, and it was necessary to face this situation."



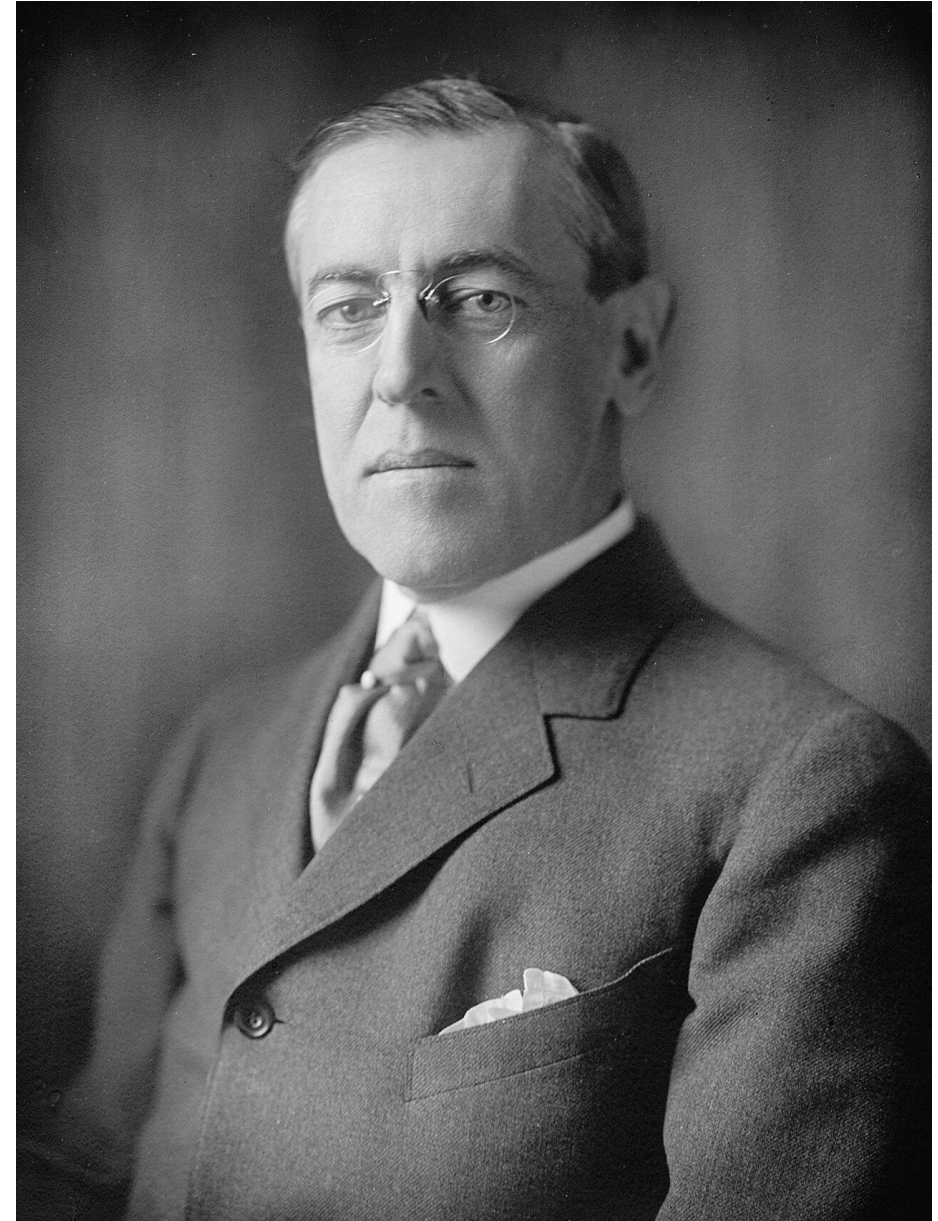
# 4 October 1917

- [Balfour] stated (to the War Cabinet) that the German Government were making great efforts to capture the sympathy of the Zionist Movement.
- This Movement, though opposed by a number of wealthy Jews in this country, had behind it the support of a majority of Jews, at all events in Russia and America, and possibly in other countries ...
- Mr. Balfour then read a very sympathetic declaration by the French Government which had been conveyed to the Zionists, and he stated that he knew that President Wilson was extremely favourable to the Movement."



# 6 October 1917

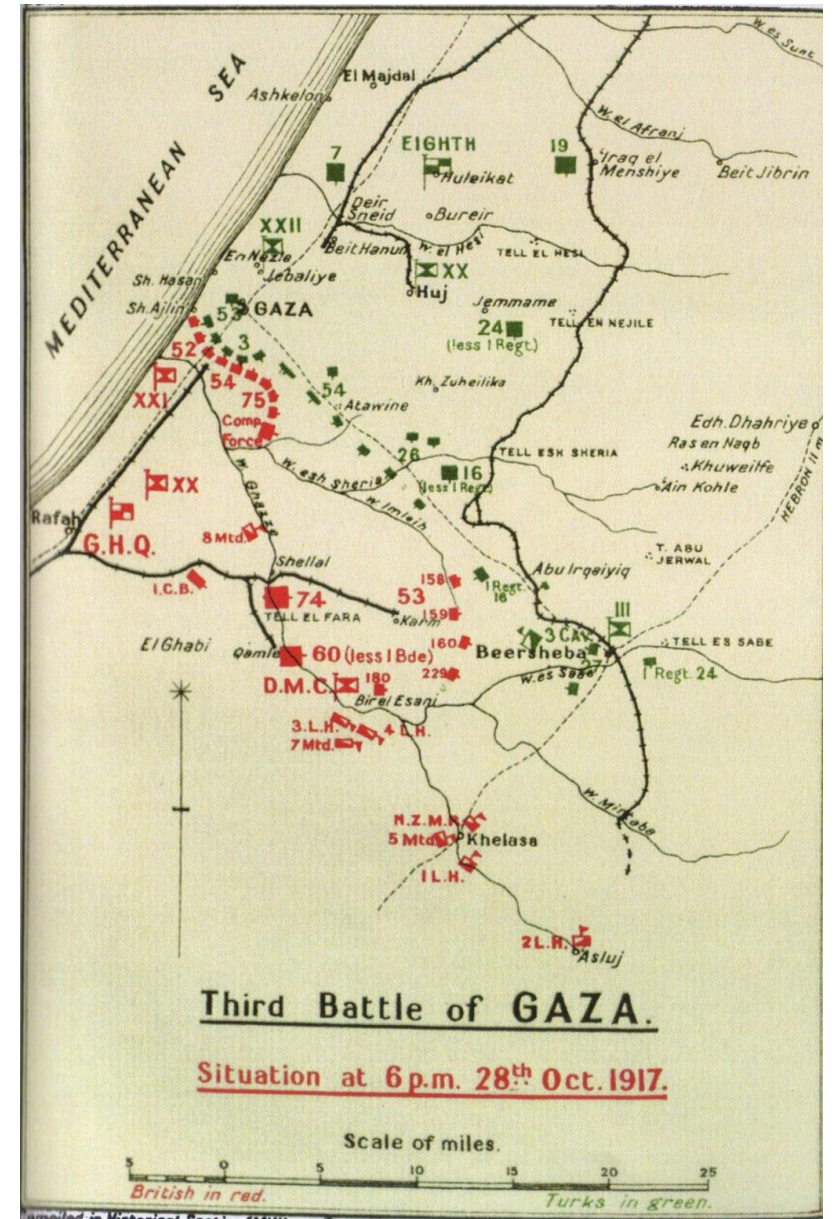
- British officials asked President Wilson (photo) for his consent on the matter (The Balfour Declaration) on two occasions –
- first on 3 September, when he replied the time was not ripe,
- and later on 6 October, when he agreed with the release of the declaration.





# 22 October 1917

- Allenby's battle order was issued on **October 22nd**.
- Chetwode, with XX Corps, was to strike at Beersheba from the south-west, while Chauvel, with two divisions of Desert Mounted Corps, was to assault the town from the east and north-east.
- This was to take place on **October 31<sup>st</sup>**.
- **Four days earlier** the artillery of Bulfin's XXI Corps, on the left, was to begin bombarding the Gaza defences. This shelling was to be increased in intensity from day to day, and, in conjunction with navy activity from the sea, was designed to persuade the enemy that Gaza was Allenby's main objective.



# 22 October 1917

- In all his orders Allenby insisted that Beersheba must be captured on the first day of the operations. Surprise and rapidity of movement were indispensable to success.
- Chauvel (photo), with his mounted troops, was then to push northwards on Chetwode's right flank, and, as a preliminary, seize Nejile, where there was a good supply of water; then, riding north-west, he must threaten the whole of the Turkish communications and menace the army round Gaza.
- Chauvel's mission was a difficult one. He was by dawn on October 31st to have the Anzac and Australian Mounted Divisions on the east and south-east of Beersheba, ready to strike simultaneously at the town and at the old road that leads northwards along the top of the Judaeen hills to Hebron and Jerusalem.
- He was to reach that position unknown to the enemy, with his horses fairly fresh from water and capable of at least one day's hard work without a drink.
- Water was, as it always had been since leaving the Canal, the main problem.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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# 27 October 1917

- The initial bombardment of the defences around Gaza opened on October 27th, with the dual purpose of reducing the defences and of concealing the attack on Beersheba.
- It was continued at intervals, and with increasing intensity, by two 60-pounder batteries, five and a half 6-inch howitzer batteries, one 8-inch howitzer battery, and the divisional artillery of the 52nd, 54th, and 75th Divisions.



6 inch howitzer near Boesinghe, Battle of Langemarck, August 1917.

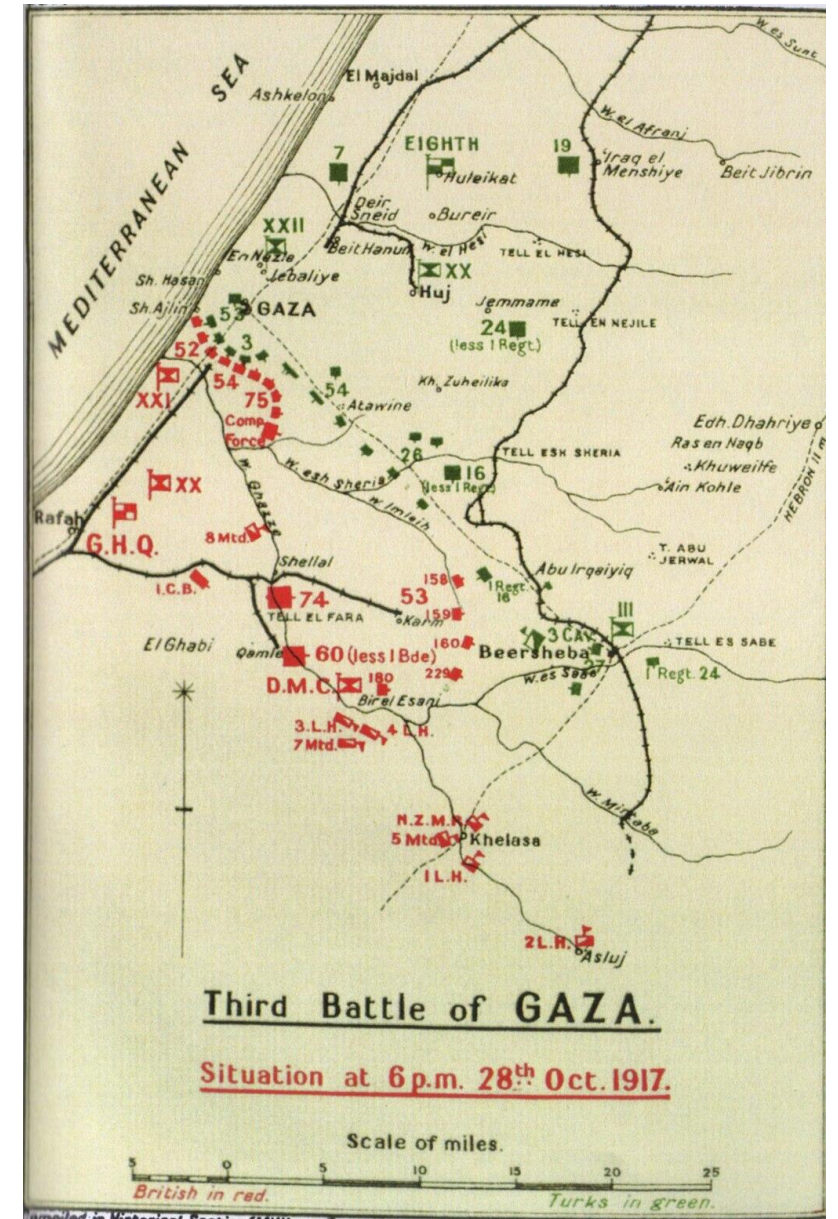
# 29 October 1917

- The navy joined in the shelling of Gaza, and day and night the Turks were punished with artillery as they had never been in this or any other war.
- the fourteen inches (360 mm) guns on HMS Raglan (photo), the Monitors M15 9.2 inches (230 mm) guns, the M29, the M31, and the M32 with 6 inches (150 mm) guns, the cruiser Grafton, and the destroyers Staunch and Comet. French vessels included the Requin, Arbalète, Voltigeur, Coutelas, Fauconneau and Hache.



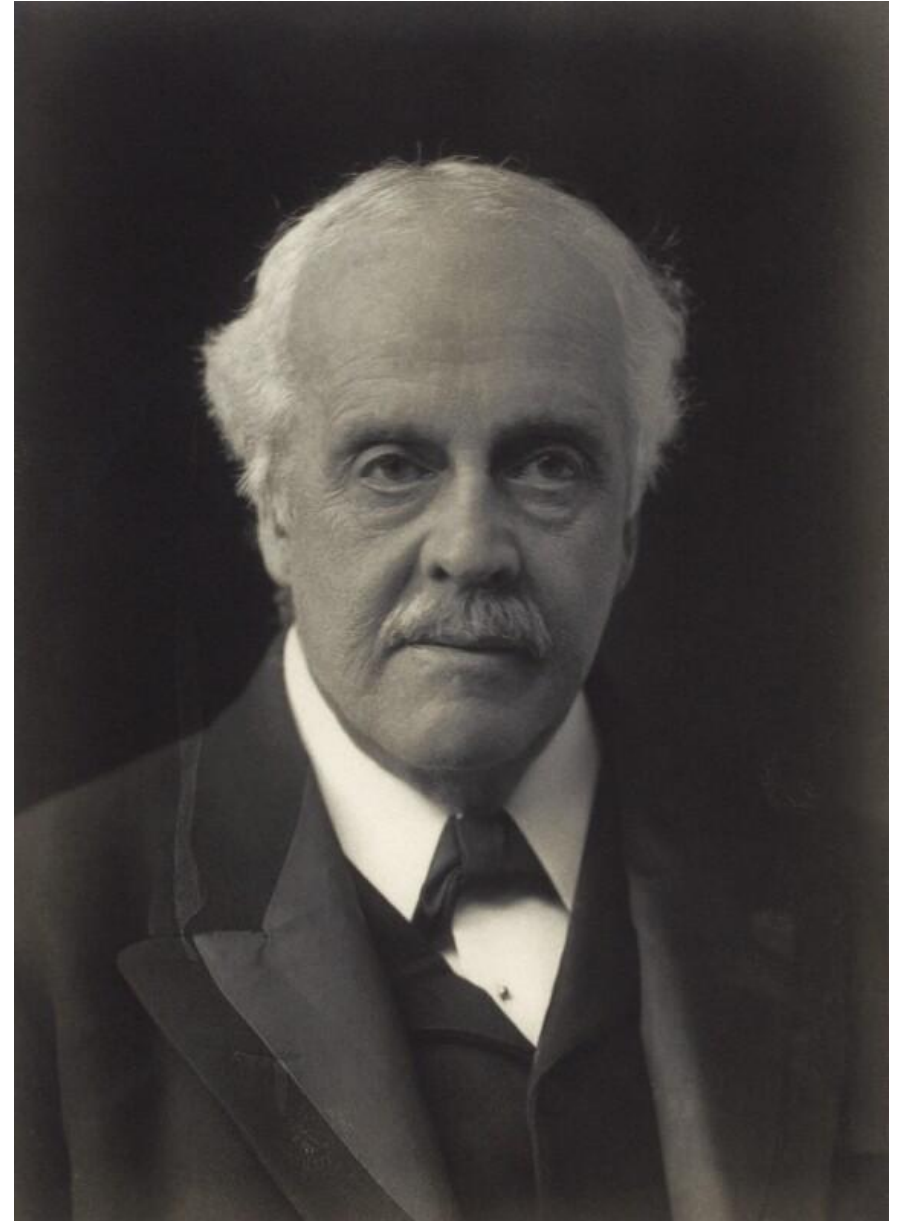
# 29 October 1917

- Even on October 29th-when Allenby's flank movement, despite all precautions, could be concealed no longer-the Turkish High Command recorded the following appreciation :-“ An out- flanking movement on Beersheba, with about one infantry and one cavalry division, is indicated; but the main attack, as before, must be expected on the Gaza front.”



# 31 October 1917

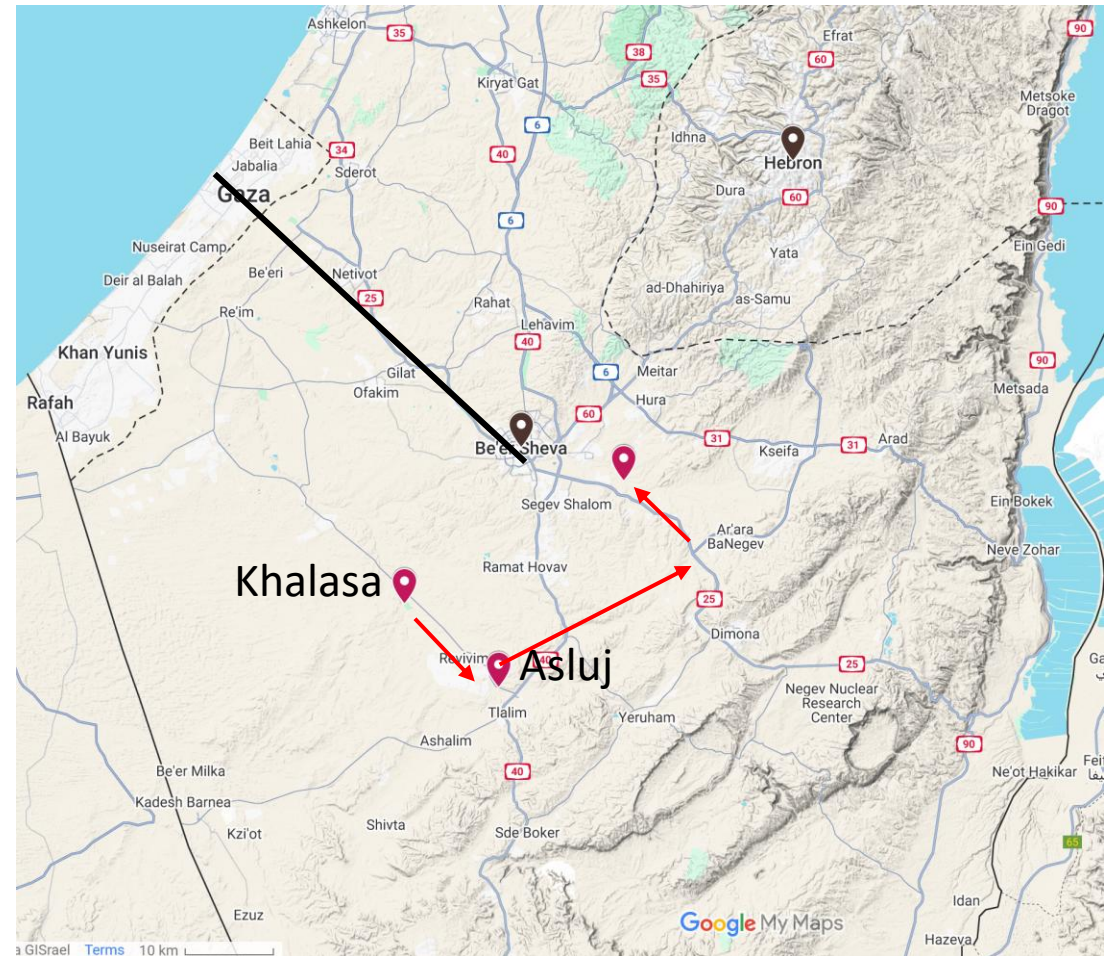
- "[Balfour] stated (to the War Cabinet) that he gathered that everyone was now agreed that, from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favourable to the aspirations of the Jewish nationalists should now be made.
- The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as, indeed, all over the world, now appeared to be favourable to Zionism.
- If we could make a declaration favourable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America."





# 30/31 October

- The 7th Light Horse Regiment of the 2nd Brigade, as advance-guard to the corps, cleared Asluj at 6 p.m. and led the long column of the Anzac and Australian Mounted Divisions north-east along the track to Bir Arara, which was reached at 2 am. on the 31st.
- The Australian Mounted Division moved from Khalasa, and, marching by Asluj, had some miles further to travel than the Anzacs.
- The men carried three days' rations.
- Smoking was as usual forbidden, and any talking was in subdued tones.

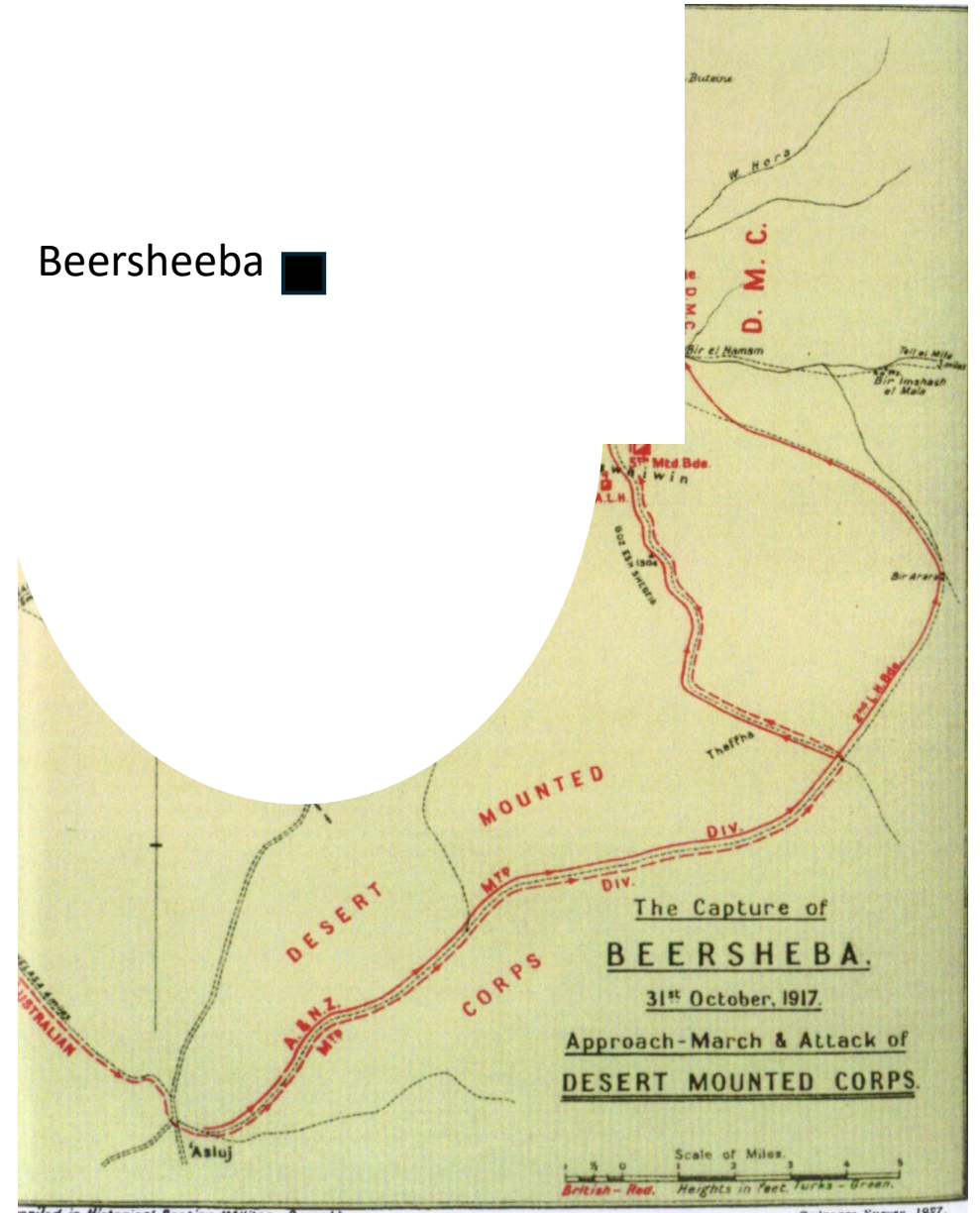




# 30/31 October

- Chauvel's orders were to straddle the Hebron road to prevent reinforcement of and escape from Beersheba. That done he was to storm the town.
- At Thaffha the track split. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ALH Brigade under Ryrie pressed on to Bir Arara to cut the Hebron road.
- The main column, with the Wellington Regiment of the New Zealand Brigade in the lead, turned along the road to the north towards Beersheba.
- The night passed without sight of the enemy.

Beersheeba ■



# 31 October 1917

- At 3 o'clock in the morning the Wellingtons reached El Shegeib; at 7 they were riding past Iswaiwin and, followed by Anzac Mounted Division, were advancing on Bir Salem-Abu Irgeig.
- The Australian Mounted Division under Hodgson swung to the left towards Beersheba, and after marching a few miles halted and remained in reserve.



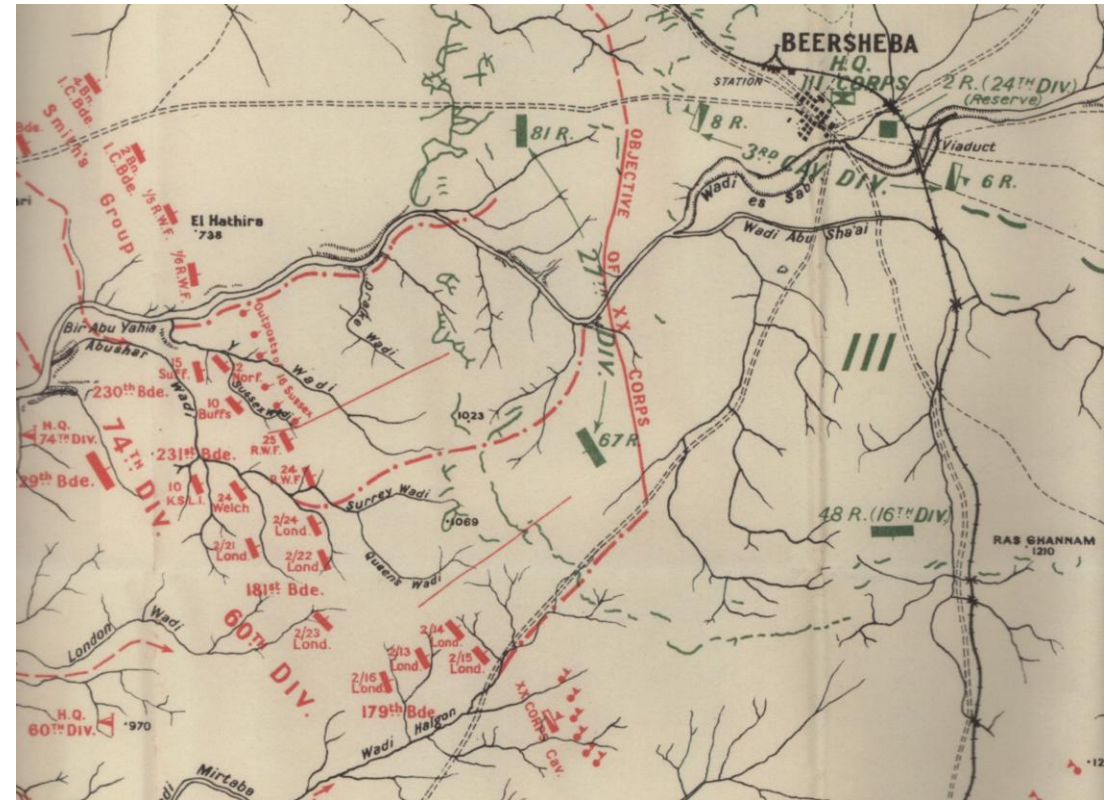
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A02788

The 4th Australian Light Horse Regiment on the way to take part in the attack on Beersheba.

# 31 October 1917

- At 5.55 Chetwode opened his bombardment on the enemy's advanced defences south-west of the town.
- More than 100 field-pieces and howitzers were jolting the shallow advanced trenches with high explosive, and shrapnel was falling effectively on all moving targets and cutting off the positions from their rear.
- Twenty heavy guns were engaging the Austrian batteries.
- There was not a breath of wind, and all targets quickly became obscured by the smoke and dust of the bursting shells.
- The infantry commanders couldn't see how far the enemy wire had been destroyed.

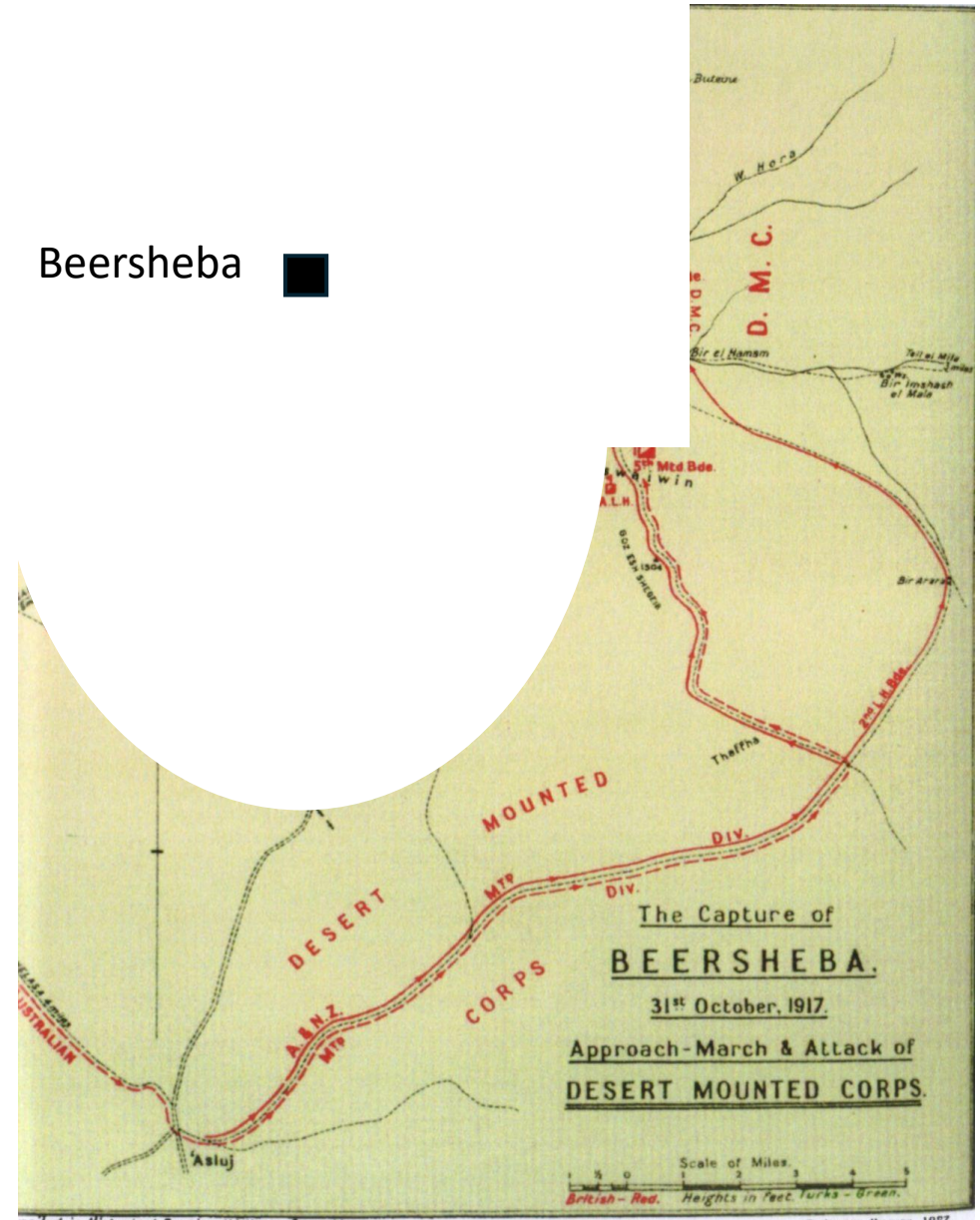




# 31 October

- Ryrie's brigade (2ALH) made Bir el Hamani soon after 7 a.m. and was then halted while patrols were pushed out towards the line Tel el Saba-Sakati.
- From the high ground they could see Beersheba and a large pool of water in the wady near the town. A thunderstorm had brought heavy showers, and the fall around Beersheba had been enough to be useful to the horses.
- Shortly before 8 o'clock the New Zealand Brigade was concentrated at Khashm Zanna, in touch with the 2nd Light Horse Brigade on its right, and soon afterwards the New Zealanders were in possession of Bir Salem-Abu Irgeig.

Beersheba



# 31 October

- During the war in Sinai Beersheba had been used as a base and many new sheds had appeared.
- As the Anzacs first saw it from the hills to the south-east Beersheba had, except for its new mosque built by the Germans, the appearance of a struggling township on the pastoral country in Australia.

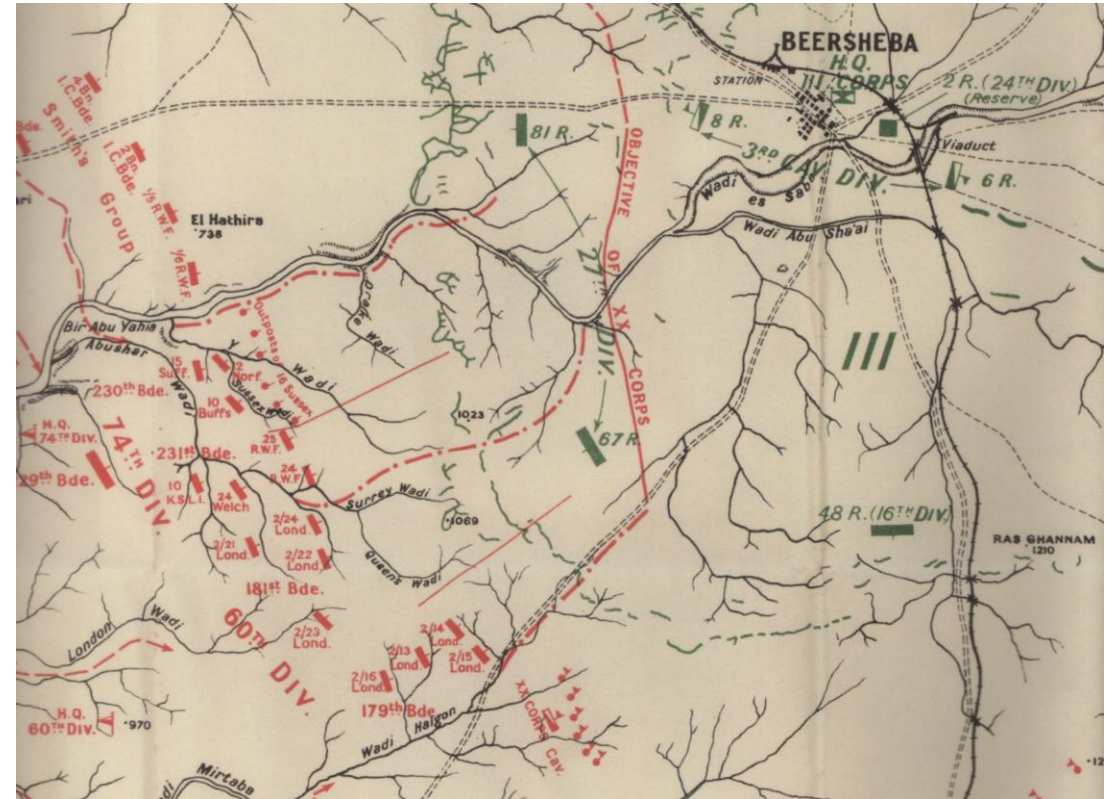


Arial photo of Bethsheeba from 1917



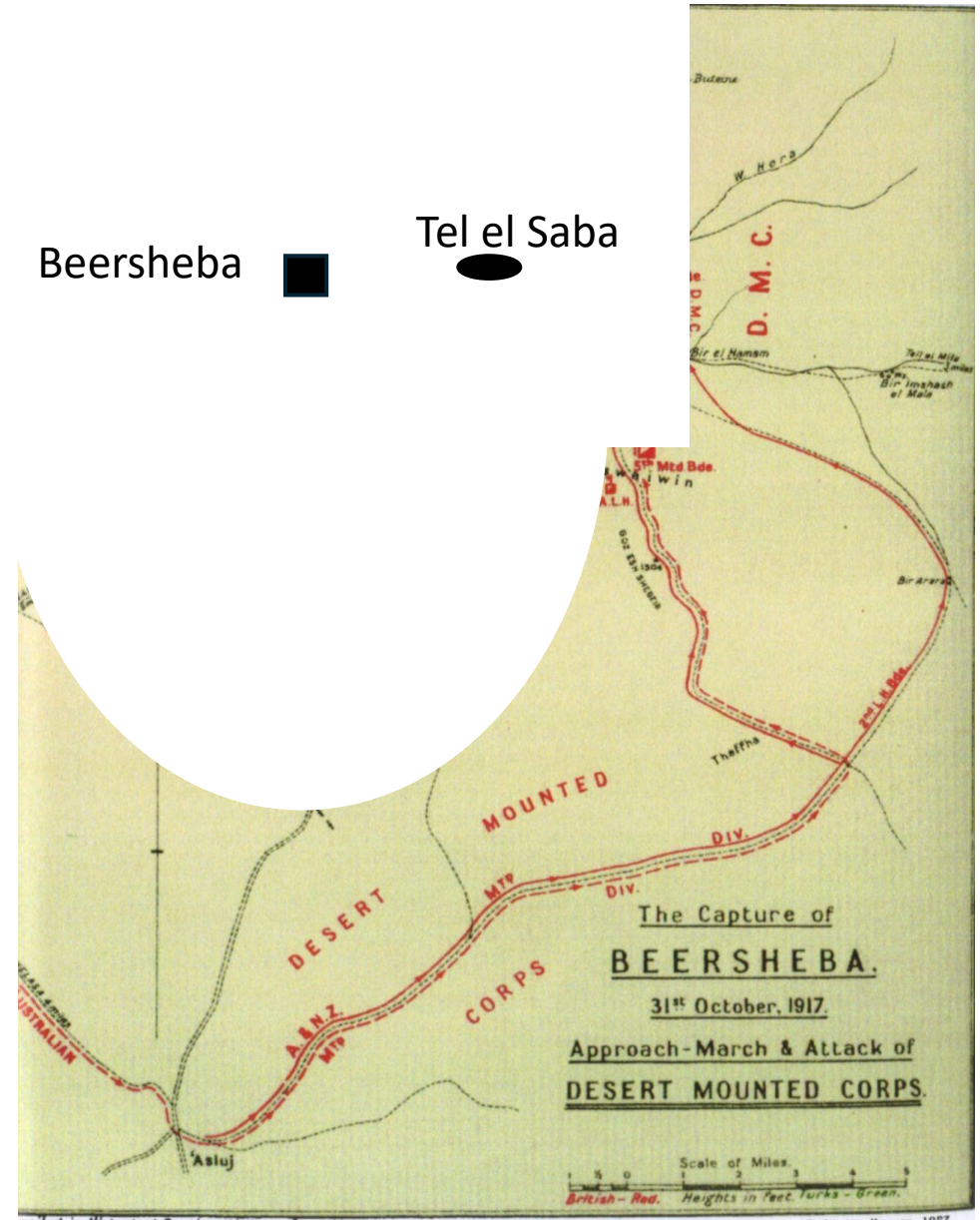
# 31 October 1917

- At 8.30 the 181st Infantry Brigade of the 60th Division advanced and quickly captured Hill 1070, a strong outpost, and British guns were rushed forward over the rough ground to bring them within range of the main Turkish line of defences.



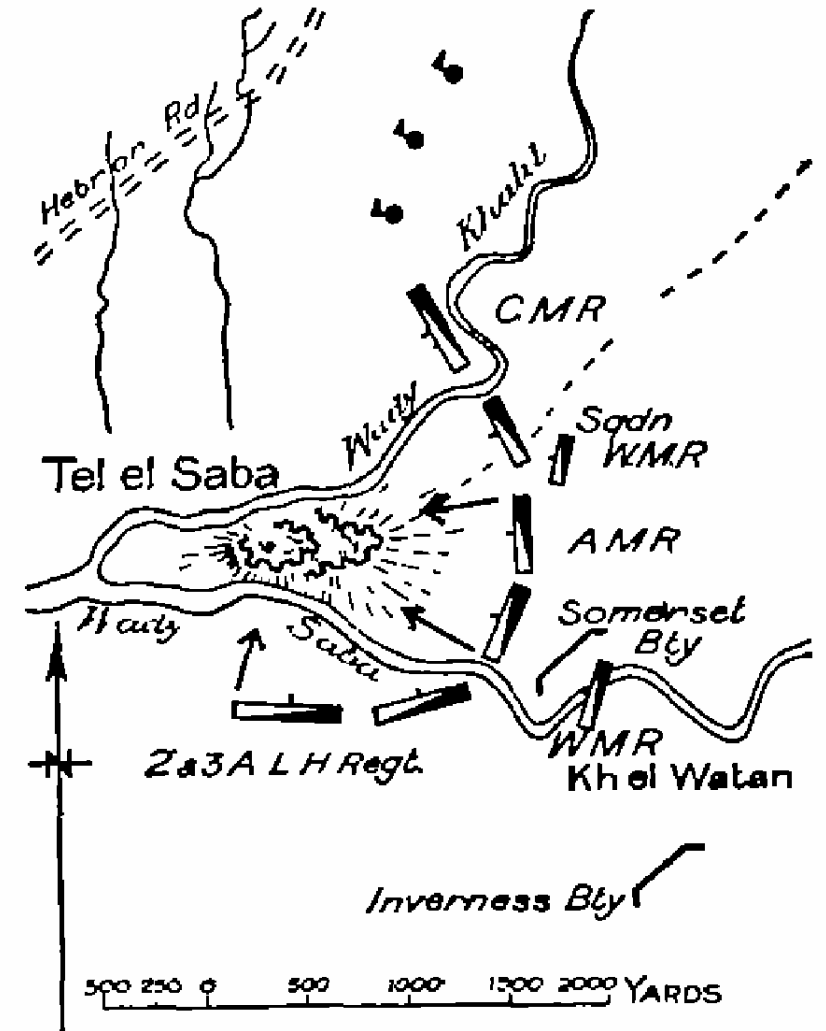
# 31 October

- The defence of Beersheba against attack from the east and south-east depends on Tel el Saba.
- The tel lies on the northern bank of the Wady Saba, three miles due east of the town, and is a great mound with a cliff-face abutting on the rough wide water-course. A few acres in extent, it rises steeply to a height of a few hundred feet from the bare surrounding country. Its top is fairly flat, but is covered with boulders, which, with very little digging, gave sound cover to infantry, and provided perfect pockets for machine-guns.
- Two lines of trenches, one cut above the other in the slope, commanded the plain across the wady to the south, and east.
- The steep sides of the mound were inaccessible to men on horses, and the naked plain held out unpromising prospects to a dismounted advance.



# 31 October

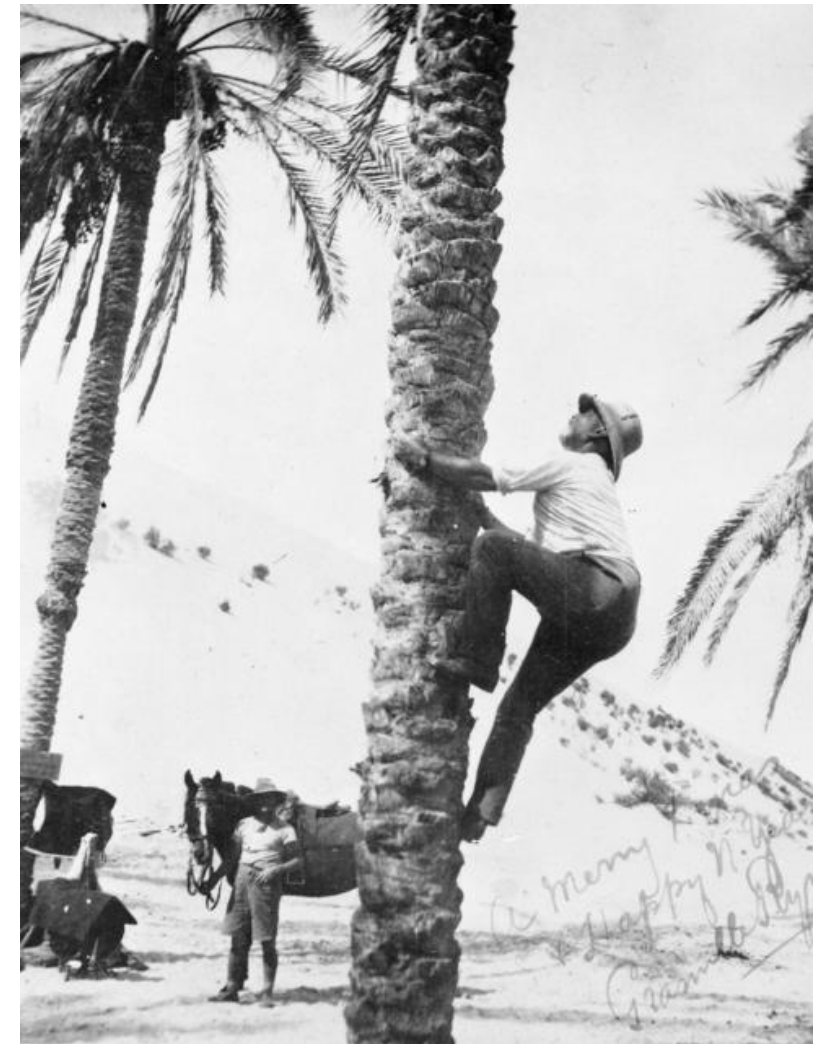
- By 9 a.m. the brigades were in readiness for the second phase of the advance aimed at seizing the Beersheba-Hebron road at Sakati and capturing Tel el Saba.
- Mounted enemy troops were seen moving to reinforce the Tel el Saba redoubt, and it was plain that the mound was strongly occupied.
- Enemy cavalry, guns, and transport were moving out of Beersheba by the Hebron road either to escape capture or to guard against a raid on that line of communications.





# 31 October

- Ryrie at 9.30 having received orders to move with “all speed” on Sakati, the brigade trotted off and headed north-west, Onslow with the 7th Light Horse Regiment setting the pace.
- Soon Onslow had quickened the pace, and the horses, making light of their heavy loads and fighting for their heads, were rattling along at the gallop.
- Ryrie had scattered his brigade into artillery formation, and the precaution was quickly justified.
- As soon as the enemy spotted them shrapnel fire was opened over the regiments; but, as usual with galloping troops in extended order, the artillery proved futile. The Australians did not suffer a single casualty.
- The line of advance lay across a large scattered Bedouin encampment, with its customary collection of fowls, sheep, donkeys, and camels. Through this excited, clamorous medley the regiments thundered, with shrapnel bursting thickly above them- and, while the light horsemen escaped loss, a number of the natives were hit.
- Photo: Brigadier-General Granville de Laune Ryrie, Commanding Officer (CO) of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, scaling a date palm at an oasis, in quest of the dates near the top of the tree. Ryrie was then aged 52. Holding the reins of a horse, another Light Horseman looks on in the background.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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# 31 October

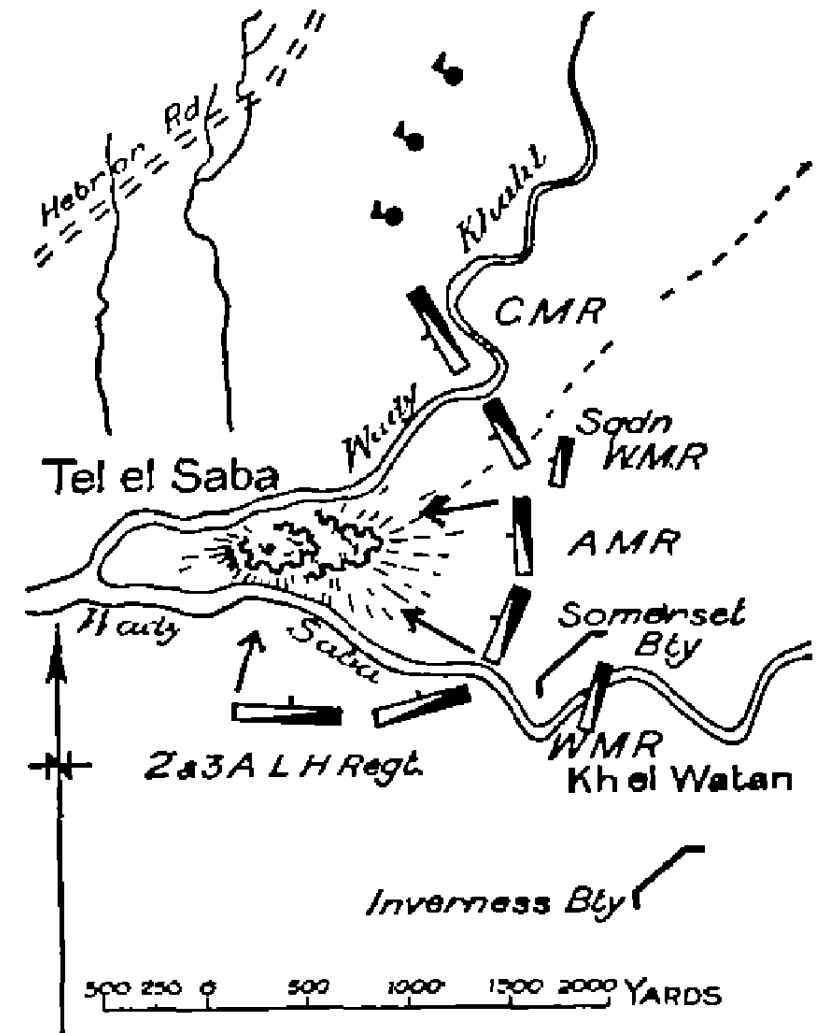
- Onslow gained the Hebron road without slackening the pace, and his screen there rushed and captured a Turkish convoy of ten waggons with horses and mules.
- But on the heights immediately ahead was an enemy battery, some machine-guns, and riflemen. These had lost the range on the rapidly approaching horsemen, but they now fired point-blank into Onslow's squadrons, and only their excitement saved the Australians from heavy casualties.
- Fortunately the rough country gave immediate cover; into this the regiment was rushed, safe, but disappointed that, after winning to within a few chains of the guns, the hopelessness of the ground prevented their capture.
- Here in a wady near the road, under good cover but unable to move, the brigade stayed all day. Its immediate task was accomplished, but in that country a further advance was impossible.





# 31 October

- Meanwhile Chaytor had sent the New Zealanders and the 1st Light Horse Brigade against Tel el Saba.
- At 10 o'clock the Somerset Battery opened fire on the position from the south east at a range of 3,000 yards, to cover the advance of the New Zealanders to the north of the wady, while the 3rd Light Horse Regiment of Cox's (1 ALH) brigade was ordered to attack the mound from the south-east.
- Approach up the bed of the wady was made impossible by enemy machine-gun fire; and Lt-Col Bell, of the 3rd, after consultation with the C.O. of the Aucklands, decided to move along open ground south of the water-course, with the Aucklands conforming on the north.
- A spirited gallop under fire carried Bell's regiment to within 1,500 yards of the enemy position before the men dismounted.



# 31 October

- The Inverness Battery covered the attack from a range of only 2,600 yards concentrating its fire upon a nest of machine-guns in caves some 400 yards east of Tel el Saba. But the fire of such light batteries against an enemy in earthworks is seldom destructive.
- The two batteries were handled with skill and marked fearlessness, and the Somerset guns were during the fight galloped up to within 1,200 yards of Tel el Saba; but the Anzac lines on either side of the wady were nevertheless subjected to punishment which, increasing in intensity as they advanced, soon threatened them with complete destruction.
- The Australians on the south were especially exposed, but the two advanced squadrons, led by Major Dick and Captain Tackaberry, crept gradually forward until they were able to bring effective Hotchkiss fire to bear upon the trenches on the face of Tel el Saba.



Soldiers in a Hotchkiss machine gun team, Egypt.  
National Library of New Zealand.

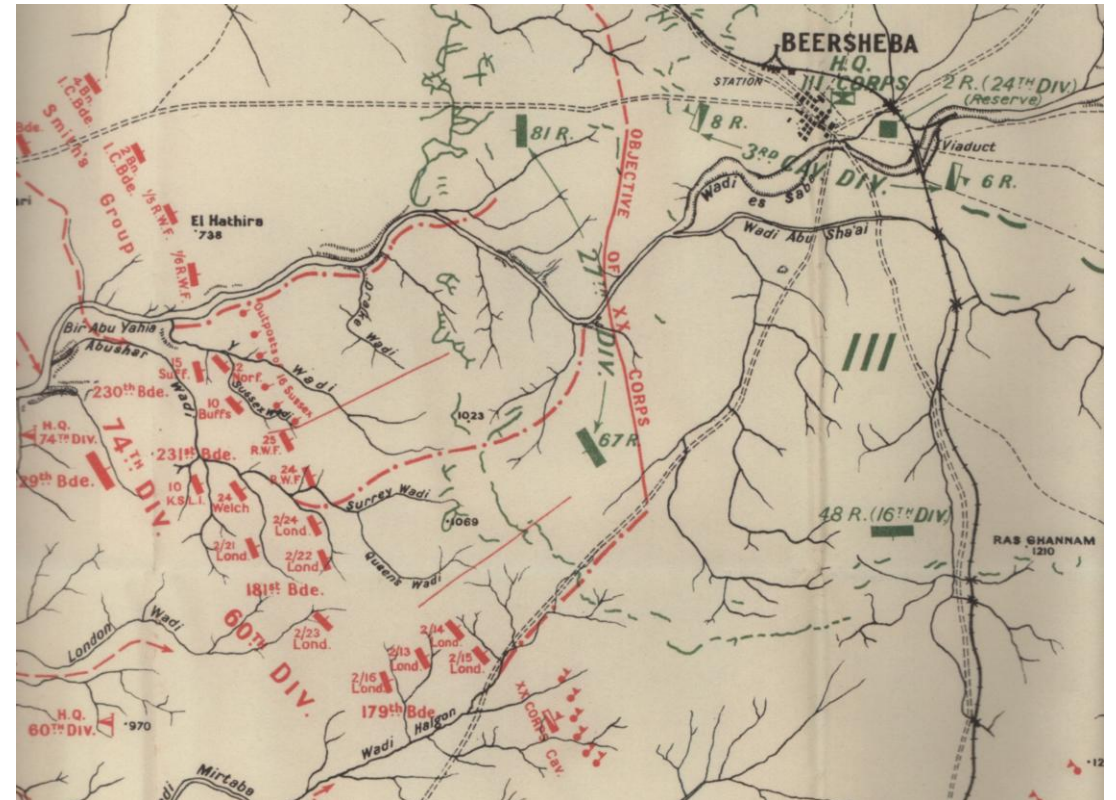
# 31 October

- Hotchkiss M1909 light machine gun.
- The New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade was equipped with Hotchkiss light machine guns after the First Battle of Gaza, March 1917. Each mounted squadron (160 men) received four Hotchkiss guns in place of the single Lewis machine gun they had been equipped with previously.
- The French designed Hotchkiss gun was light, durable, and easy to operate. It fired .303-inch rounds from a 10-round metal strip which was carried in a bandolier.
- The gun, a spare barrel and 900 rounds could be transported on a single packhorse. Two ammunition packhorses travelled with every mounted squadron, each carrying 2400 rounds.



# 31 October

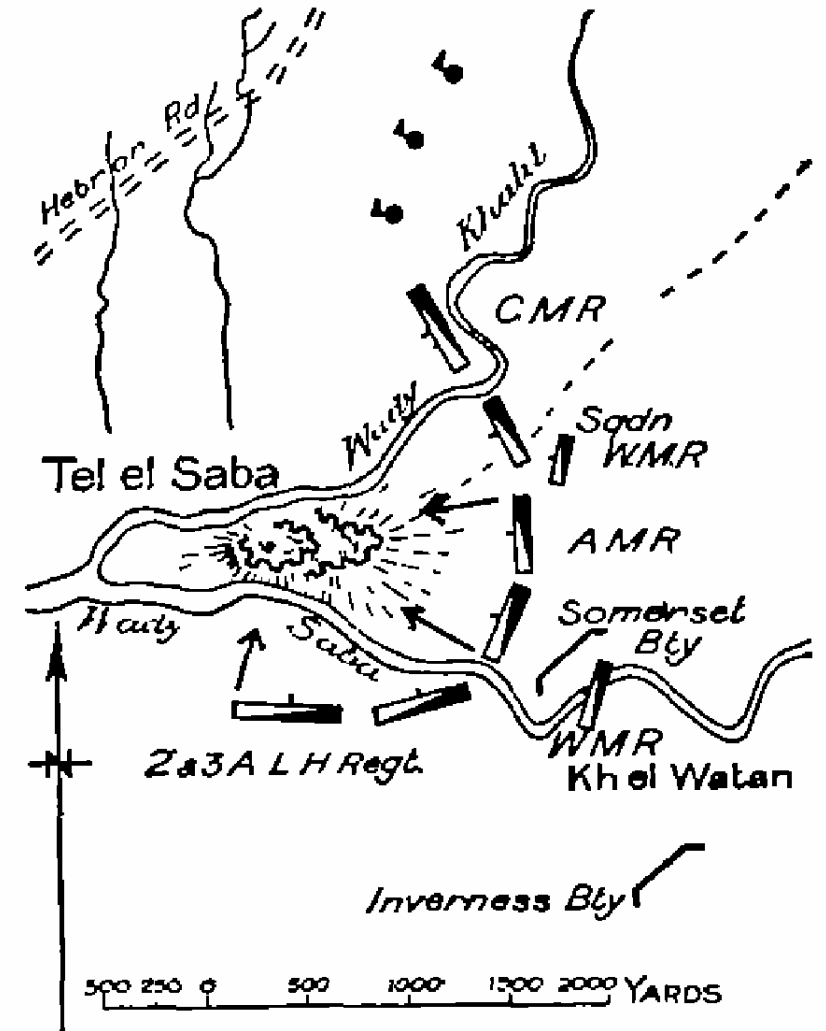
- At 12.15 Chetwode launched his main attack with four brigades, and the infantry, advancing in beautiful order, speedily carried all their objectives between the Khalasa road and the Wady Saba.
- Soon afterwards troops of the 74th Division captured the last of the defences north of the wady. So dense had been the dust of the barrage, that in places little parties of the British had been able to creep forward, complete the cutting of the barbed-wire by hand, and so ensure a clear dash at the trenches.





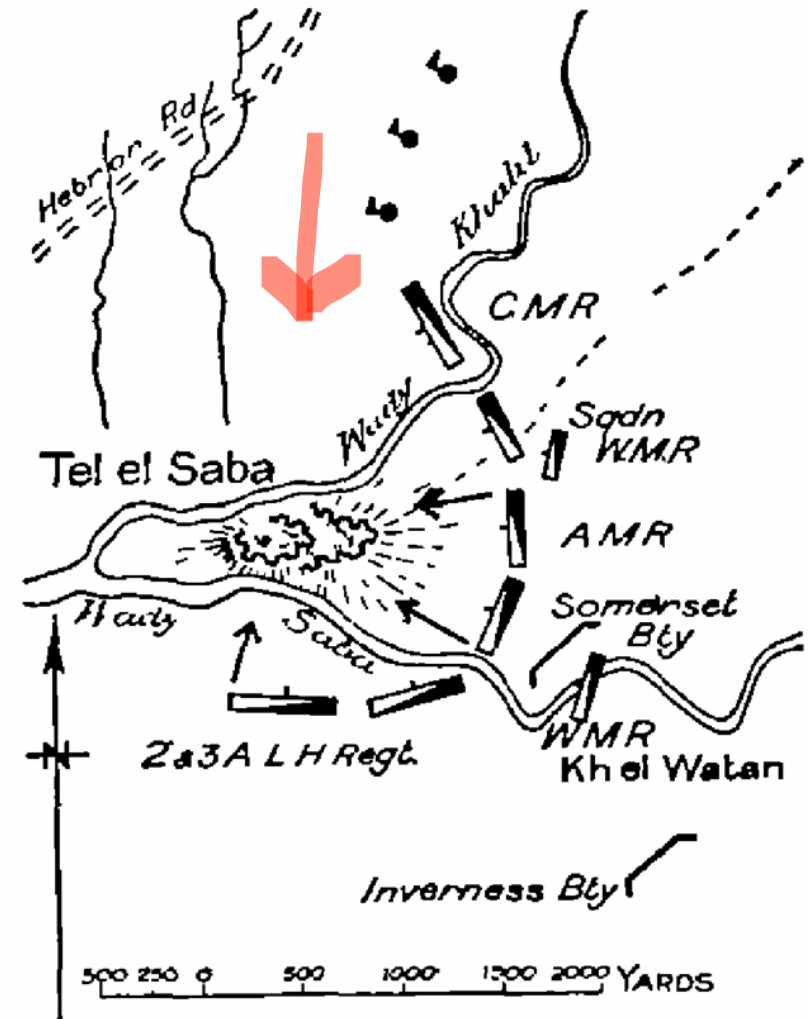
# 31 October

- A section of the machine-gun squadron under Lieutenant Garvie, working forward with the regiment also obtained good targets at close range.
- The prospect that the 3rd ALH Regiment might cross the wady and scale the tel was not bright; but the fire and menace of the Australians were calculated to give full opportunity to the New Zealanders, who were now threatening the position not only from the east but across country which afforded more cover in the north.
- **At 1 p.m.** Cox ordered the 2nd Light Horse Regiment in from the south on the left of the 3rd, and they advanced at the gallop until they reached a zone of heavy fire.
- So rapidly were the galloping horses checked, cleared, and rushed back by the horseholders, and so quickly did the dismounted men resume their advance on foot, that the Turks, under the impression that the regiment had retired on the horses, shelled the galloping animals, while for a time the riflemen were not fired upon.



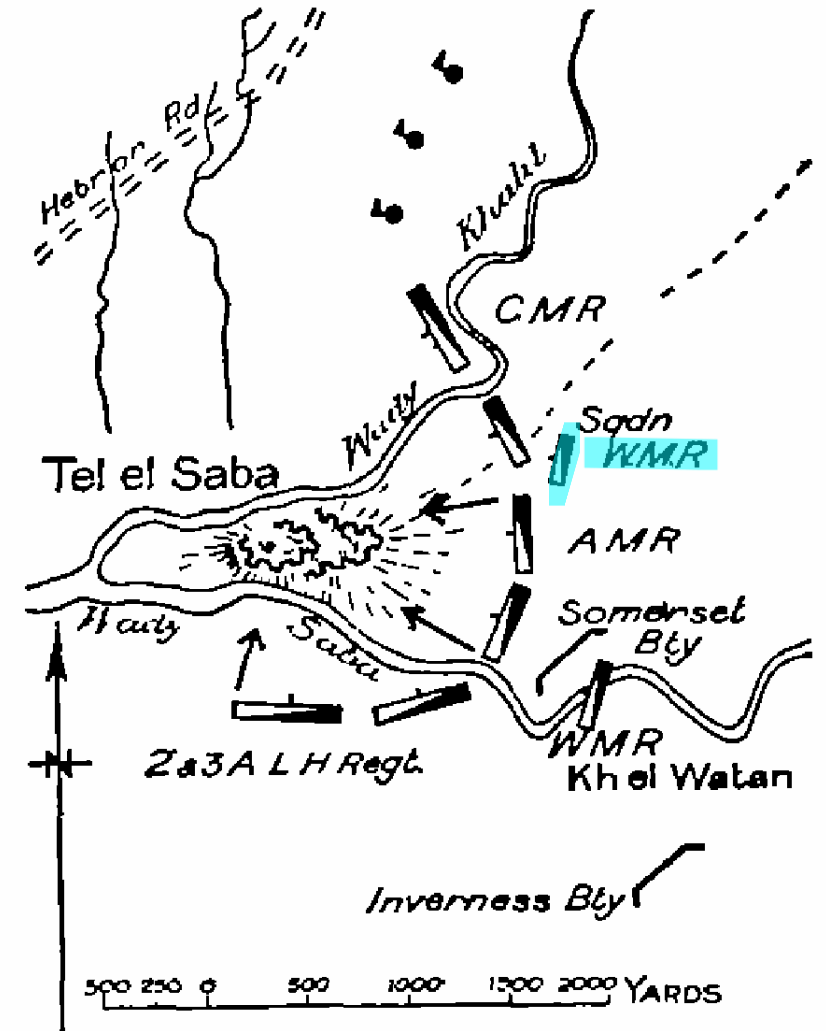
# 31 October

- Early in the afternoon, Chauvel detached the 3rd ALH Brigade and two batteries of artillery from the Australian Mounted Division and sent them round on the right of the New Zealanders to assist in the attack on the tel.
- The appearance of the regiments, trotting in mounted, possibly contributed to the collapse of the garrison, but the movement also weakened the Australian reserves.



# 31 October 1917

- The two advanced squadrons of the 3rd ALH Regiment had by then gained the bank of the wide wady immediately opposite the Turkish position on the tel; the Wellington Regiment had been thrown in on the right of the Aucklanders, and the enemy was now under intense converging fire.
- Every Turk who showed was a target, and the position of the garrison had become precarious.
- At 3 o'clock the New Zealanders rose from the line to which they had crawled and dashed up the slopes with the bayonet.
- Simultaneously Dick's squadron of the 3rd Light Horse Regiment advanced across the wady.
- The Aucklanders were the first to reach the trenches. As they scrambled up the mound, 132 Turks tamely surrendered, while the rest fled towards Beersheba and the north-west.
- Troops of the 2nd and 3rd ALH Regiments at once gave chase and, taking up a position where the Wady Saba joins a wady from the north, caused many casualties among the running foe.
- At about the same time an enemy force moved out from the town and threatened a counter-attack but was speedily driven off by the Australians.



# 31 October 1917

- At 3.30 orders were issued for the final phase of the struggle, the occupation of Beersheba.
- The 3rd Light Horse Brigade was to strike for a line between the Hills 970 and 1020 north of the town, while Cox's 1st Brigade, moving on the left of the 3rd, was to take as its objective a line from the mosque in the town to Hill 970.
- The enemy, although driven off Tel el Saba, was strong south of the town, and still stronger in the hills immediately north of it.
- The country ahead of the 1st and 3rd Brigades was rough and difficult, and progress must be slow and there remained only a few hours of daylight.
- Chetwode's infantry divisions could not be moved on the town because of the absence of water-supplies, and because a further advance would disorganise the next stage in the operations, when they were to march north-west on Sheria and Hareira.



# 31 October 1917

- The moment had come for the employment of the Australian Mounted Division and the 7th Mounted Brigade, which had filled the gap between Chetwode's infantry and Desert Mounted Corps.
- “ If there was one lesson more than another I had learned at Magdhaba and Rafa,” Chauvel remarked some time afterwards, “it was patience, and not to expect things to happen too quickly.
- At Beersheba, although progress was slow, there was never that deadly pause which is so disconcerting to a commander.”

# 31 October 1917

- About 3 o'clock Hodgson (AMD) Grant of the 4th ALH Brigade and FitzGerald of the 5th Mounted (Yeomanry) Brigade, were at Chauvel's headquarters.
- Had Tel el Saba fallen earlier a dismounted attack would doubtless have been decided upon. But with the day on the wane, it was now neck or nothing.
- There was a brief but tense discussion, in which FitzGerald and Grant pleaded for the galloping attack which was clearly in Chauvel's mind.
- FitzGerald's yeomanry had their swords and were close behind Chauvel's headquarters: Grant's Australians had only their rifles and bayonets, but they were nearer Beersheba.
- After a moment's thought, Chauvel gave the lead to the light horsemen. "Put Grant straight at it," was his terse command to Hodgson; and Grant, swinging on to his horse, galloped away to prepare and assemble his regiments.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

B00754

Brigadier General Grant of the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade

# 31 October 1917

- Early in the afternoon, as Tel el Saba continued to resist, Chauvel was asked from General Headquarters if he could water in the Wady Malah, in the event of the supplies at Beersheba not becoming available.
- Replying literally to the inquiry, he said: “ Water situation in Wady Malah is not hopeful, and if Commander-in-Chief approves, it is proposed to send back all troops which have not watered to Bir Arara and Wady el Imshash, if Beersheba is not in our possession by nightfall.”
- When this telegram reached GHQ, Allenby (photo) was away with Chetwode and it was repeated to him.
- Allenby had no knowledge of the original inquiry which Chauvel was answering and interpreted the statement as implying a contemplated withdrawal.
- “ The Chief orders you,” Chauvel was advised, “ to capture Beersheba to-day, in order to secure water and take prisoners.”
- This peremptory message became known to the whole army and it was generally believed, outside Desert Mounted Corps, that Allenby’s intervention was directly responsible for the great light horse charge.
- But Grant’s regiments had their orders for mounted action and were making ready for the charge before Allenby’s telegram reached Chauvel .
- Relative timing from the Official History but message times not quoted.



# 1917

- At 2.30 p.m. two enemy machines flew very low over the 8th ALH Regiment, who had just received orders to report to Chauvel's headquarters, and were in close formation.
- The Germans, using both bombs and machine-guns, quickly caused many casualties.
- Lt-Col Maygar, V.C., and his grey horse were both severely hit by a bomb, and the animal bolted into the darkness. The regiment never saw their loved and gallant leader again.
- Many troopers dashed off in pursuit, but, when the horse was found covered in blood, Maygar was missing.
- He was picked up during the night by other troops but he died on the following day at Karm.
- Maygar's death was deeply lamented not only by his fighting regiment, but by the whole light horse and New Zealand forces. The fearlessness and devotion which had won him the Victoria Cross in South Africa had been followed by fine work upon Gallipoli; and at Bir el Abd and in the bloody day of April 19th, he had in every crisis stirred the spirit of his regiment by his example in the firing line.
- Portrait of Lt Col Leslie C Maygar VC DSO VD, Commanding Officer of the 8th Light Horse Regiment. Lt Col Maygar died of wounds during the battle of Beersheba on 1 November 1917.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A04436



# 31 October 1917

- At 3 o'clock Grant's regiments, as a precaution against bombing, had been waiting scattered over a wide area in single troops; it was therefore nearly 4.30 before Bouchier and Cameron drew up their men behind a ridge about a mile north of Hill 1280.
- The way to Beersheba lay down a long, slight slope broken occasionally by tracks cut by heavy rains, but bare of growth or other cover.
- Somewhere between them and the town lay a system of enemy trenches. Grant knew from air photographs that these trenches were protected by neither barbed wire nor pits; but they were cleverly masked and could not be definitely located.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment were on the right, the 12th on the left. This was a pure cavalry adventure, but the regiments carried neither sword nor lance, and, in order to give the charge as much moral effect as possible, the men rode with their bayonets in their hands.

Pattern 1907 Bayonet blade 17 inches long.

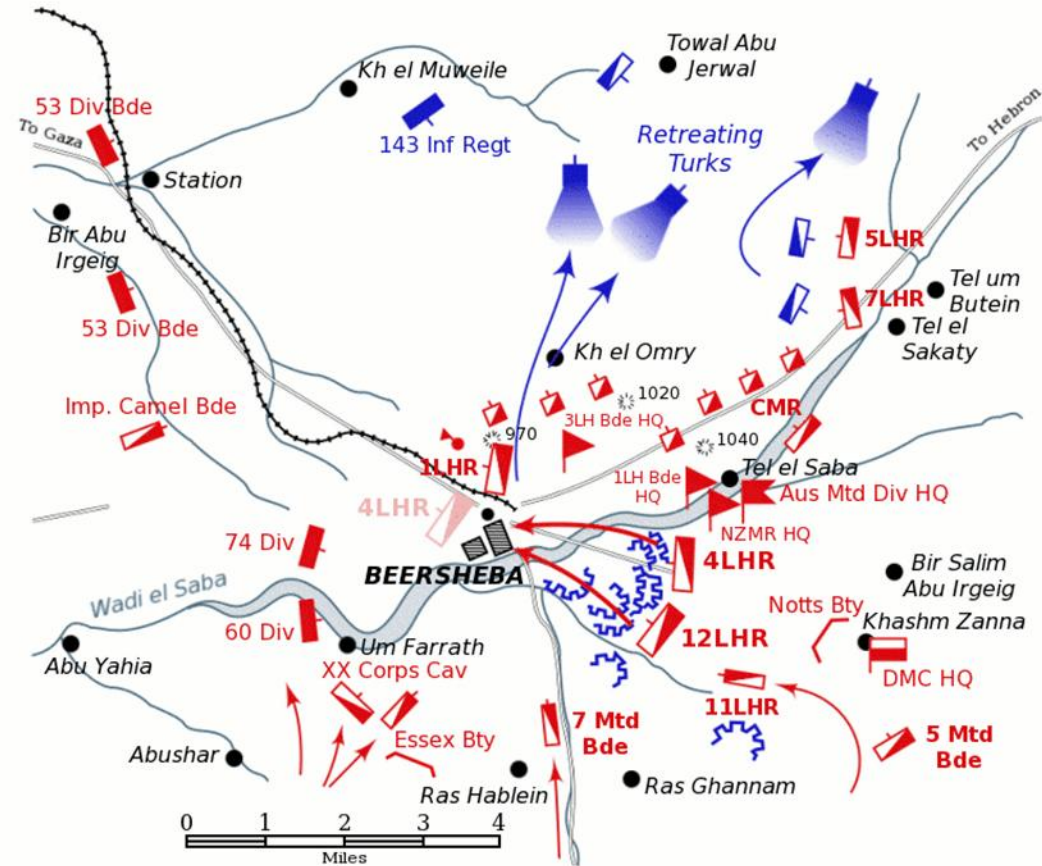


Pattern 1907 bayonet fitted to SMLE rifle.



# 31 October 1917

- Each regiment formed up on a squadron frontage in three lines from 300 to 500 yards apart.
- They knew that the whole Gaza-Beersheba line was to be broken; they knew Beersheba must be captured on this first day.
- At 4.30 the two regiments moved off at the trot, deploying at once until there was a space of five yards between the horsemen. Surprise and speed were their one chance, and almost at once the pace was quickened to a gallop.
- Regimental headquarters and the machine-guns rode with the reserve squadron. The 11th Regiment followed at the trot, and then came FitzGerald's 5th Mounted Brigade, while away on the left the 7th Mounted Brigade advanced briskly along the Khalasa road.



# 31 October 1917

- The Turks were quick to observe the movement and opened fire with shrapnel on the Regiments immediately they deployed. But the range was long, the target scattered and fleeting, and the casualties trifling.
- After going nearly two miles, hot machine-gun fire was directed against the leading squadrons from the direction of Hill 1180 on the left but the vigilant officers of the Essex Battery detected the machine-guns as soon as they began to shoot, got the range at once, and put them out of action with the first few shells.
- The front line were now within range of the Turkish riflemen directly in their track, and these, after an erratic opening, settled down to sustained rapid fire. Many horses in the leading line were hit and dropped, but there was no check to the charge. The enemy fire served only to speed the gallop.
- These Australian countrymen had never in their lives ridden a race like this; and all ranks drove in their spurs and charged on Beersheba.



A photograph that has been described as one of the charge of the 4th Light Horse at Beersheba, allegedly taken by a Turk whose camera was later captured (AWM)



# 31 October 1917

- The fire from the trenches came chiefly from the 4<sup>th</sup>'s front, and they charged straight at it.
- As they came within half-a-mile of the earthworks, which were now clearly in view, the casualties among the horsemen almost entirely ceased, despite an increase in the firing.
- Over the last few hundred yards they galloped untouched.
- The Turks surprised and bewildered at the sheer audacity of the charge, had failed to change the sights on their rifles, and their fire was passing harmlessly overhead.
- The first trench, a shallow, unfinished one, held by only a few riflemen, was taken by the rushing horsemen in their stride.
- Close behind them was the main line, a trench in places ten feet deep and four feet wide, thickly lined by Turks.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05380.001

A hand-coloured print of the famous photograph ...



# 31 October 1917

- As the 4th galloped at this obstacle several horses and men were shot, but the excited line pressed on, jumped the trench and, reining up amidst a nest of tents and dugouts, dismounted.
- The 4<sup>th</sup>'s three leading troops were then joined by a troop from the 12th Regiment.
- As the horses were led at the gallop to cover, the Australians leaped into the main trench which they had just crossed and went to work with the bayonet, at the same time clearing up the enemy in the dugouts.
- Lt Burton (photo) was killed as his horse was jumping the trenches, and Lieutenant Meredith fell immediately after dismounting.
- But the Turks were now so demoralised that they offered only a feeble resistance to the bayonet, and any shooting on their part was wild and comparatively harmless.
- After between thirty and forty had been killed with the steel, the rest threw down their rifles and begged for pity. (Official History)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H05903

# 31 October 1917

- One of the troops in the 4<sup>th</sup>'s second line dismounted to deal with the enemy in the shallow advanced trench.
- The rest pressed on to assist the first line in the main Trench.
- In a few minutes the fight there was over.

# 31 October 1917

- The progress of the 12th was equally brilliant and decisive.
- The Turkish defences were not continuous. Major Hyman (photo), at the head of the leading squadron, charged up to the trenches of a small redoubt and at once dismounted with about a dozen of his men.
- But most of his command passed the redoubt close on their right, and, finding they had ridden through a gap in the defensive lines, galloped straight on for Beersheba, with Captain Robey at their head.
- Hyman with his party engaged the Turks in the trenches with rifle and bayonet; a bitter little fight ensued, and not until the Australians had killed sixty of them did the enemy surrender.
- As the trenches were approached, the second squadron had reduced the distance between the first and second lines.
- Most of the squadron swung away round the redoubt and, led by Capt Davies followed Robey's men at the gallop towards the town.
- Robey rode hard for the western side of Beersheba, aiming to envelop it by the north, while Davies led his men along the main street.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H01633

# 31 October 1917

- Between the time when the advanced Australian squadrons smashed into the trenches and the arrival of Robey and Davies on the outskirts of the town, the Turkish force, hitherto in a state of comparative order, had been thrown into chaos.
- From staff officers to men in the ranks, the one thought was of escape and personal safety.
- There was a wild mob-rush towards the hills north and north-west. Guns were limbered up and moved off as fast as their miserable horses and slow oxen could draw them.
- Most of the engineers, who had demolition charges laid ready at the wells and important buildings, bolted with the crowd, leaving their work undone.
- Resistance to 7th Mounted Brigade, which was approaching along the Khalasa road, and to the 1st and 3rd Light Horse Brigades evaporated.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01208.023

Group portrait of officers of 12th Light Horse Regiment.



# 31 October 1917

- About half-a-mile before the galloping Australians had reached the town they began to overtake fugitive troops and guns.
- Nine guns were overrun, and most of the gunners surrendered on being challenged ; others, who fought, were shot or bayoneted by the light horsemen from their horses.
- The pursuit continued through Beersheba and out on to the hills, until the Australians were checked by fire from enemy riflemen and machine-gunners in position.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P04933.003

"Captured at Beersheba". Members of the 12th Light Horse survey damaged items and captured Turkish equipment from the battle of Beersheba.

# 31 October 1917

- The 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment's two ground scouts, Troopers O'Leary and Healey, galloped some seventy or eighty yards in advance of the squadron, but both rode through untouched.
- O'Leary jumped all the trenches and charged alone right on into Beersheba.
- An hour and a half afterwards he was found by one of the officers of the regiment in a side street, seated on a gun which he had galloped down, with six Turkish gunners and drivers holding his horse by turn.
- He explained that, after taking the gun, he had made the Turks drive it down the side street, so that it should not be claimed as a trophy by any other regiment.
- Photo: Military Medal (Geo V). Impressed around edge with recipient's (Trooper T O'Leary) details. The AWM summary records that "O'Leary did not readily adapt to the discipline of military life. On a number of occasions throughout his service he was charged with offences such as insubordination, drunkenness and being absent without leave.
- Healey, his mate, dismounted on reaching the trenches, and was the first man among the Turks with the bayonet.



# 31 October 1917

- While the fighting was proceeding at the trenches, Armourer Staff-Sergeant A. J. Cox saw a machine-gun being hurriedly dismounted from a mule by its crew.
- In a minute it would have been in action at close range.
- He dashed at the party alone, bluffed them into surrender, and took forty prisoners.
  - He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (left)
  - Other medals are:
    - Queen's South Africa Medal: Trooper A J Cox, Imperial Light Horse
    - Natal Rebellion Medal: Trooper A J Cox, Natal Carbineers
    - 1914-15 Star: Private A J Cox, 4 Light Horse Regiment, AIF
    - British War Medal 1914-20 : Warrant Officer 2 A J Cox, 4 Light Horse Regiment, AIF
    - Victory Medal : Warrant Officer 1 A J Cox, 4 Light Horse Regiment, AIF



# 31 October 1917

- At 5 p.m. as the 9<sup>th</sup> regiment was advancing mounted around Tel el Saba an enemy aeroplane swooped down and dropped bombs from a height of about 800 feet.
- Both the 9th and the machine-gun squadron suffered severely with thirteen killed and twenty wounded, while thirty-two horses were killed and twenty-six wounded.
- Swinging round, the same airman then inflicted losses on the New Zealanders.
- All day the German airmen were bold and effective in their bombing.
- Both Chauvel's and Chaytor's headquarters were severely punished and also came under a good deal of shell-fire.



# 31 October 1917

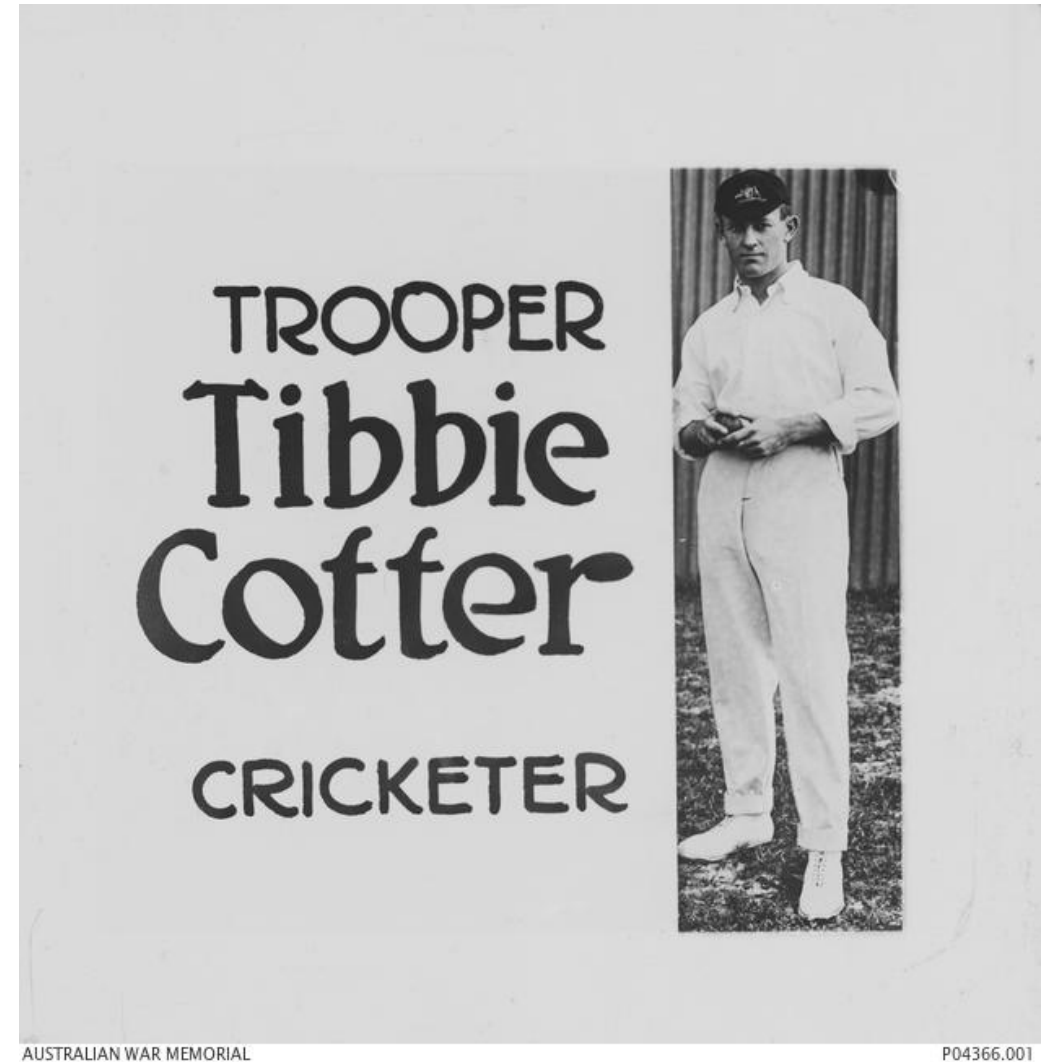
- Soon after nightfall all the prisoners had been collected.
- General Grant with his staff arrived at about 11 p.m.
- A systematic search was made for the wells, and the horses, many of which had been without a drink for thirty hours, were relieved as fast as water could be raised.
- For hours the wires along the whole front repeated the news of the fall of the town.
- The news was the more welcome because the whole army realised how close Allenby had been to an initial failure which might have baulked his whole grand operation.

# 31 October 1917

- The two regiments took thirty eight officers and 700 other ranks prisoner and captured nine field- guns, three machine-guns, a large number of transport vehicles, and much other material.
- A German officer among the prisoners said that the Turkish commander and his staff had fled about ten minutes before the Australians entered the town.
- The light horse casualties in the charge were astonishingly light.
- The 4th Regiment had eleven killed and seventeen wounded; the 12th had twenty killed and nineteen wounded.
- Nearly all the casualties occurred at the trenches.
- The mounted stretcher-bearers rode forward, as they always did, with the advanced light horse lines, and worked coolly in the midst of the dismounted fight round the earthworks. While so engaged Private A. Cotter, the famous Sydney fast bowler, was shot dead by a Turk at close range, at the second Gaza engagement he had been singled out for fine work under heavy fire. He behaved in action as a man without fear.

# 31 October 1917

- Albert Tibbie Cotter was playing for New South Wales by the age of 18.
- When he was 20 years old he was selected to bowl for Australia.
- In a nine-year international career he played in 21 Tests, taking 89 wickets for an average of 28.64 runs.
- Cotter joined the AIF in April 1915, aged 31.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P04366.001

# 31 October 1917

- Before Beersheba all, or nearly all, the British cavalry leaders had a deep respect for the Turks in position.
- Here and there an officer-and fortunately Cameron of the 12th Light Horse Regiment was one of these-believed that, given good ground and plenty of pace, the Turks could be safely galloped in any minor position.
- Cameron had seen Boers in sangars successfully rushed by mounted riflemen in the South African War and had frequently urged his belief upon Grant.
- The Beersheba charge was for days almost the sole topic of conversation in the camps and messes of Allenby's army, and the general verdict was that Grant's adventure was something more than a desperate expedient; and everywhere, and especially among the yeomanry, there was a resolution to lose no opportunity of following the example of the 4th Brigade.
- Photo: ROMANI AREA. 1916-11. GROUP PORTRAIT OF MEMBERS OF THE 5TH AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT. LEFT TO RIGHT MIDDLE ROW: LT CYRIL ERNEST SCOTT, LIEUTENANT COLONEL (LT COL) LACHLAN CHISHOLM WILSON, LT COL DONALD CHARLES CAMERON, MAJOR ARCHDALE GEORGE BOLINGBROKE;



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01541.003



# 1 November 1917

- During the night all available engineer parties of the Mounted Divisions were sent into Beersheba to seek out the wells and develop the flow.
- But, although the town contained many wells, the supply was far short of DMC necessities.
- Thorough as were the Commander-in-Chief's preparations, the great flank movement might still have failed, had it not been for the thunderstorms of October 25th, which left useful pools of water over a wide area about Beersheba.
- These pools, although rapidly evaporating, watered the horses of a number of brigades on October 31st and the days which followed.



*The Imperial Camel Corps Brigade outside Beersheba, **1 November 1917.***

# 1 November 1917

- Early on the morning of **November 1st** two German pilots again bombed and machine-gunned the 8th Light Horse Regiment.
- This time, however, the troops were dismounted, and one of the airmen was hit by rifle-fire and crashed in the hills to the west.

# 2 November 1917

- The two subsequent drafts included much more substantial amendments:
- the first in a late August draft by Lord Milner which reduced the geographic scope from all of Palestine to "in Palestine", and
- the second from Milner and Amery in early October, which added the two "safeguard clauses".

Foreign Office,  
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "A. J. Balfour". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Above the main signature, there is a smaller, less legible handwritten mark that appears to be "Y. in".

# 3 – 8 November 1917

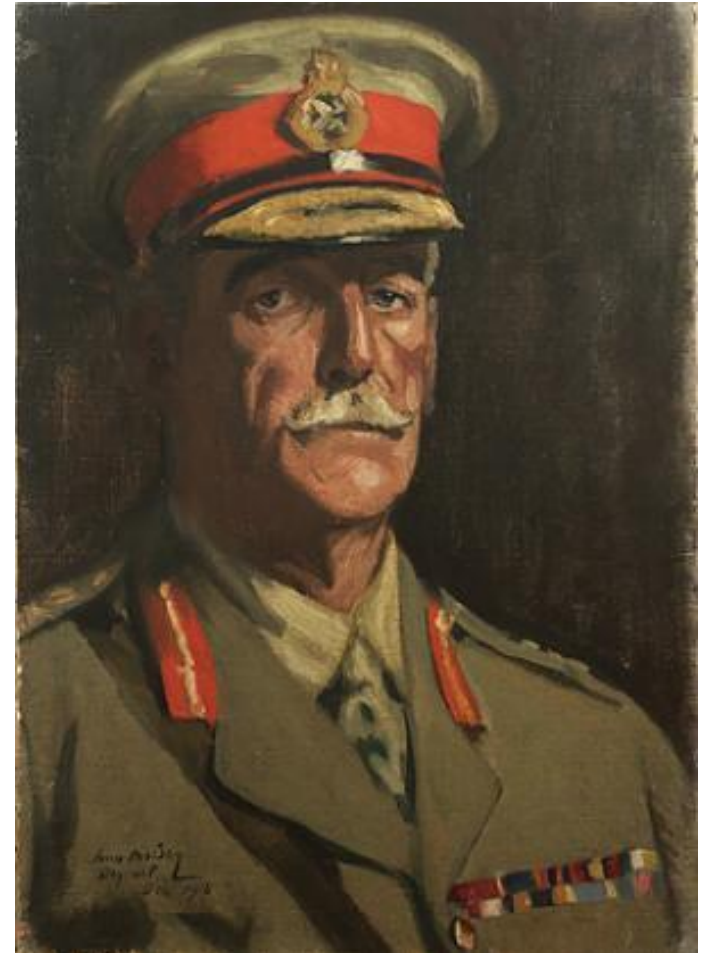
- Following the October Revolution the Bolsheviks took control of the garrisons and the Petrograd Soviet between November 3 and November 8.
- The Winter Palace, the last refuge of the Provisional Government, defended by a few cadets and women soldiers, surrendered after a few hours: restaurants, theaters and streetcars operated as usual.
- The All-Russian Congress of Soviets held its first session on November 8 and had just enough time to endorse the first two decrees dictated by Lenin (photo): the Decree on Land, which recognized peasant ownership of land, and the Decree on Peace, which "calls on all peoples and governments to open negotiations for a just democratic peace without delay".
- The Bolsheviks at this stage had no control over the Russian Army which had largely collapsed.





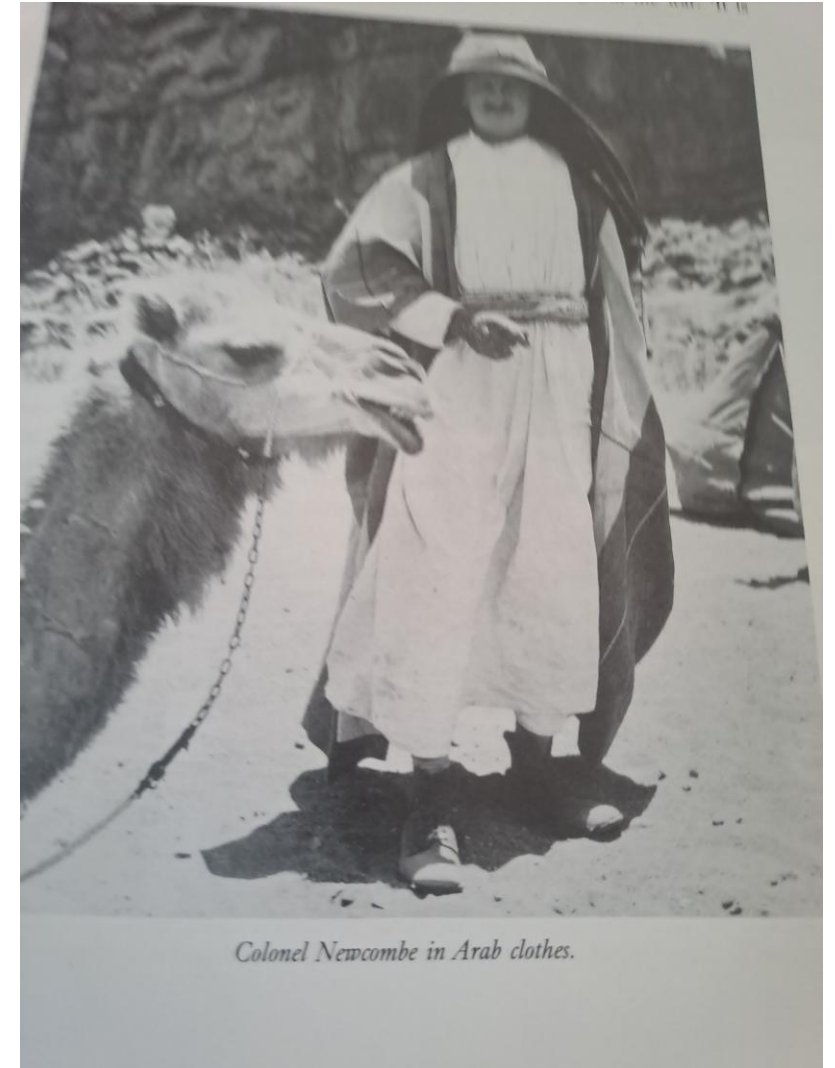
# 2 November 1917

- Bulfin's XXI Corps attacked the enemy's extreme right flank between Gaza and the sea in the dark at 3 a.m. on November 2nd.
- Between the beach and the impenetrable cactus hedges which guarded the face of the town, the enemy had laboriously established a system of trenches about 4,000 yards long reinforced by sandbags, thousands of palm-trees and the beams of most of the houses in Gaza.
- The defences were deep, line succeeding line. Barbed-wire, so sparingly used on the Beersheba flank, was applied here in profusion; the soft sand made a cushion for British shells, and only occasional direct hits gave concern to the defenders.
- No-Man's Land was crossed from end to end by the 54th Division supported by six tanks, and the front-line trench was completely captured. Very bitter fighting attended the capture of the supports. Heavy counter-attacks were decisively repulsed, and the British, after a dash of 3,000 yards on a 5,000-yard front, consolidated their new position.



# 3 November 1917

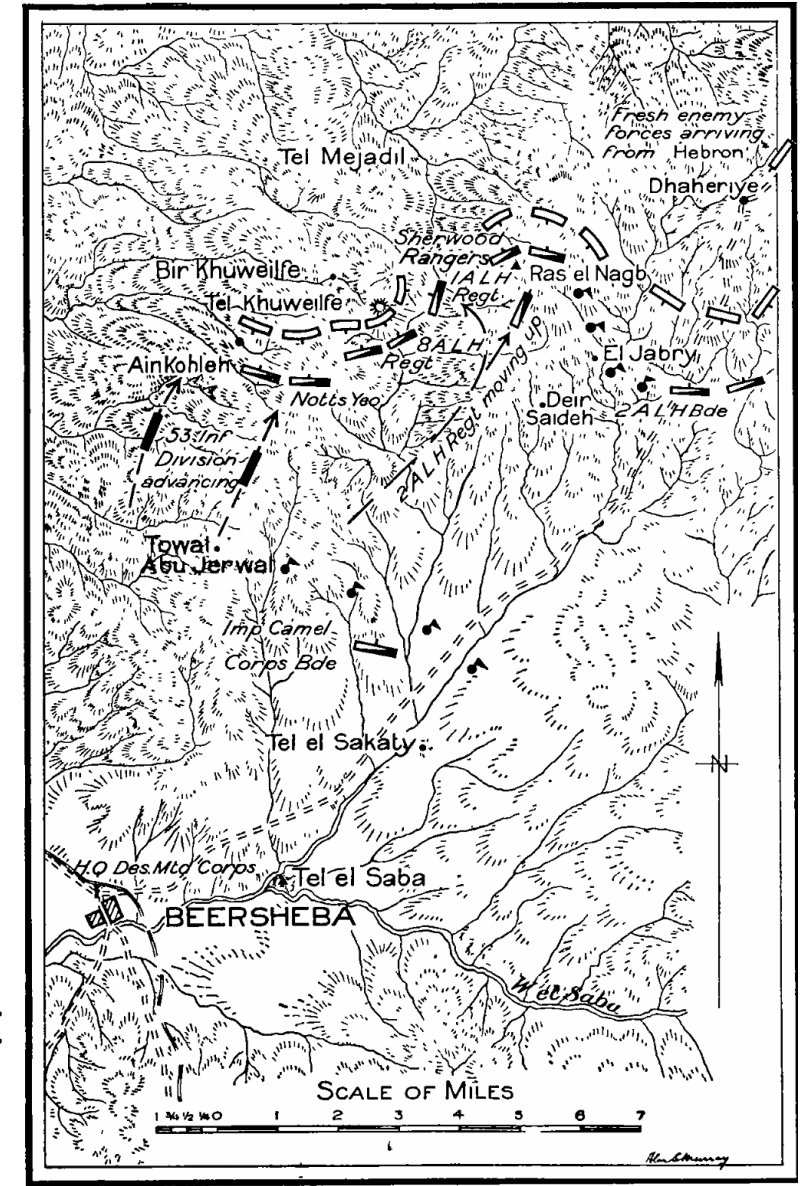
- Colonel Newcombe's Arab detachment had marched from Asluj some time before Desert Mounted Corps, had made a wide detour by the east, established his headquarters at Yutta, and taken up a position on high ground overlooking the road between Dhaheriye and Hebron.
- His force was small, and carried only three days' rations, but was stiffened by a few British machine and Lewis gunners and was well supplied with ammunition.
- His mission was merely to harass the Turks retiring from Beersheba; as the road was already cut further south, at Sakati, he remained for a time in idleness, except for the capture of some motor-transport.
- The Turks apparently took it for a strong advance-guard of Chauvel's mounted troops and marched a force of no less than six battalions against it, three from Hebron and three from Sheria.
- Newcombe's men, surrounded by overwhelming numbers, resisted bravely as long as their ammunition lasted, but were reduced by severe losses, and finally made prisoners two or three days after the fall of Beersheba.



*Colonel Newcombe in Arab clothes.*

## 2 – 3 November 1917

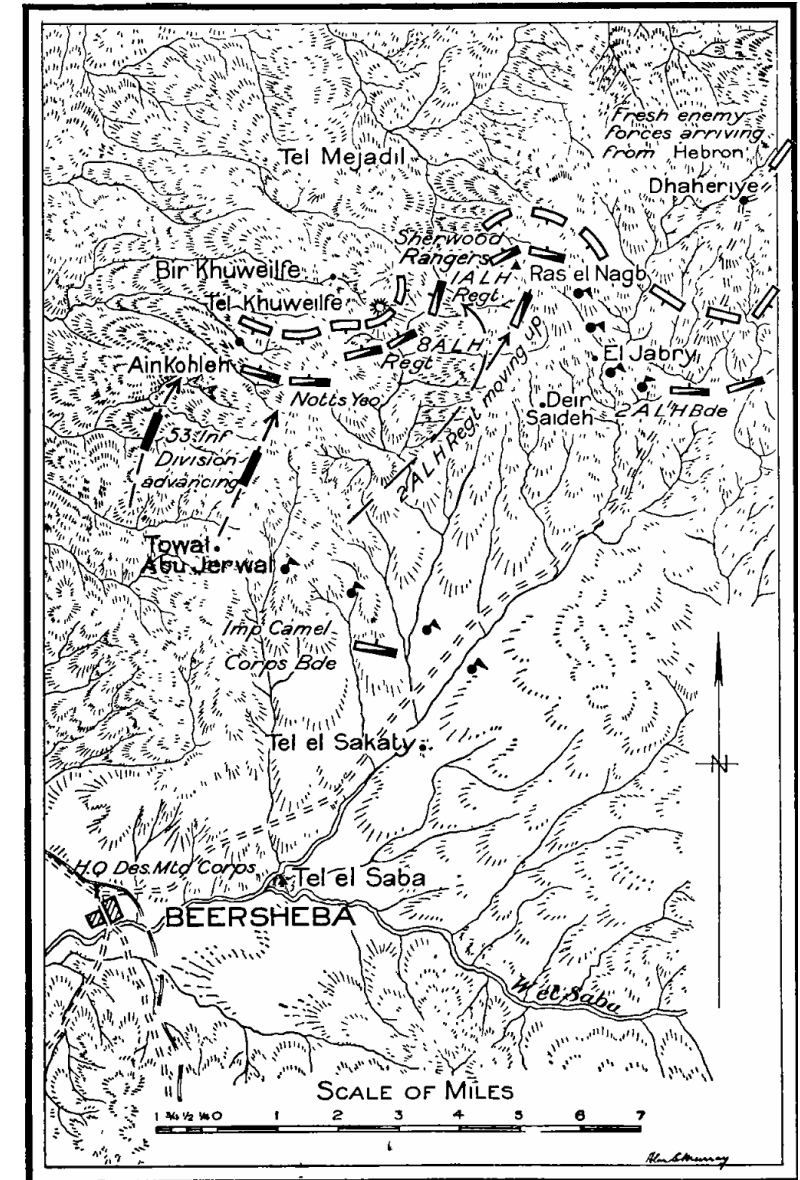
- After Beersheba the Turks formed a strong point on the Tel Khuweilfe, a dominating, bare, flat-topped hill, ten miles north of Beersheba and reinforced it with troops withdrawn from the coast and brought down from Hebron.
- On **2 November** the 8th Mounted Brigade, with the 8th Light Horse under command advanced against the tel but could not get forward.
- During the night of the 2nd, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division and the 1st ALH Brigade were ordered forward to ensure the speedy reduction of the opposition.
- The day's fighting revealed considerable and increasing enemy strength, and it was clear that only careful preparation and persistent and heavy fighting would clear the Turks from the position.



KHUWEILFE, 2ND-3RD NOVEMBER, 1917.

## 2 – 3 November 1917

- Lack of water was still a formidable obstacle, and the absence of supplies nearer than Beersheba meant that each brigade, after a day's action, had to be withdrawn eleven miles to water, and the fighting and marching and loss of sleep were rapidly reducing the strength of the troops.
- During two days and a night, in which they had been constantly fighting or riding, the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment had existed on one bottle of water and practically no rations. Many men drank to excess at the wells, and the result was a severe outbreak of diarrhea.
- Ryrie's brigade (2ALH) was vainly endeavouring to bear in from the east across the Hebron road on the extreme flank. The opposing enemy force was small ; but the country was extremely rough, and the Turks, securely posted on the higher ground, had all the best of the struggle.
- The mounted brigades (including the Camel Brigade) on the Ras el Nagb sector at Khuweilfe were now under orders to hold the line, while the 53rd Division made a decisive assault from the south-west.

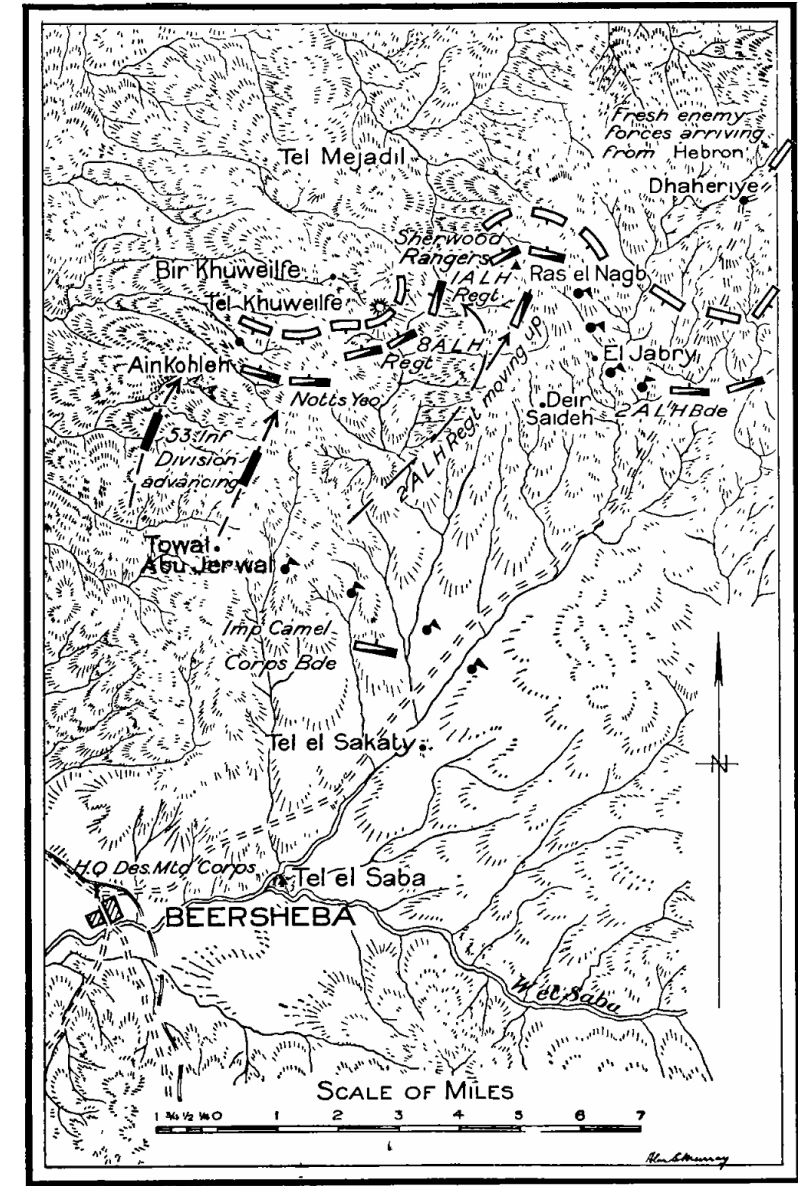


KHUWEILFE, 2ND-3RD NOVEMBER, 1917.



# 6 – 8 November 1917

- On the **morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>** the 53rd Division was to attack the Tel in the dark over mountainous country. The 3rd Battalion (Australian) of the Camel Brigade, under Lieutenant-Colonel de Lancey Forth, was to follow in rear of its right.
- Some units were late starting and some advanced on the wrong line and the advance was stuck and suffering heavy casualties all the 6<sup>th</sup> and most of the 7<sup>th</sup>.
- About 3 o'clock on the 7<sup>th</sup> the attack received more effective artillery support, and the situation was immediately eased. Towards evening a general advance was ordered. All troops had been marching and fighting without a moment's respite for more than thirty-six hours, but still the attack was made with great spirit.
- Lieutenant E. W. Dixon led a force of the Camels against Tel Khuweilfe. The artillery effectively co-operated, the men rushed up the slopes with bayonets and hand-grenades, and after a brief struggle the Turks fled.
- At daylight on the morning of the **8<sup>th</sup>** it was found that the Turks, whose front had been badly broken towards Sheria, had evacuated the whole Khuweilfe position.

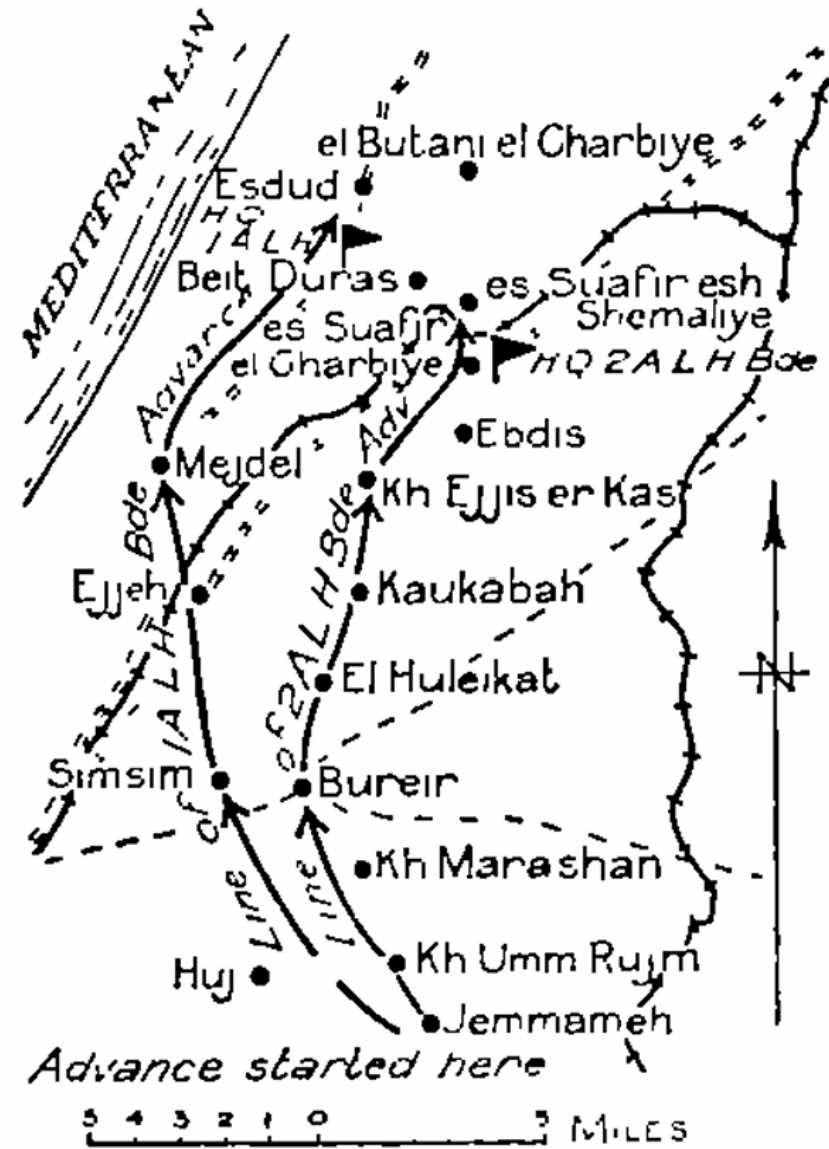


KHUWEILFE, 2ND-3RD NOVEMBER, 1917.



# 9 November 1917

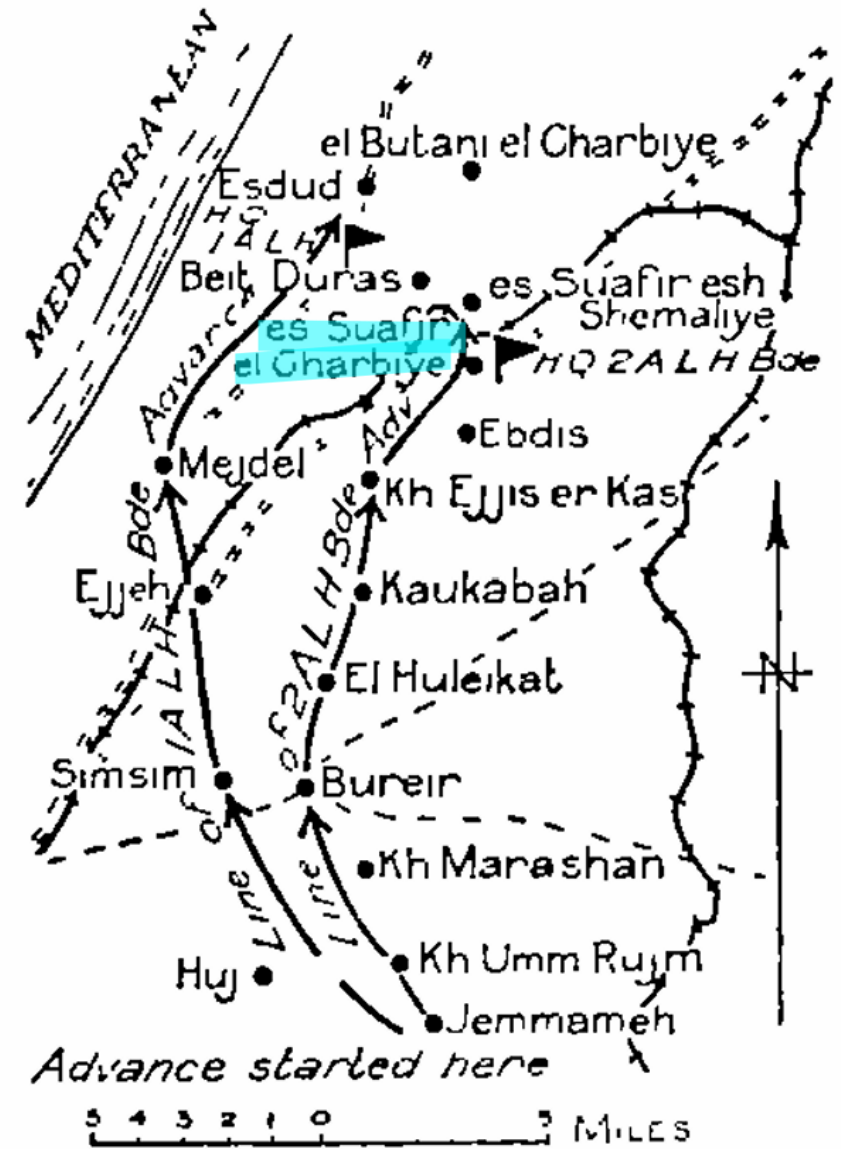
- The Anzac Division moved forward at 6 o'clock on the morning of the 9th.
- The Turks had destroyed most of the wells at Huj, and the horses of the Australian Mounted Division had to be sent to the already overtaxed supplies at Jemmameh on the night of the 8th. There they waited until the parched Anzacs were satisfied, and not until late in the afternoon of the 9th were they returned to their riders about Huj.
- The Yeomanry Division suffered a similar delay; consequently two of the three mounted divisions were out of action on this day.
- This proved to be the day of the enemy's greatest disorganisation. Again and again the Anzacs encountered large bodies of Turkish stragglers, who offered very little resistance.
- Had the three divisions been available for the pursuit, Allenby's hopes to capture troops and guns on a grand scale would probably have been realised.





# 9 November 1917

- Ryrie, in view of his large haul of prisoners and of the exhaustion of his men and horses, decided at dark to withdraw and concentrate his force near **Es Suafir el Gharbiye**.
- Circumstances necessitated a strong and alert outpost line, and every man who could be spared was put to work to water the horses.
- All the little villages on the flanks and rear were exploited for water, but the wells were from 100 to 250 feet deep. With the exception of an occasional antiquated water-wheel, the only appliance for raising the water was a bucket and a rope, and most of the ropes had been removed by the natives.
- All night the crooked little streets of the mud-built, straw-thatched villages were packed with restless, thirsty horses, and gaunt, dusty, unshaven men, careless of their exhaustion in their desire to relieve their animals. Where ropes were missing they were replaced with telephone wire, and cattle and horses, thus attached to the buckets and walking out in a straight line, hauled the water from depths as great as 200 feet.
- All night, and until late on the following day, the water was raised bucket by bucket, and the work went on until all the parched horses had been relieved.





# 10 November 1917

- Chaytor had ordered a vigorous resumption of the advance.
- Ryrie (photo) replied that he would push on if it were absolutely necessary, but that the effort would mean the loss of the majority of his horses.
- No man on the front knew better than Ryrie when his horses had reached breaking-point; Chaytor at once accepted his opinion, and the brigade passed the day about the wells.
- Having established a line of outposts to the north and north-east, the 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade of the Australian Division also spent nearly the whole day in watering the horses. The wells were from 100 to 300 feet deep; the enemy had destroyed the oil engines ; and again the water had to be hauled up, a bucket at a time, with telephone wire.

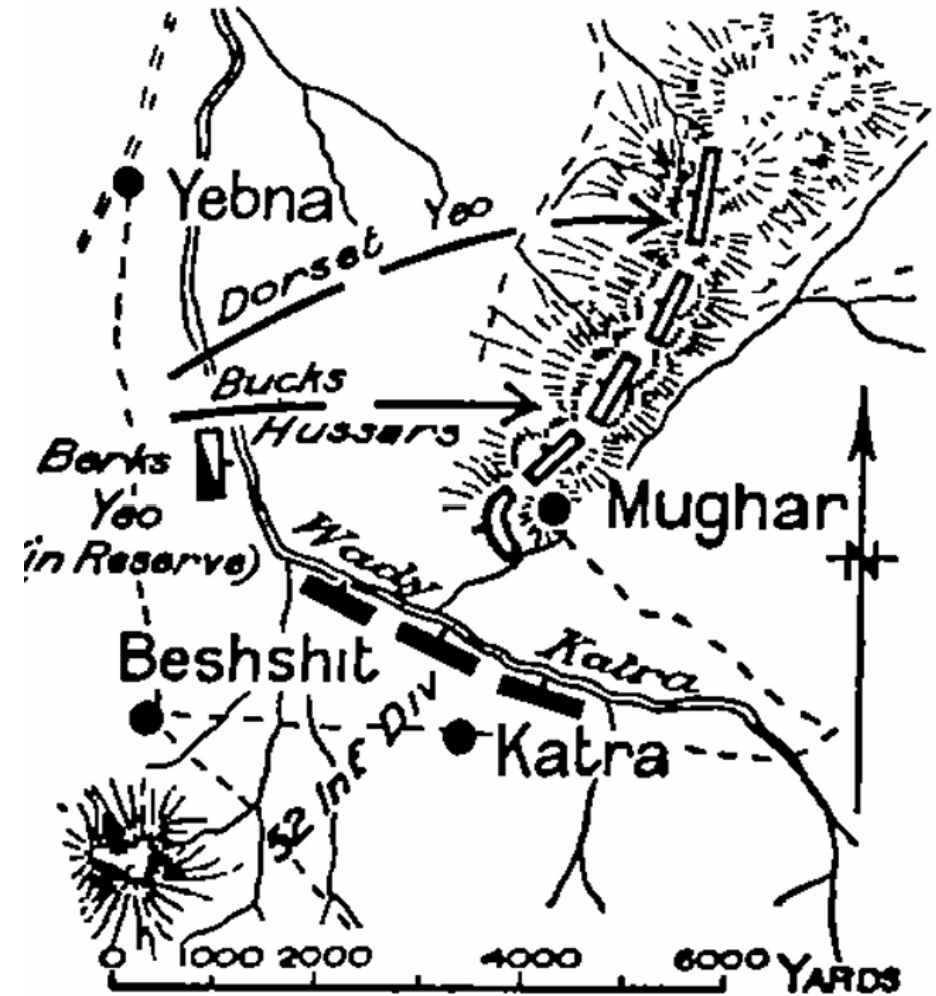


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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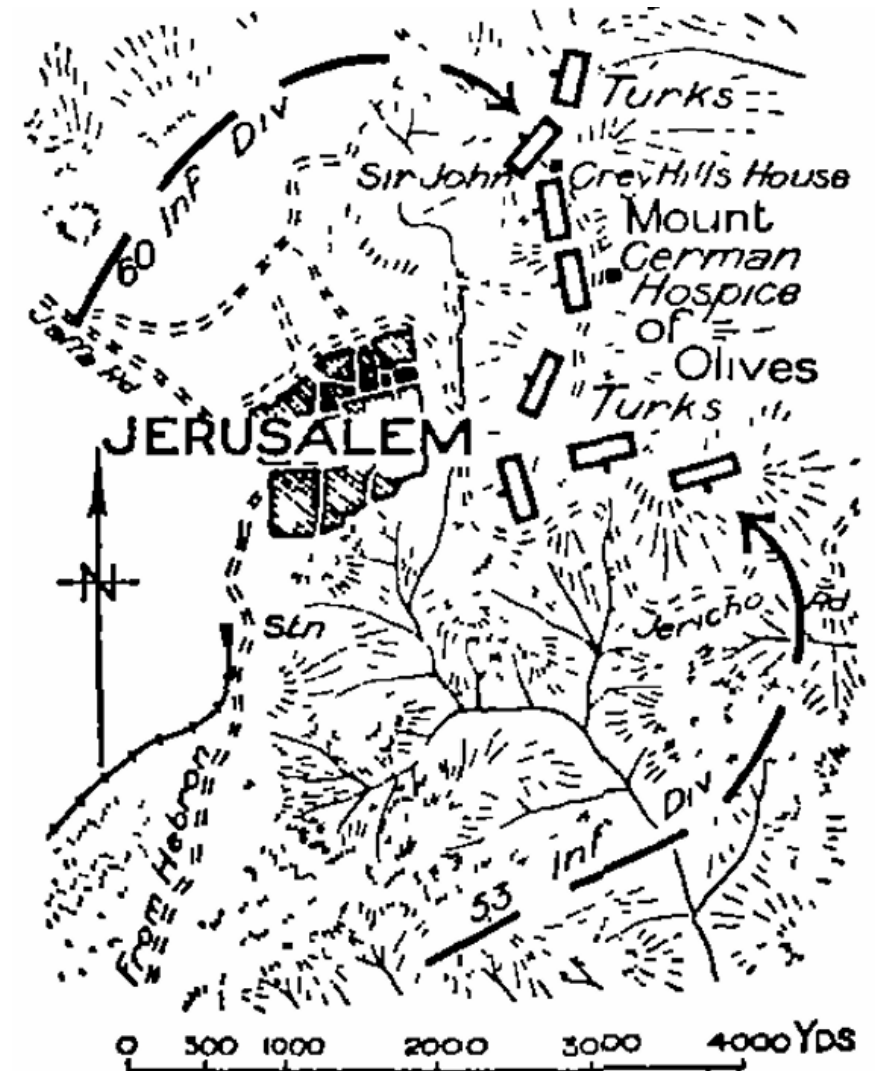
# 11 – 14 November 1917

- The Advance continued led by the 75th and 52nd Infantry Divisions supported very effectively by the sword armed British cavalry of the Yeomanry Division.
- On the morning of November 14th two armoured cars, travelling in advance of the 234th Brigade, seized Junction Station. The enemy's railway communication with Jerusalem was now severed, and the British troops were within easy striking distance of the main road from Jaffa into Judea.
- In all the wars of the ancients, and during the Crusades, chariots and horsemen fought on the rolling plain on the west, and on the level surface of Esdraelon between Galilee and Samaria, while the infantry battled in the rough highlands. So in Allenby's campaign Jerusalem was to fall to the infantrymen.



# 9 December 1917

- General Shea went in with a guard of honour supplied by his own muddy Londoners (60<sup>th</sup> Infantry), and in a brief, plain ceremony formally accepted the surrender from the mayor.
- But if this ceremony was severely simple in itself, the setting in which it took place teemed with significance and suggestion.
- British fighting men had for the first time won Jerusalem; the cradle of Christianity was again in Christian hands; the Jews believed that the city, and all Palestine, was that day secured, not for Christian possession, but for them; the Turks, who had for 400 years blighted the country and exercised tyranny over Christian and Jew alike, were driven out never to return.
- General Shea was greeted by shouting and almost hysterical crowds, more various in race, religion, and speech than are to be found in any other city in the world. They welcomed the little party of Englishmen in a babel of many tongues.
- Official History



# 9 December 1917



- Mingling with the demonstrative Christians and Jews, sullen and calculating, rejoicing as little in the arrival of the British as they had in the occupation of the Turks, were the Arabs who make up so large a part of the population.
- Photo: Australian light horse in Jerusalem during WWI



- The Arabs had greeted the British horsemen with ready cheers but the Jews and their pretty and orderly settlements offered a much fairer prospect.
- The lot of these people during the war had been unfortunate in the extreme. Made up chiefly of immigrants from South Russia, with occasional Jewish families from Roumania, Spain, and even the British Empire and America, they were a simple, God-fearing folk, ill-fitted for physical conflict.
- Since they had come to Palestine under the generous scheme founded and fostered by the Rothschilds and other Jewish millionaires, they had carried on a brave and ceaseless struggle against the thieving Arabs, who, resentful of their coming, and careless of the lax Turkish law, had harassed and pillaged them without scruple.
- Then, after a long struggle, when their increasing numbers and wealth and power were making them safe against the natives, there had come, first the crusade of the Young Turks against all who were not Turks, and after that the war.
- To the timid mind of the Jewish settlers these two calamities spelled ruin, and even extermination. They possessed neither the strength to fight in their defence nor the money to purchase their safety. But they had on their side one factor which was of paramount influence in all the world at that time. They were the foster-children, the special care and pride, of great international Jewish financiers. The Turks might not have cared whether they offended all-powerful Semitic bankers, but Germany and Austria would not be guilty of such a blunder.
- And so, while other non-Turks, and especially the non-Moslems of the Turkish Empire, suffered so sorely at that time, these defenceless Jewish colonies were subjected to no measures of extreme cruelty. . .
- Their houses were safe, and their women were respected. The long arm of the Jewish money-lender was their efficient bulwark.
- Official History

# 16 December 1917

- On **16 December**, the Armistice of Erzincan (Erzincan Cease-fire Agreement) was signed which officially brought the end of hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Russians.
- The Russian Bolshevik Government had been forced to sign the Armistice with the Germans the previous day.



# February 1918

- The British resumed their offensive in Mesopotamia in late February 1918, but this petered out in April after they had to divert troops to Palestine to support the operations there.



# September 1918

- Further advances were temporarily delayed as troops were transferred from Palestine to France in the wake of the German Spring Offensive.
- But in September 1918, Allenby attacked the Turks, who held a defensive line running from Jaffa to the River Jordan.



# 15 September 1918

- On 15 September, a combined force of Serbian, French, and Greek troops attacked the Bulgarian-held trenches in Dobro Pole, at the time part of Serbia, in the Vardar Offensive.
- The assault and the preceding artillery preparation had devastating effects on Bulgarian morale, eventually leading to mass desertions.
- On 18 September, a second Entente formation assaulted the Bulgarian positions in the vicinity of Lake Doiran. The Bulgarians managed to stall the Allied advance on the Doiran sector but the collapse of the front at Dobro Pole forced the Bulgarians to withdraw from Doiran.
- The Allies pursued the German 11th Army and the Bulgarian 1st Army, while pushing deeper into Vardar Macedonia. By 29 September, the Allies had captured the former HQ of Skopje.
- The simultaneous anti-monarchist Radomir Rebellion by retreating mutineers forced Bulgaria to sign the Armistice of Salonica on 29 September and withdraw from the war.
- Tsar Ferdinand I assumed responsibility, abdicating in favor of his son Boris III on 3 October.
- The treaty included the full capitulation of the 11th German Army, bringing the final tally of Bulgarian and German prisoners to 77,000 and granting the Allies 500 artillery pieces.



# 19 September 1918

- On 19 September 1918, following accurate artillery barrages, the infantry broke through at Sharon, pushing the Turks away from the sea.
- Chauvel's Desert Mounted Corps poured through the gap.
- They rode up the coast for 30 miles, taking Haifa, before swinging inland to Megiddo to block the Turkish retreat.
- Waves of British and Australian aircraft repeatedly attacked Turkish forces as they withdrew.



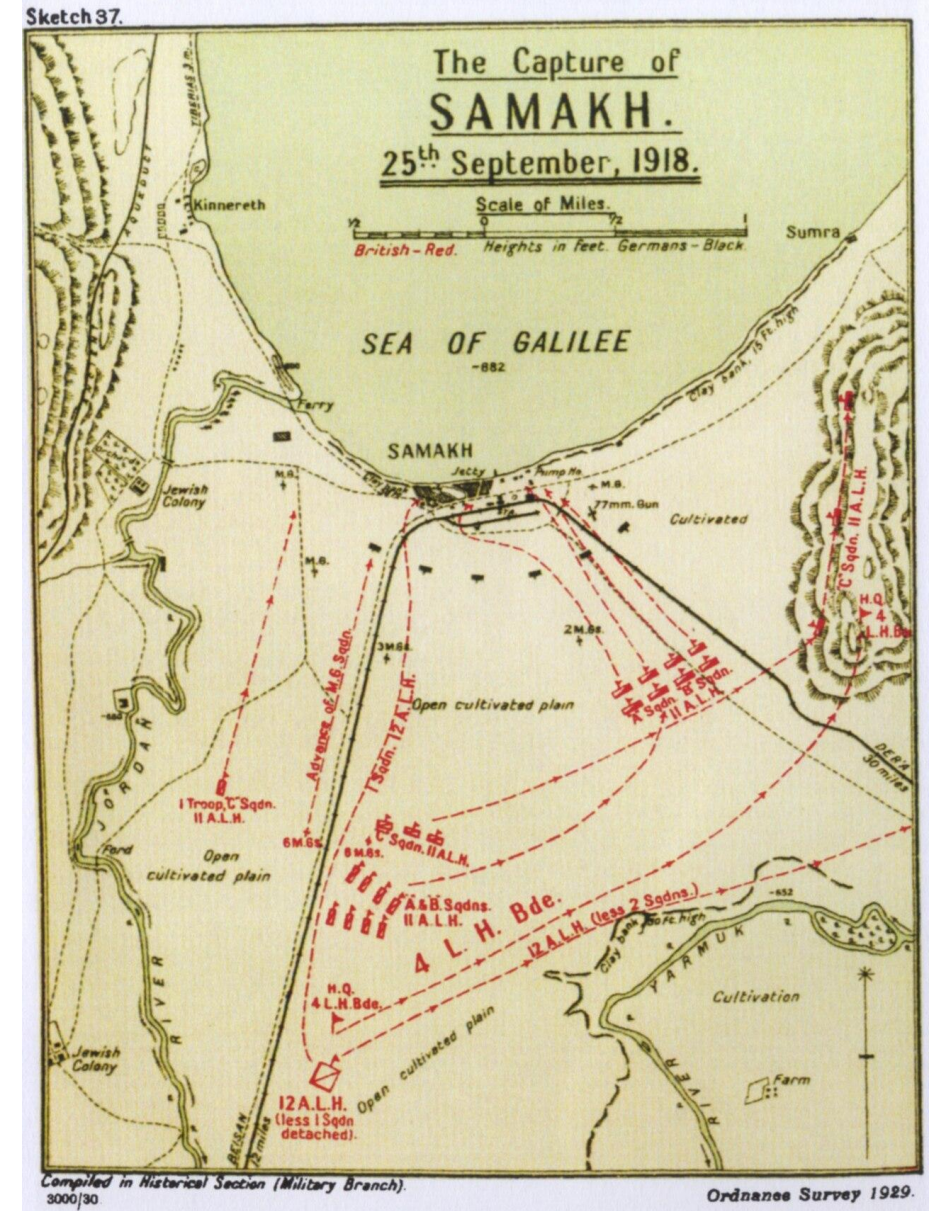
# 24 September 1918

- Chauvel, commander of the Desert Mounted Corps, ordered the capture of the towns of Samakh and Tiberias to complete the strategic and tactical line held by his cavalry across the Esdraelon Plain from Acre north of Haifa on the Mediterranean Sea to Nazareth.
- On 24 September the Australian Mounted Division commanded by Major General Hodgson, was ordered to capture Samakh and the railway bridges over the Yarmuk gorge,



# 25 September 1918

- The 4th Light Horse Brigade, Australian Mounted Division had been deployed guarding supply columns, and prisoners, before being ordered to attack and capture Samakh on the shore of the Sea of Gallilee.
- Samakh, in the centre of a rearguard line stretching from Tiberias through Samakh and on to Deraa was intended to cover the retreat of three Ottoman armies.
- The rearguard was set up to delay the advance of the EEF cavalry after the British Empire infantry victories in the Judean Hills at Tulkarm and Tabsor during the Battle of Sharon.
- The Ottoman and German garrison had been ordered by the commander of the Yildirim Army Group to fight to the last man.





# 25 September 1918

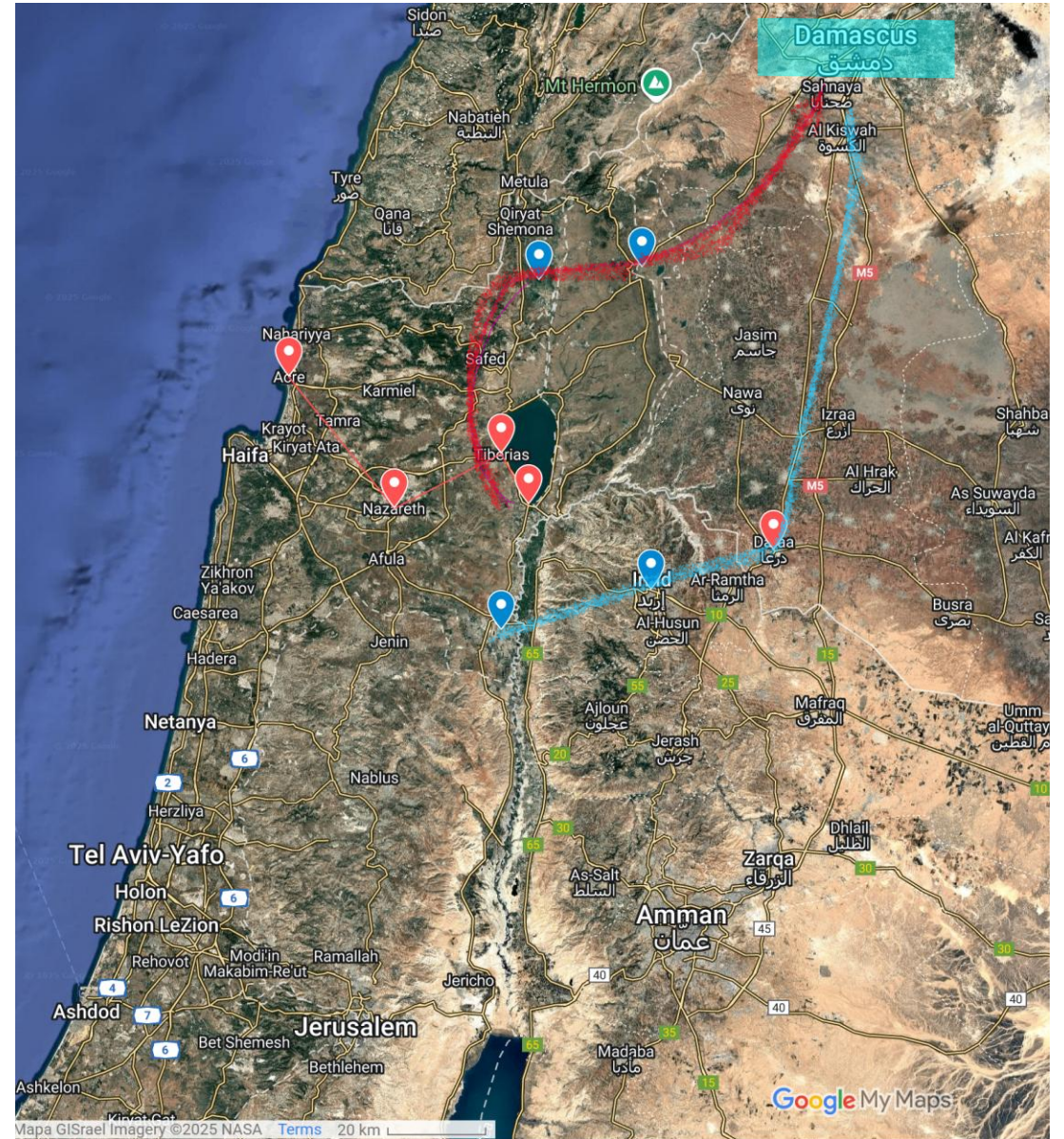
- By dawn on 25 September, when a regiment and two squadrons of the Australian 4th Light Horse Brigade attacked Samakh, the rearguard was strongly entrenched.
- The assault began with a mounted cavalry charge and ended two hours later after fierce fighting with bayonets and swords, from room to room in the railway buildings in the capture of the town.
- This victory, which captured the centre of the rearguard line, opened the way for the cavalry pursuit to Damascus.



Column of prisoners captured at Samakh

# 27 September 1918

- The **Australian Mounted Division** was ordered to advance to Damascus 90 miles away along the west coast of the Sea of Galilee and round its northern end, across the Jordan River and on to Damascus. With the 5th Cavalry Division following.
- **4th Cavalry Division** was ordered to ride north from Beisan and cross the Jordan before advancing eastwards via Irbid to Deraa in the hope of capturing retreating remnants of the Ottoman Fourth Army.
- If they failed to capture the retreating columns they were to pursue them north along the Pilgrims' Road and the Hejaz Railway to Damascus 140 miles (230 km) away.
- Australian aircraft reconnoitred Damascus for the first time on **27 September**, when the railway station was seen to be filled with hundreds of rolling stock. Columns of retreating troops and transport were also seen on the roads heading north towards Deraa.





# 29 September 1918

- On 29 September 1918, the German Supreme Army Command informed Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Imperial Chancellor that the military situation facing Germany was hopeless.
- Ludendorff (photo on right with Hindenburg and the Kaiser) claimed that he could not guarantee that the front would hold for another two hours. Stating that the collapse of Bulgaria meant that troops destined for the Western Front would have to be diverted there, and this had "fundamentally changed the situation in view of the attacks being launched on the Western Front".
- Ludendorff demanded a request be given to the Entente for an immediate ceasefire.



# 2 October 1918

- Historians have disputed which Allied troops were the first into the city. Australian authorities and others concluded that the honour probably went to a patrol of the 4th Australian Light Horse Regiment early on the morning of 1 October. They were followed by the 10th Light Horse Regiment.
- Lieutenant General Chauvel leading march through Damascus by Australian, British, French, Indian and New Zealand units, **2 October 1918**





# 13 October 1918

- The Ottomans suddenly faced having to defend Constantinople against an overland European siege without help from the Bulgarians.
- Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha (photo) visited Berlin and Sofia in September 1918. He came away with the understanding that the war was no longer winnable. With Germany likely seeking a separate peace, the Ottomans would be forced to do so as well.
- Talaat convinced the other members of the ruling party that they must resign, as the Allies would impose far harsher terms if they thought the people who started the war were still in power.
- On 13 October Talaat and the rest of his ministry resigned. Ahmed Izzet Pasha replaced Talaat as Grand Vizier.
- Two days after taking office he sent the captured British General Townshend to the Allies to seek terms on an armistice.



# 23 October 1918

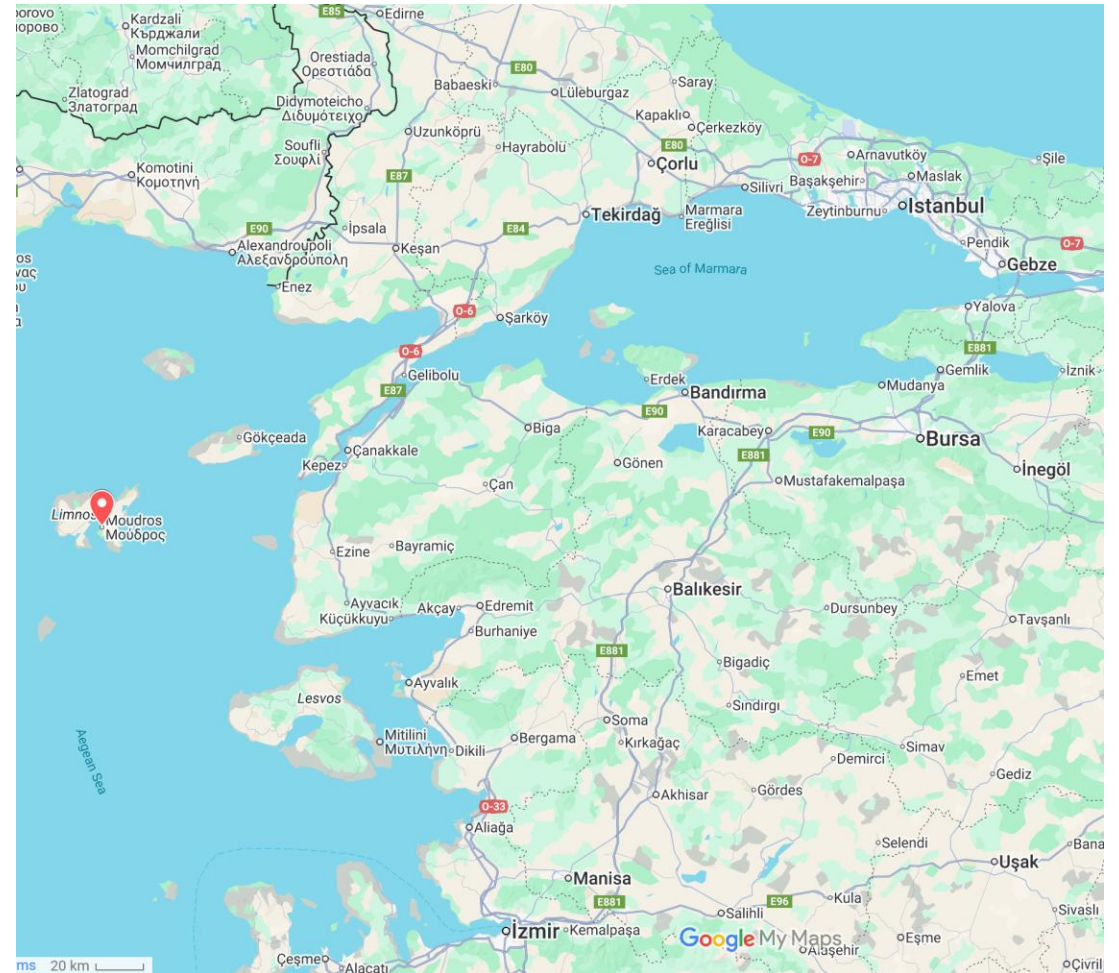
- Ottoman opposition collapsed and Allenby swept on into Syria. Damascus fell on 1 October, and Aleppo fell on 23 October.
- In just over a month, Allenby (photo) had advanced 350 miles and taken 75,000 prisoners for the loss of 5,000 men.





# 30 October 1918

- The Armistice of Mudros was signed at the port of Mudros at the Greek island of Lemnos. This was where so many of the Anzac troops had prepared for the Gallipoli Campaign in April 1915.
- The Armistice was an agreement between Britain, representing the Allies, and the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans surrendered to Britain, including their forces and garrisons in modern-day Iraq, Syria and Yemen.
- Under the terms of the agreement, the Allies would occupy the Dardanelles straits, Bosphorus and the Armenian provinces. They also had the discretion to seize other points from which a threat to the Allies might emanate.
- The Armistice enacted the demobilisation of the Ottoman Army and made Ottoman infrastructure available to the Allies.



- Thanks for your attention.
- That's that for 2025.