

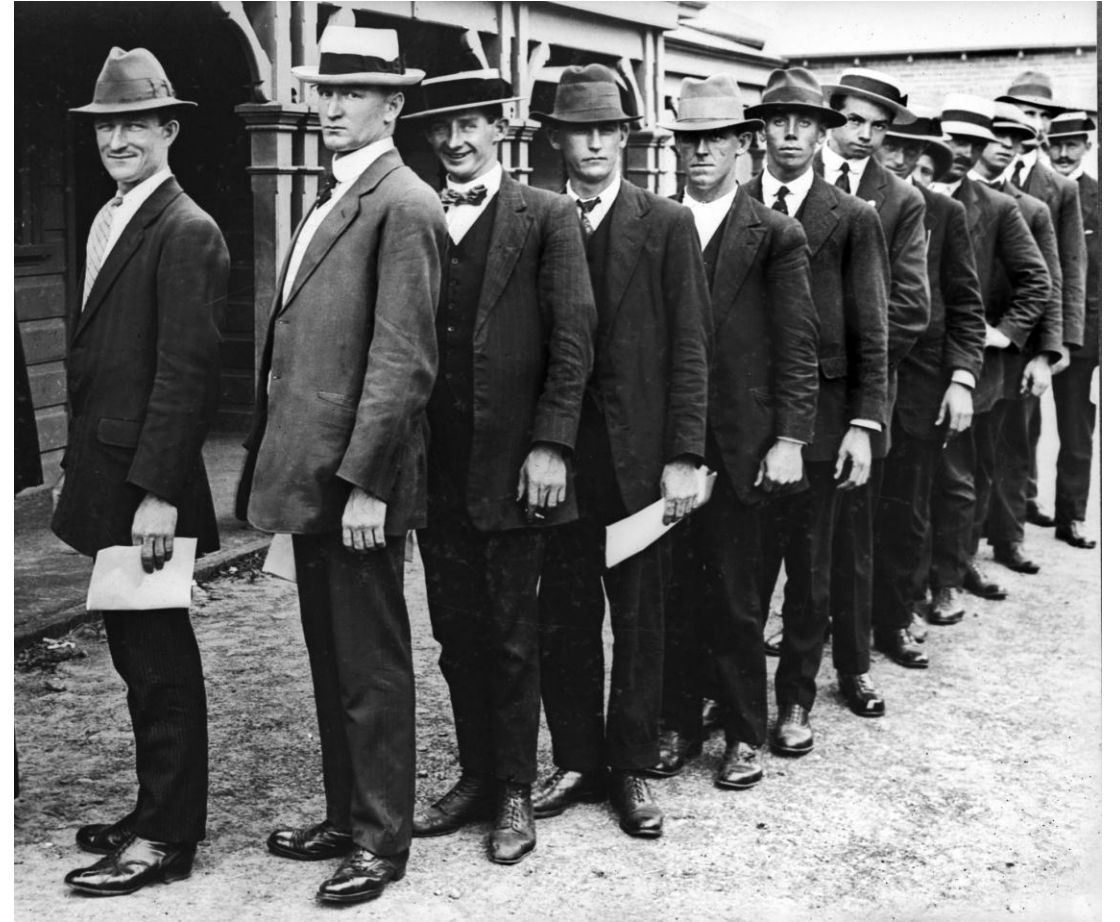
# The Australian Light Horse in The War of the Ottoman Succession



Jerry Mæhlen 2026

# August 6th

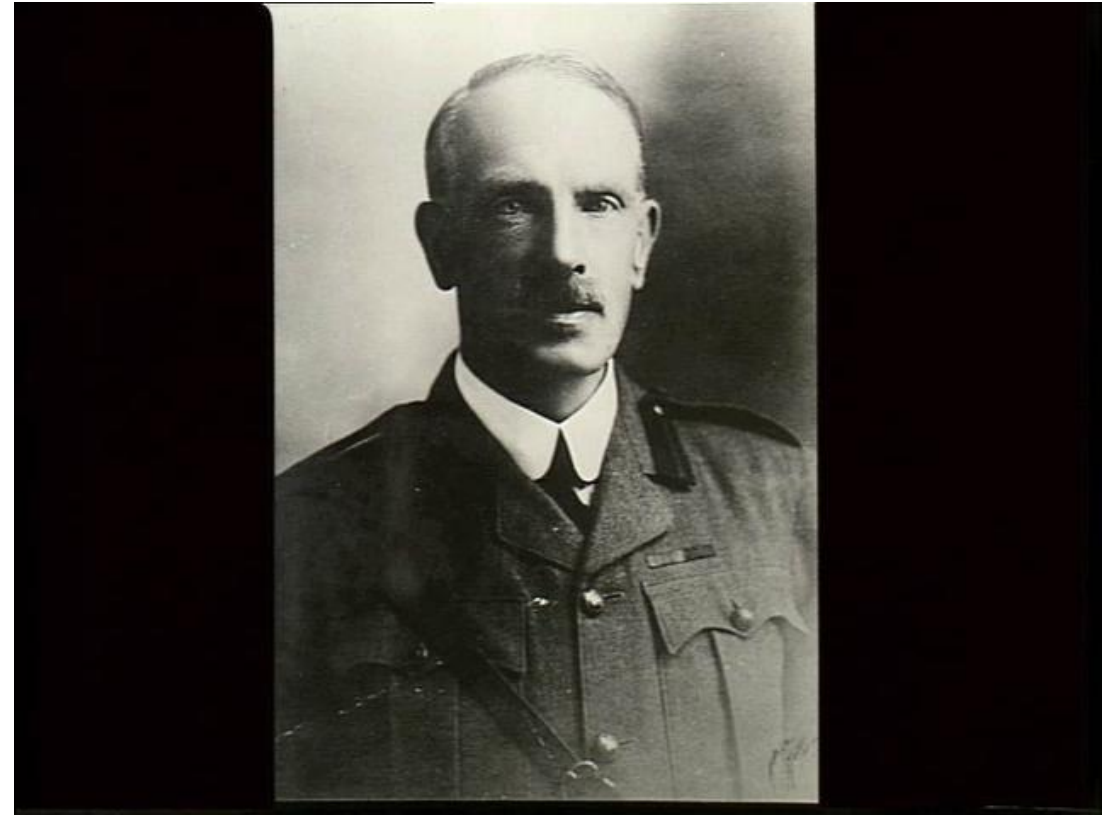
- When news was received that War has broken out with Germany. The Australian government offered to send a force of 20,000 men to fight with the British.
- But already men had begun to appear from all directions at the headquarters in Sydney and Melbourne begging to enlist.



Volunteers queuing to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force outside Victoria Barracks, Sydney. Australian War Memorial A03406

# August 7th

- General Bridges, Inspector-General of the Australian Military Forces, negotiated that the 20,000 men would be a division of infantry and a light horse brigade of 2,226 men and 2,315 horses.
- Bridges saw that this was to be mainly an Infantry war but he believed that Light Horse was the national arm of Australia, and he desired that arm to be represented.



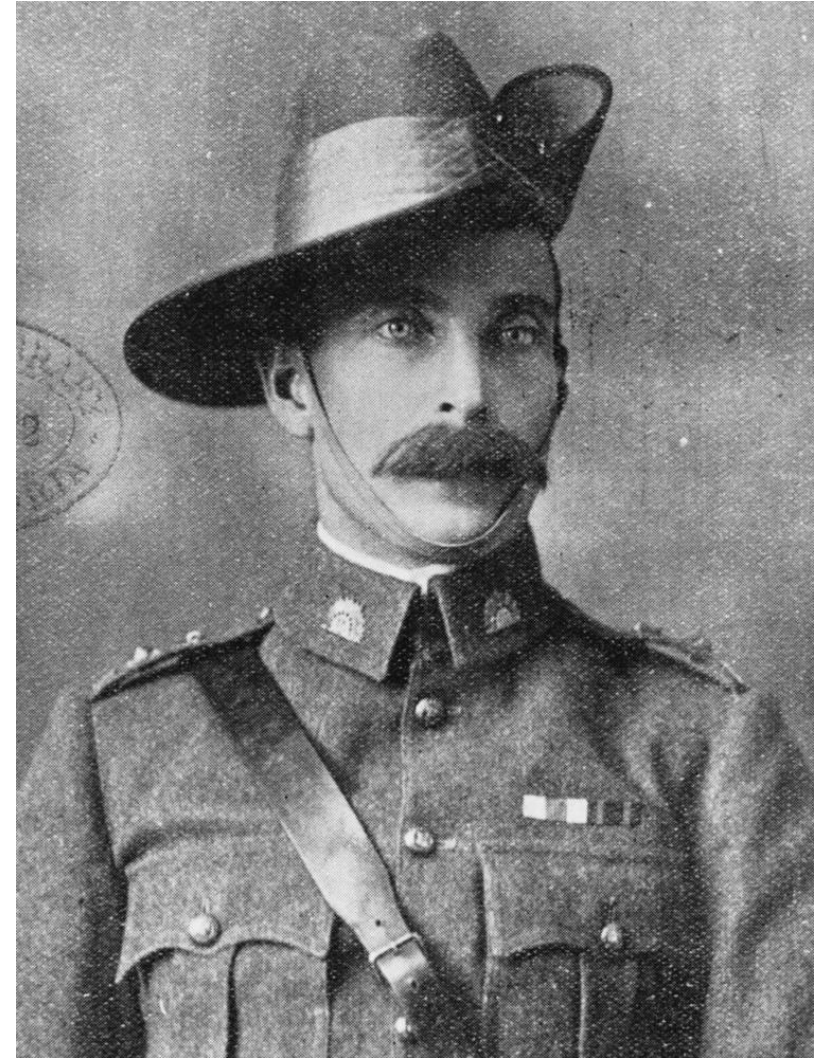
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Major General Sir William T. Bridges, Commandant, Royal Military College, Duntroon from 1910-1914.

# August 8th

- A senior officer of the Australian permanent forces, Colonel Harry Chauvel, then in England as Australian representative on the Imperial General Staff, was chosen as commander of the Light Horse Brigade.
- He was instructed by telegraph to join the brigade on its arrival overseas.
- A quarter of the men in the light horse were civilians, who had never in their lives been connected with any military force.
- The age for enlistment ran from 19 to 38. two-fifths of the rank and file was over 25; nearly the same number between 21 and 25; one-fifth under 21.
- Nearly 90 per cent were single men, although of the officers a third were married.
- Photo: Lieutenant Colonel H. G. Chauvel, 31 May 1902.



# Mid/Late August

- The first fine rush to enlistment brought to the 1st Australian Division and the light horse brigades a class of men not quite the same as that which answered to any later call.
- All the adventurous roving natures that could not stay away, whatever their duties and their ties; all those who plunged heads down into war, reckless of anything else, because it was a game to be played and they were players by nature; all the romantic, quixotic, adventurous flotsam that eddied on the surface of the Australian people concentrated itself within those first weeks upon the recruiting offices of the A.I.F.
- One man rode 460 miles, and travelled still further by railway, in order to join the Light Horse in Adelaide. Finding the ranks full he sailed to Hobart and was finally enlisted in Sydney.
  - All from the official history.



Men at the recruiting office at the Town Hall, Melbourne, to enlist for service in World War I.

# October 31st

- At 6.25 on the morning of November 1st, in bright sunlight, with the harbour glassily smooth, the convoy up-anchored and moved out to sea.
- The life on the ships depended upon whether they carried troops or horses. Aboard the troopships the force carried out the second part of its training. In the horse-ships, some of which carried as many as five horses to each man, the herculean task of cleaning the stalls, the rubbing down of horses as a substitute for exercise, and in some ships walking them round the decks, left no time for training.



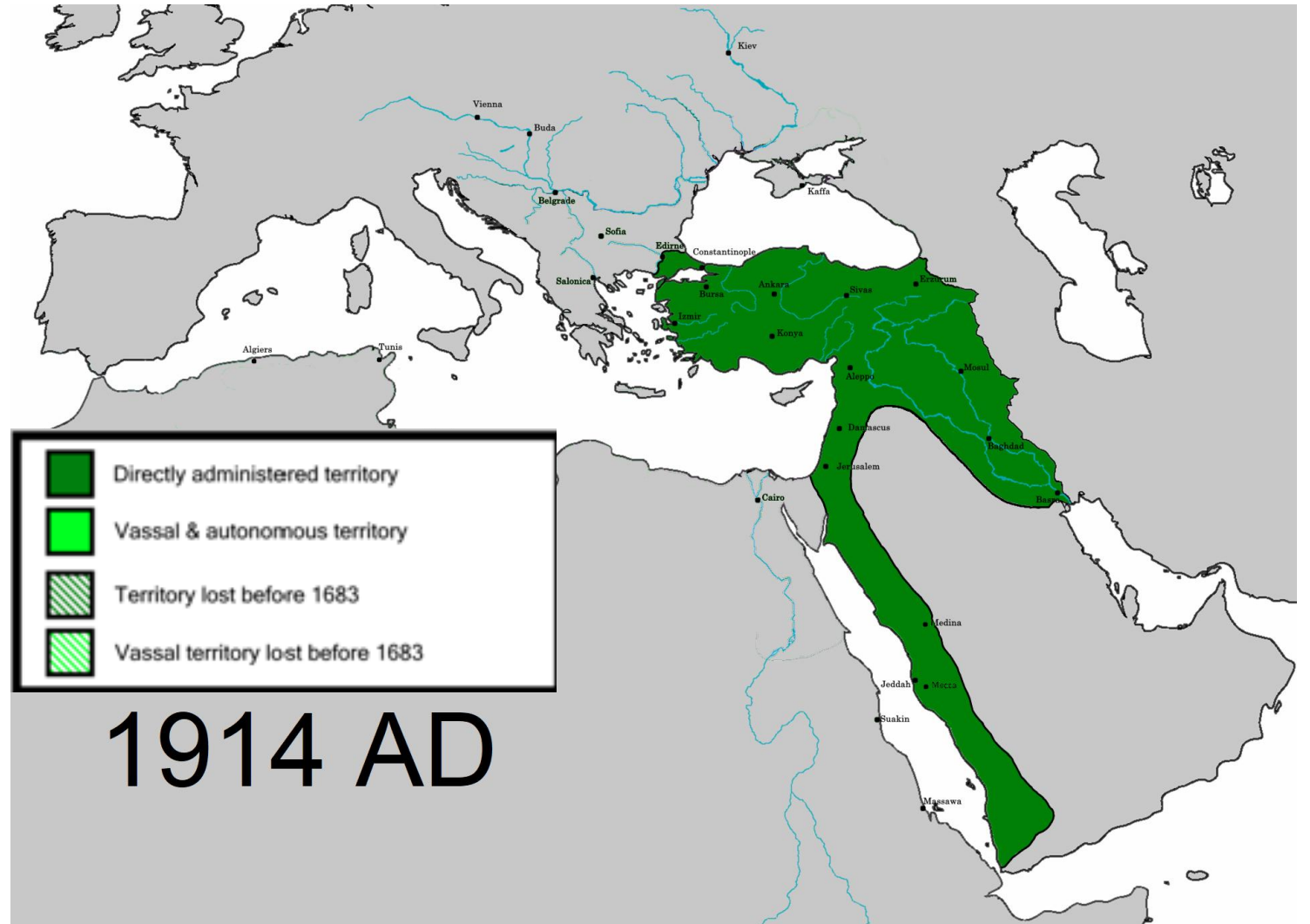
# 2 November 1914

- On 2 November, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire.
- France and the British Empire, Russia's wartime allies, followed suit on the 5th.
- Enver Pasha had succeeded in bringing the Ottoman Empire into the First World War on the side of the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary.
- The Ottoman Empire“ proclaimed a jihad against the Entente powers (Britain, France, and Russia) in November 1914 to rally Muslims globally and within the empire's territories to revolt against their colonizers and support the Central Powers.



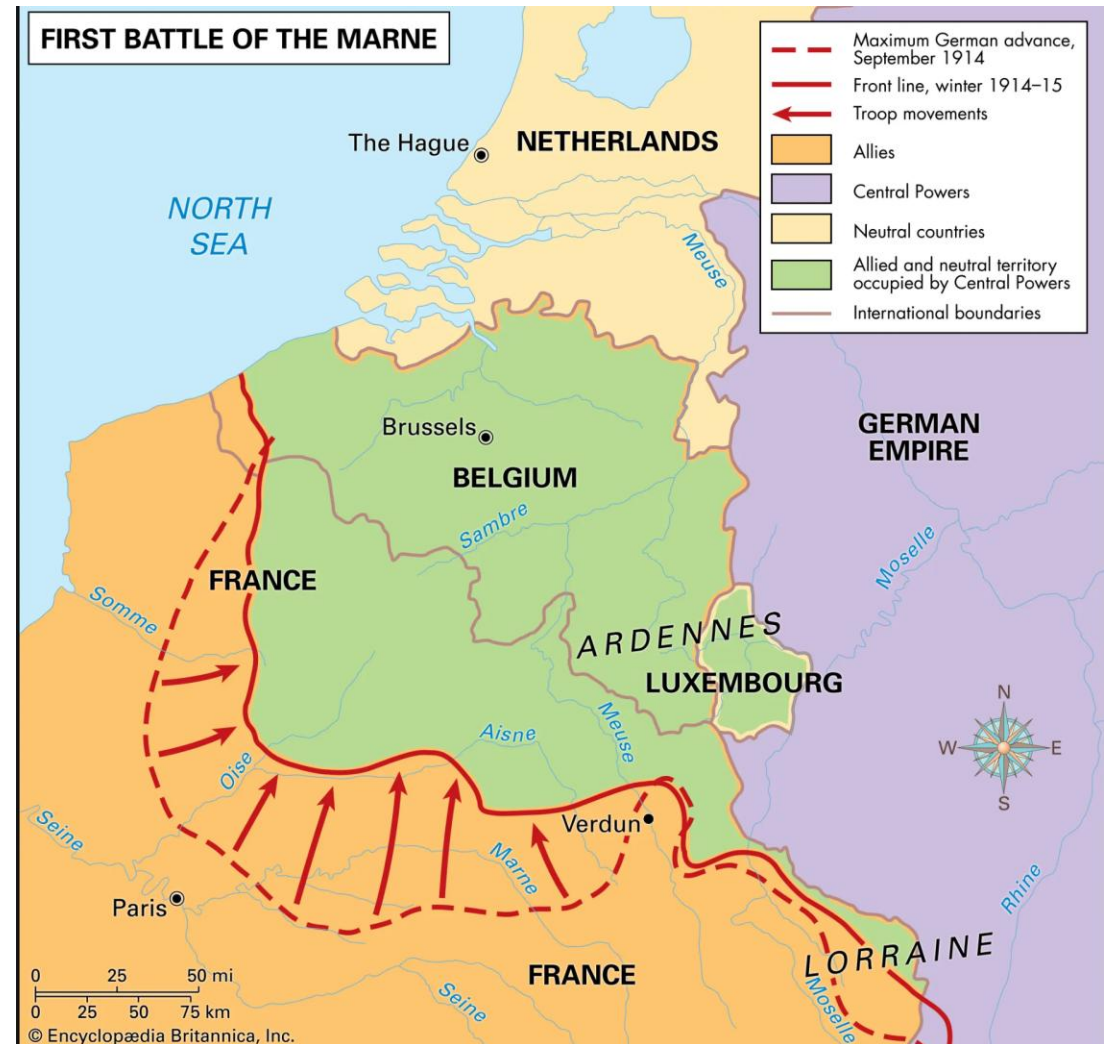
Ottoman authorities announce the Jihad against France, Britain and Russia, 11 November 1914.

# The Ottoman Empire



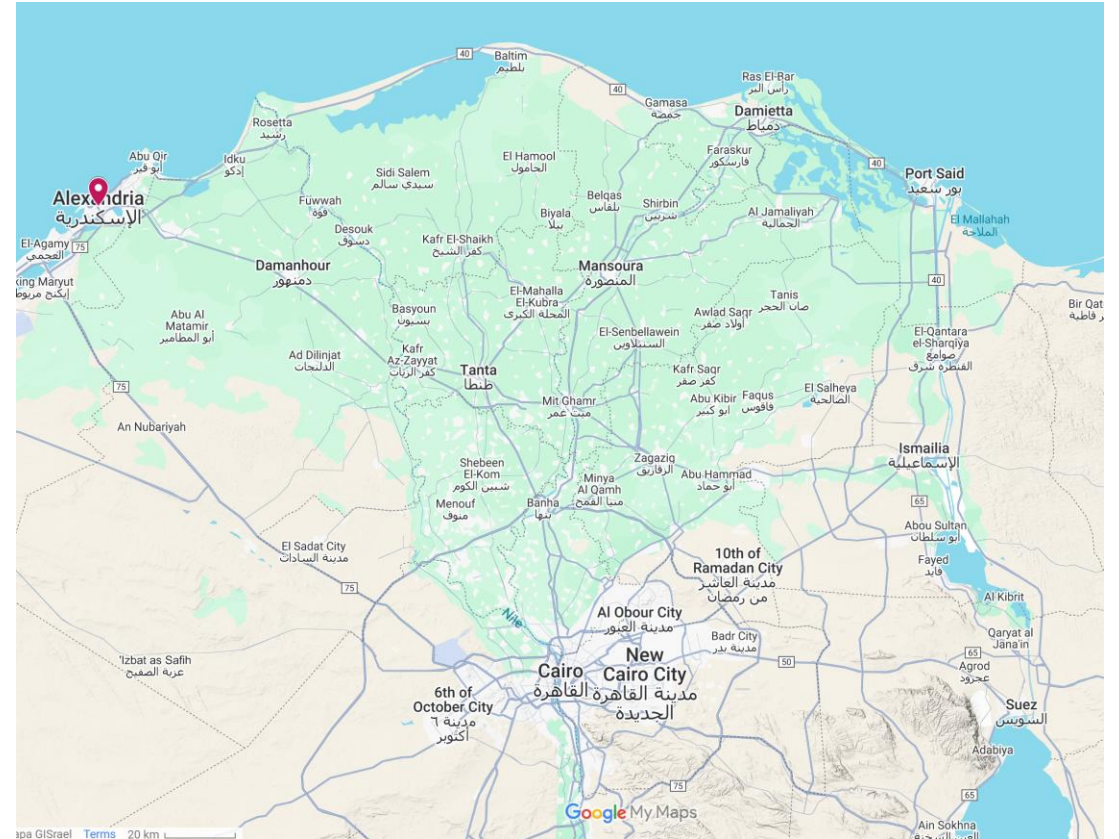
# 2 November 1914

- War had been declared against Turkey since the Australian convoy had sailed. When the news of this fact arrived on November 2nd, the question at once arose in many minds: “Shall we be stopped in Egypt?”
- The troops, to a man, desired to go to the Western front.
- Map shows movements to date and current state on the Western Front.



# December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1914

- As winter came down it became clear that troops kept under canvas through an English winter during their training were being asked to undergo extremes of unnecessary hardship.
- So the New Zealand and Australian contingents were disembarked at Alexandria on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and moved by train to Cairo.
- The 1st Light Horse Brigade assembled on the edge of the desert south of Cairo at Maadi Camp.



# December 1914

- The troops had been cooped up for nearly two months in transports without leave at any port.
- Straight from that voyage there were poured on to the desert round Cairo twenty thousand Australians. They had money. The youngsters among them were bursting with high spirits, ready for any adventure, reckless of the cost.
- They had seen the Sphinx and the desert sights. The one place of life and movement was the great half-European pleasure resort of Cairo.
- The trams constantly went into Cairo crowded on footboard and roof with many more soldiers than had leave to go. On New Year's night the stream of returning motor-cars, gharries, and men on donkeys stretched from Gizeh to Mena-five miles of swiftly-moving carriage-lights.
- General Birdwood's own motor-car was taken from the front of his headquarters and was found some hours later deserted on the sand in the heart of Mena Camp.
- The General, the British Corps Commander of the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps took the occurrence for what it was worth-a prank.
- Official Historian



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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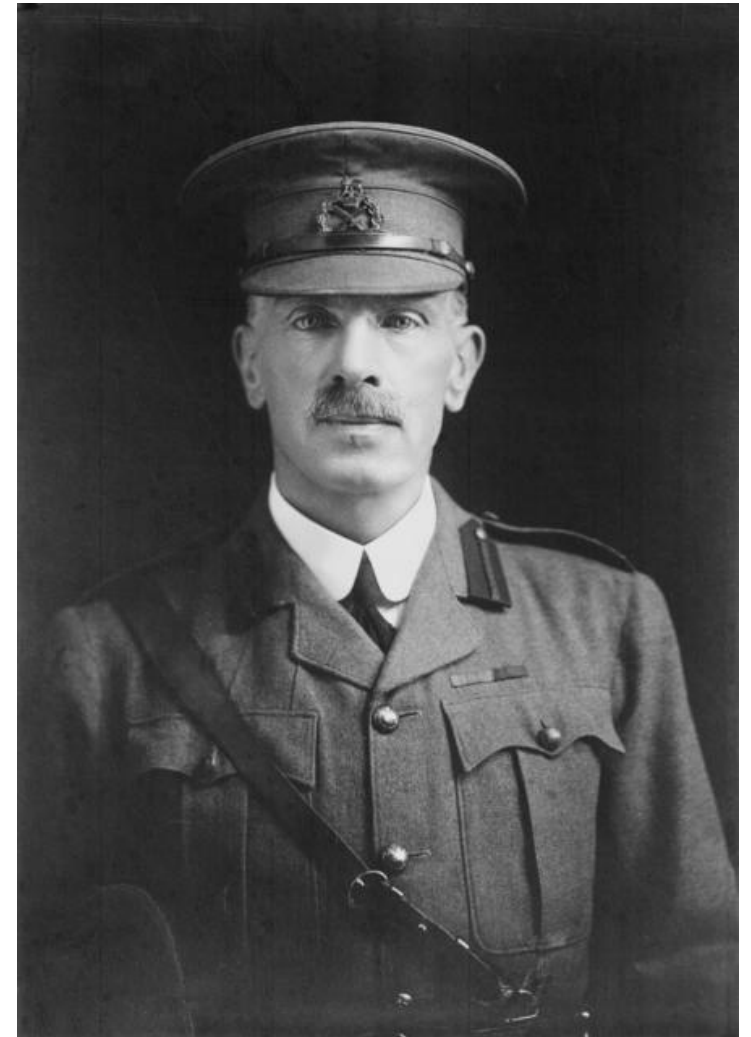
# 10 January 1915

- Following Britain's declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire in November 1914, it began to consider the future of Palestine.
- Within two months a memorandum, “The Future of Palestine” was circulated to the War Cabinet by a Zionist member of parliament and government minister, Herbert Samuel, proposing the support of Zionist ambitions to enlist the support of Jews in the wider war.
- Photo: Herbert Samuel



# January 1915

- At the same time matters were swiftly coming to a point when discipline in the A.I.F. must either be upheld or abandoned.
- Besides the high spirit of the troops a much graver class of crime was appearing--heavy drinking, desertion, attacks upon natives, in some instances robbery.
- General Maxwell drew the attention of General Birdwood to the conduct of a section of the Australians, and Birdwood, through General Bridges (photo), wrote appealing to their finer spirit not to let their country's reputation suffer at the hands of a small minority.
- Early in January about 300 men of the 1st Australian Division were absent without leave in Egypt. Though they were technically deserters, they could not, under the Australian regulations be shot.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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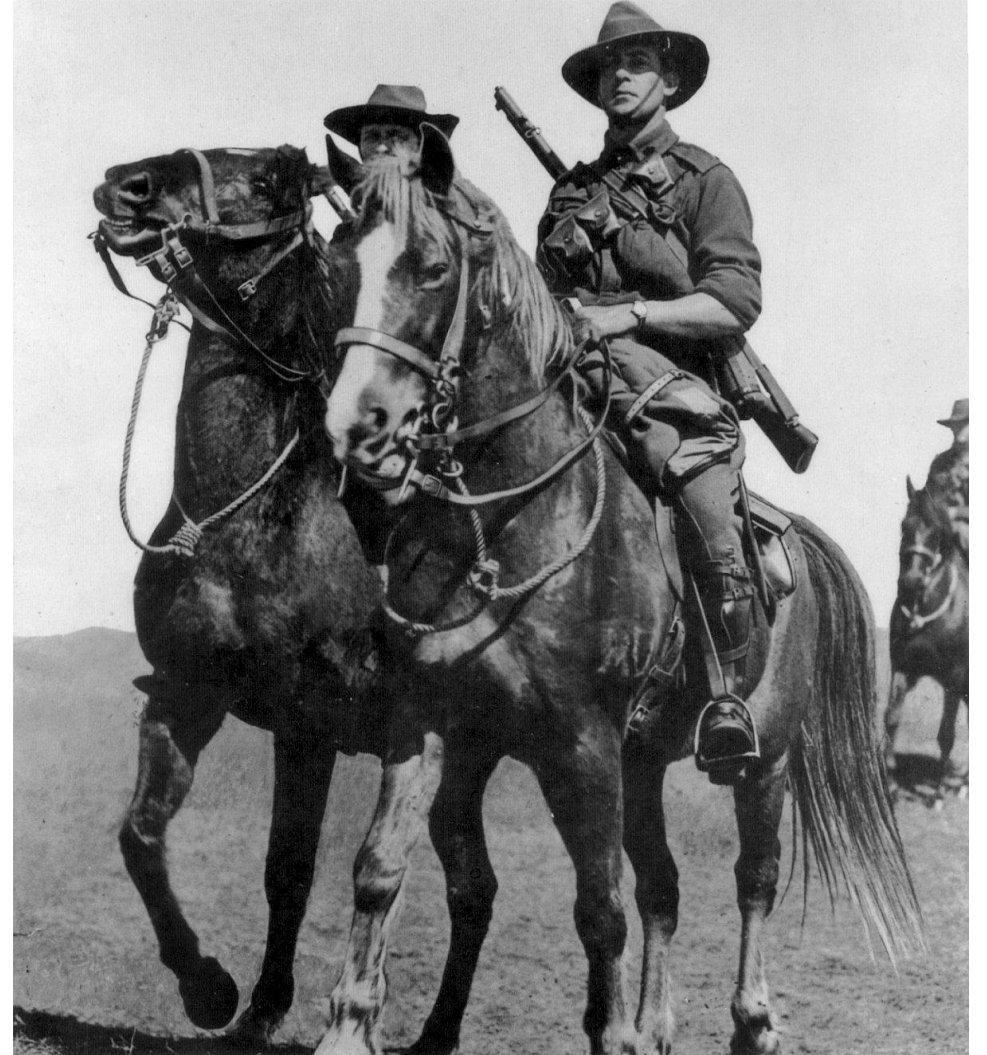
# January 1915

- Bridges was compelled to choose some other punishment to be the extreme penalty among its members. He decided on Sending a man Back to Australia to be discharged from the army.
- In order to avoid criticism, or the raising of questions as to why the men were returned, he asked the official war correspondent to write to the Australian newspapers a letter explaining the position. This letter came as a shock to Australia and was keenly resented by the greater part of the force.
- Charles Bean (portrait) was officially appointed as the Official Historian of the AIF in July 1919.
- This appointment came after his service as the official war correspondent for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during World War I.



## 2 February 1915

- The rush of Australians to enter the light horse being very great, additional light horse brigades were offered on 3 September, 2 October and 2 February 1915.
- Photo: Australian light horsemen on Walers in 1914, prior to their departure from Australia to serve in the War.



# 18 March 1915

- Following the start of naval operations in the run up to the Gallipoli campaign the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Sazonov, wrote to the French and UK ambassadors and staked a claim to Constantinople and the Dardanelles.
- In a series of diplomatic exchanges over five weeks, the UK and France both agreed, while putting forward their own claims,
- to an increased sphere of influence in Iran in the case of the UK and
- to an annexation of Syria (including Palestine) and Cilicia for France.
- The Russian, UK and French claims were all agreed in the Constantinople Agreement of 18 March 1915, all sides also agreeing that the exact governance of the Holy Places was to be left for later settlement.



1919 British map ahead of Paris Peace Conference - extract regarding 1915 Constantinople Agreement

# 1 & 2 April 1915

- The “Australian Division” was ordered to the front. Next day the “N.Z. and A. Division” received orders to follow it.
- They had been selected for the landing at Gallipoli just because they were the nearest available troops.
- None of the Light Horse or Mounted Rifles would be included in the forthcoming operations. If required, they would be sent for at a later date.
- The divisional ammunition column also was to be left behind.



Part of the Australian Mounted Division supply train

# 2 April 1915

- There occurred in Cairo one wild scene of which a good deal has been heard. Its origin was somewhat obscure, but the story obtained on the spot and at the time was as follows.
- On Good Friday 1915 immediately after hearing of their orders to leave for the front, a few Australian and New Zealand soldiers determined to exact some sort of punishment for certain injuries which they believed themselves to have incurred at some of the brothels in the street known to them as “The Wozzer”- Haret el Wasser, near Shepherd’s Hotel in Cairo.
- While they were ransacking the house, a story started, no one knew where, that a Maori had been stabbed there. The bad drink sold in the neighbourhood led this demonstration to greater lengths than were intended – beds, mattresses and clothing from several houses were thrown out of the windows and piled in a bonfire in the street. Accounts vary as to whether Australians or New Zealanders predominated-both were involved.
- Official Historian

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The facade of burnt out buildings after the Good Friday riot.

# 2 April 1915

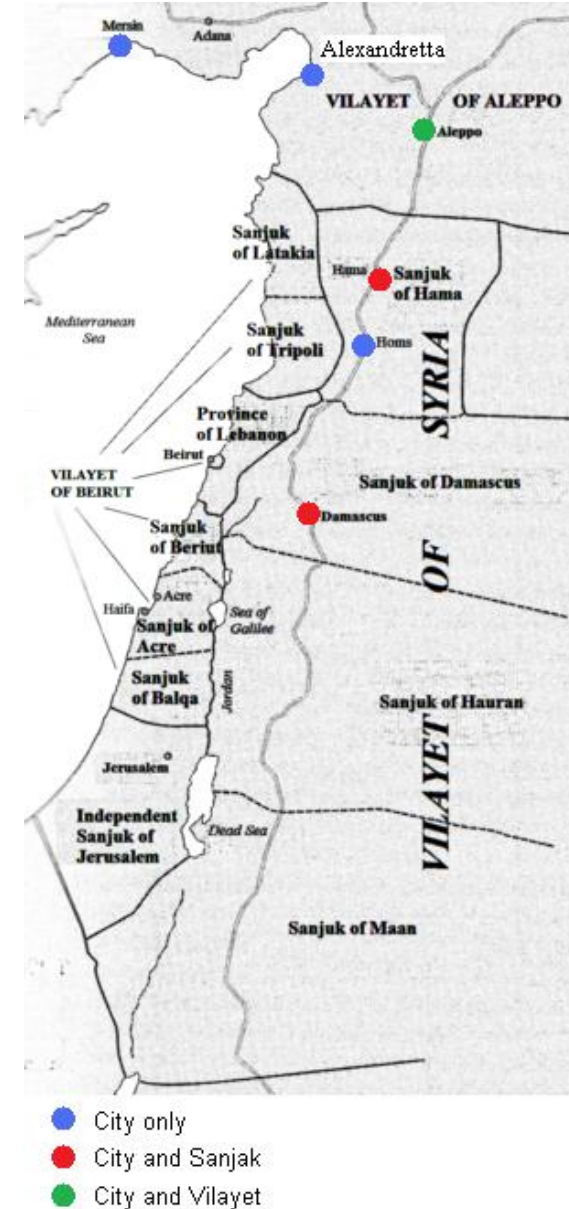
- The British military police, always a red rag to the Australian soldier, were summoned. A number came on their horses and found the Haret el Wasser crowded with Australians and New Zealanders, nine-tenths of whom were spectators. The native Egyptian fire brigade which was rather pluckily trying to put out the bonfire was being roughly handled.
- The crowd looked dangerous and the police used their revolvers. Instead of scaring the crowd away this brought it at them, and serious trouble might have happened had not the police had the saving sense to withdraw.
- The majority of the crowd consisted of pure spectators, many even photographing the scene-one had his camera hit by a revolver bullet.
- A Greek drinking-shop was accidentally burnt in the melee.
- The troops were left on the scene excited, but when the Lancashire Territorials were ranged in front of Shepherd's Hotel with fixed bayonets they very sensibly dispersed.
- These two affairs made a good deal of noise at the time. They were not heroic, but they also differed very little from what at Oxford and Cambridge and in Australian universities is known as a "rag " The Anglo-Egyptian authorities, although they were troubled by these riots and by the occasional rough handling of natives, were far from undervaluing the presence of the Australians in Egypt at a later stage of the war.
- Official Historian

# 26 April 1915

- The Australian Light Horse landed on Gallipoli on 12 May 1915. They served dismounted, with 13 regiments eventually serving on the peninsula.
- The Gallipoli campaign is too big a subject to fit into this talk.
- We will rejoin the Light Horse when they return to Egypt.

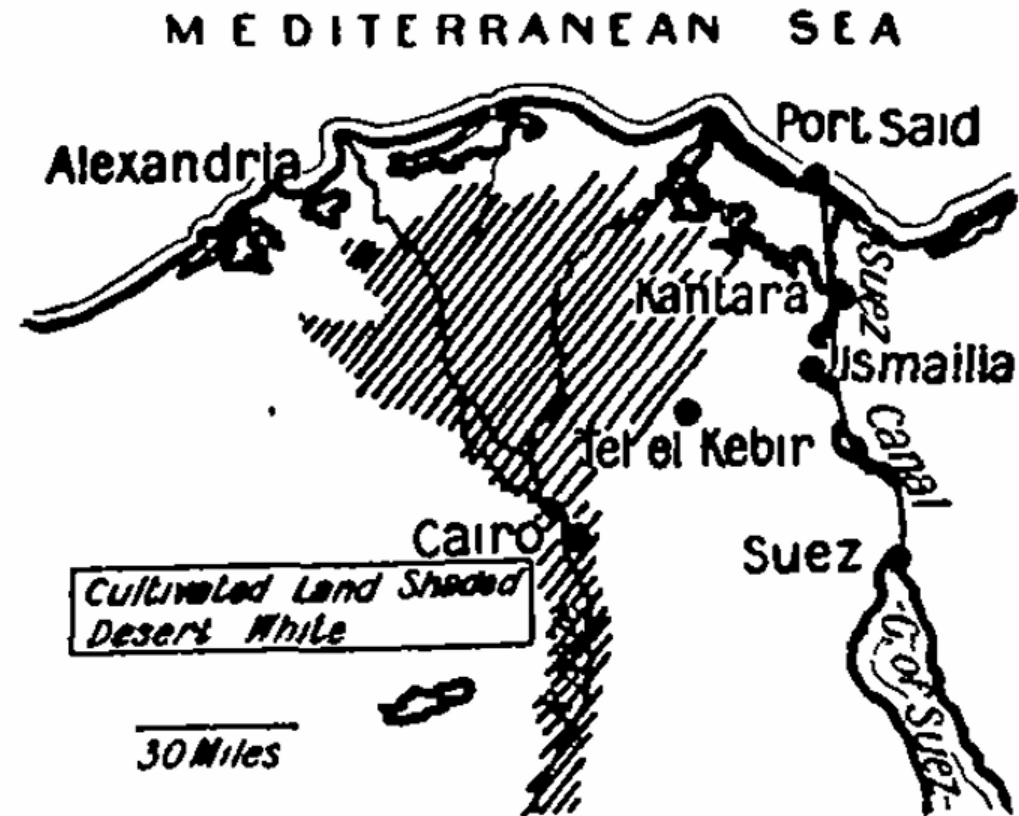
# 24 October 1915

- Between 14 July 1915 and 10 March 1916 the British High Commissioner to Egypt, Henry McMahon, exchanged ten letters with Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca.
- In his letter of 24 October 1915 he promised Hussein to recognize Arab independence "in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca" in return for Hussein launching a revolt against the Ottoman Empire.
- The pledge excluded "portions of Syria" lying to the west of "the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo"



# 28 December 1915

- After evacuation of Suvla and Anzac the ANZACs were almost immediately transferred from Lemnos to Egypt because Egypt was the only place where they could be properly re-fitted, rested, and reorganised.
- They were 14,000 short of establishment, and reinforcements including that number were now waiting for them in Egypt.



# 28 December 1915

- Mounted men were urgently needed for the defence of the Delta against the Senussi, the marauding tribesmen of the desert west of Lower Egypt, who were then threatening an attack.
- The 1st Light Horse Brigade, arriving at Heliopolis on December 28th from Gallipoli and being ordered to draw full mounted equipment and be ready to ride out within forty-eight hours, was filled with delight at the recovery of its horses
- On 31st December the 3rd Regiment actually left for the Wady Natrun, an oasis area some forty miles north-west of Cairo. The rest of the brigade followed a few days later.
- Scattered forces of the Senussi were reported to be moving towards Wady Natrun with designs on the Kataba Canal, further east, which supplies Alexandria with water.



# 31 December 1915

- General Murray was ordered to guard the Canal and the approach to the Delta from the east. He was to ensure that “no formed body of the enemy should come within artillery range of the Canal.” Small bodies of the enemy were not to be allowed to reach the Canal by night.
- At first the War Office promised him two mounted divisions of four brigades each; but this was subsequently reduced to the Anzac Mounted Division and the New Zealand brigade, with an additional yeomanry brigade as corps troops.
- At this juncture a camel corps was also formed, mainly from volunteers from the Australian divisions.



Australians of the Imperial Camel Corps on the sandhills, lined up on their camels. Frank Hurley.

# 31 December 1915

- The light horse served as mounted riflemen—essentially mobile infantry—using their horses for speed and long-range movement rather than shock cavalry tactics.
- Many officers and men had fought as mounted riflemen in the South African War only twelve years earlier, and Boer methods still shaped their thinking.



An officer from the 8th Light Horse Regiment, Egypt, 1915

# 31 December 1915

- A light horse regiment contained 25 officers and nearly 500 men, yet even a full mounted brigade in Sinai and Palestine rarely put more than 800 rifles into the firing line, compared with about 3,500 in an infantry brigade.
- Their supply needs, however, were far heavier. A man's daily ration weighed only a few pounds, but a horse required twenty pounds of feed, plus large quantities of water. Men might be limited to a gallon a day—sometimes only a quart or even a pint—while horses needed five gallons to maintain strength.
- Any force entering Sinai therefore required a vast transport system and ample water.
- Tens of thousands of camels had to follow the fighting troops, and by early 1916 the commander requested 25,000 camels, rising to 50,000 by June.
- Behind the army came the railway and water-pipe, essential to sustaining operations in the desert.



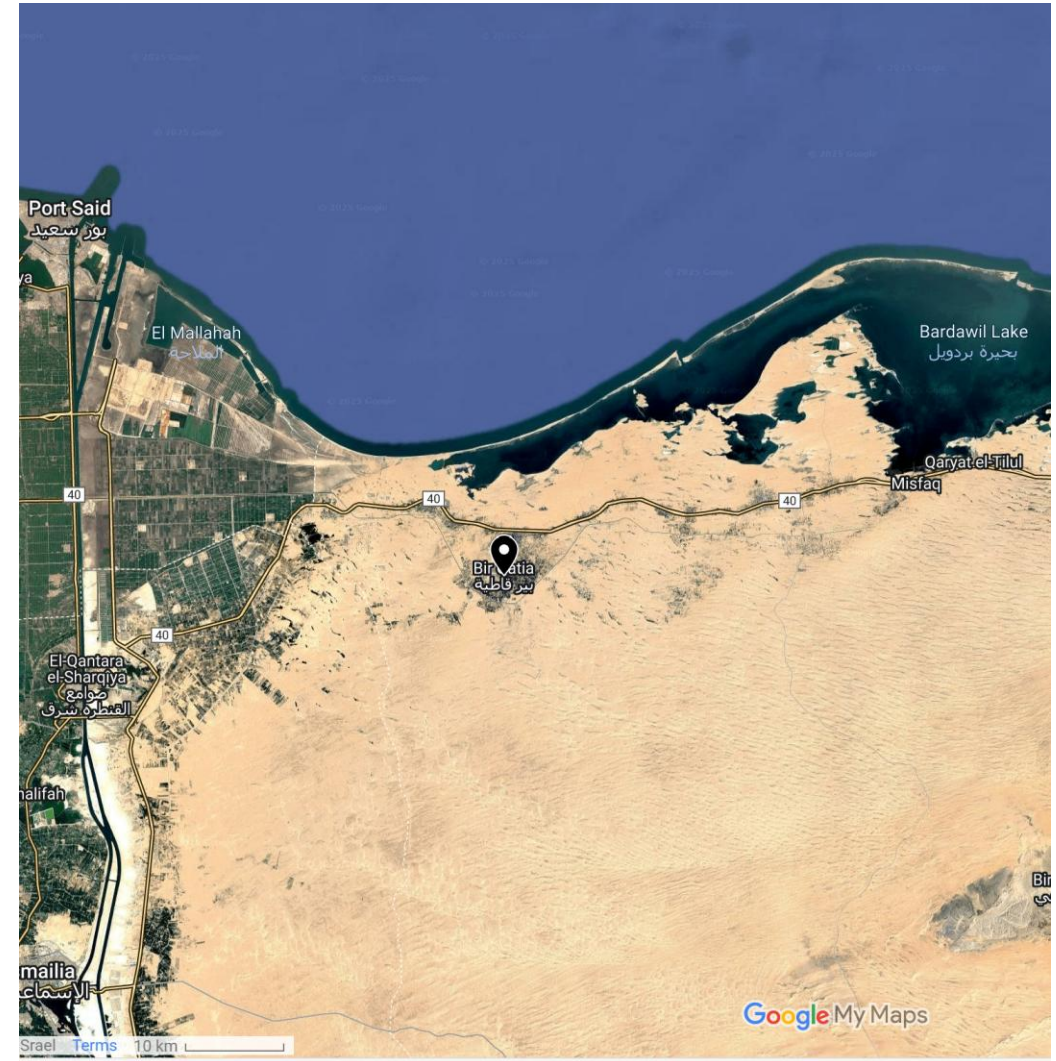
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Deiran, Palestine. 1918-01. Australian Light Horsemen on the move.

# 31 December 1915

- Murray planned to establish a force 50,000 strong in the area of the Katia oasis.
- Supply from the sea in that area was impracticable because the great Bardawil lagoon lies immediately north-east of the Romani-Katia district effectively barred communication with the Mediterranean.
- Transport across the sands was the only course open, and no time was lost in pushing forward the preliminaries for a broad-gauge railway.



# 3 January 1916

- The Sykes–Picot Agreement was a secret treaty between the United Kingdom and France, with assent from Russia and Italy, to define their mutually agreed spheres of influence in an eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire.
- The negotiations took place between 23 November 1915 and 3 January 1916, on which date the British and French diplomats, Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, initialled an agreed memorandum.
- They also agreed that an all-arms French contingent would be attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

# 3 January 1916



L Sir Mark Sykes, 6th Baronet (1879-1919) very rich and very entertaining, soldier, civil servant, MP, friend to Prime Ministers, lifelong traveller in the Middle East, selected by Kitchener for a committee advising the Cabinet on the Middle East.  
R Francois Picot (1870 – 1951) Lawyer and professional Diplomat



# February 20th 1916

- On February 20<sup>th</sup> 1916 the first troops were advanced beyond the infantry defences towards Katia, one squadron of yeomanry, two machine-guns and fifty men of the Camel Corps proceeding to Bir el Nuss, nineteen miles east of the Canal.



# March 16th 1916

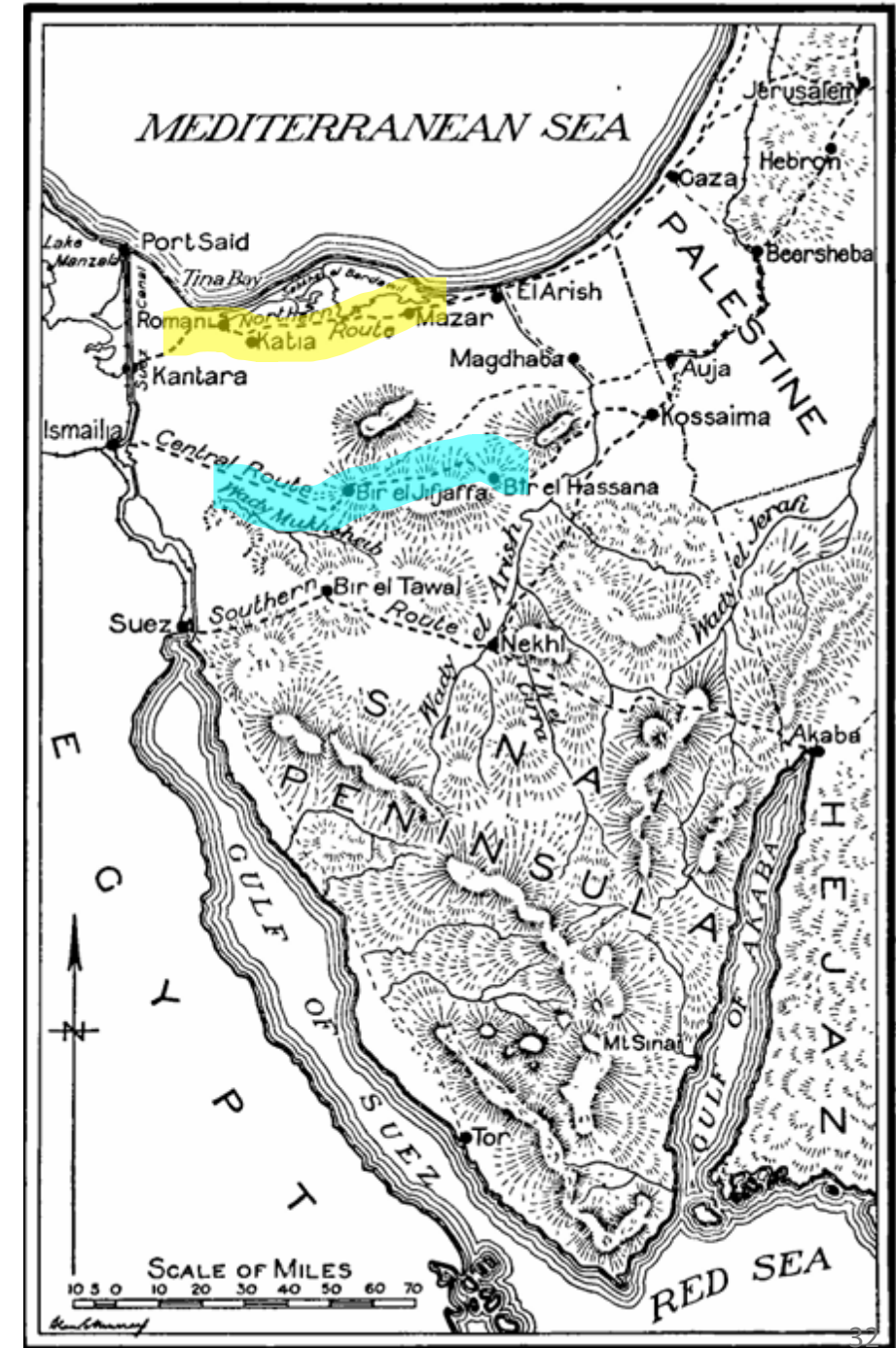
- The Anzac Mounted Division was formed with Major-General H. G. Chauvel in command.
- It was composed of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade.
- Almost every officer and non-commissioned officer, and more than half the men, had been through the Gallipoli campaign as infantry.
- Australia did not provide artillery for its mounted brigades, so Chauvel was provided with four batteries of the British Royal Horse Artillery.



18-pounder gun with sand wheels, Suez Canal Defences 1916

# 21 March 1916

- Turkish forces had previously used the **Muksheib route** to attack the Canal, and reports suggested they were improving water supplies there.
- Since the British line east of the Canal relied on a desert largely without water, it was vital to prevent the Turks from expanding their access.
- A reconnaissance by fifteen officers and ninety-four men of the 8th Light Horse covered eighty miles in thirty-seven hours, finding old, abandoned works but gaining valuable experience. Horses handled the pace well; camels struggled.



# 21 March 1916

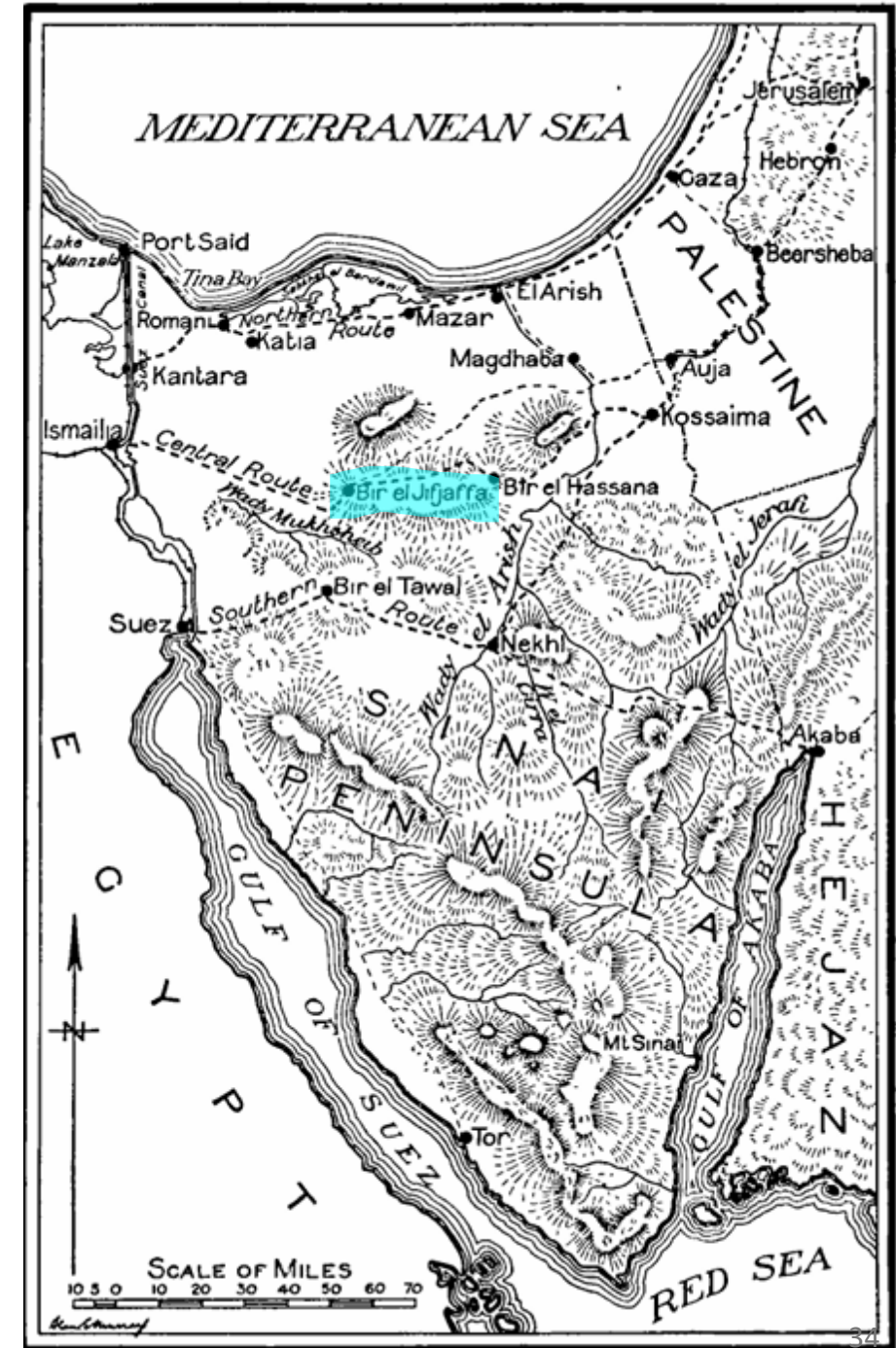
- This mission also marked the beginning of close cooperation between airmen and the light horse.
- Aircraft scouted ahead, greatly increasing the speed and safety of mounted operations.
- Wireless carried on camels kept the column in touch with headquarters.



British machines were of ancient type-B.E.2 two-seaters (90 h.p. R.A.F. engine)

# Early April

- Air reconnaissance identified a small Turkish post at **Jifjafa**, fifty-two miles east of the Canal.
- Major W. H. Scott led a squadron of the 9th Light Horse, supported by engineers and medical staff, totalling 320 men, 175 horses, and 261 camels.
- The main challenge was supply, not combat.



# 11 April 1916

- Scott (photo) advanced via Wady um Muksheib, where the Australian walers again proved superior desert walkers.
- Reaching a bivouac eight miles from Jifjafa, he waited until the enemy returned from the hills before attacking.

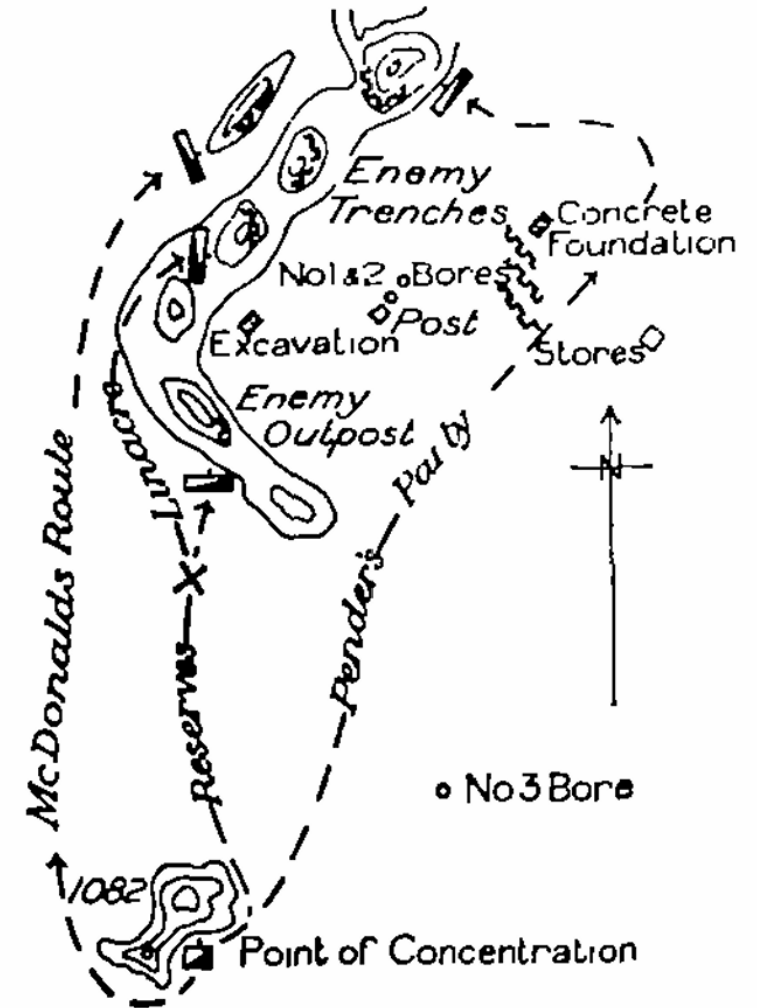


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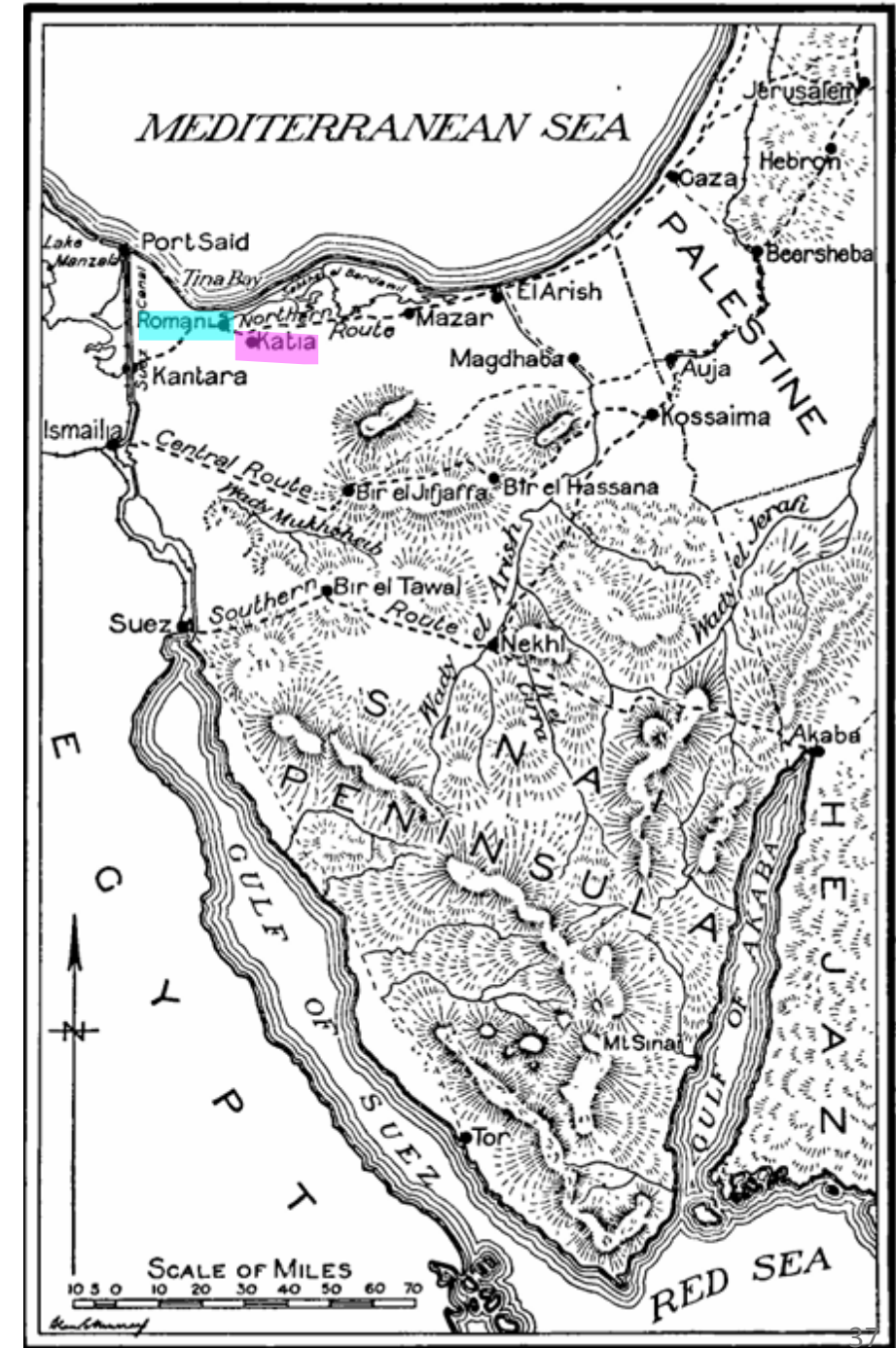
# 13 April 1916

- The fight was brief: six Turks were killed, five wounded, and the rest surrendered.
- The post was run by an Austrian engineer using German well-boring equipment. After destroying the plant, Scott withdrew.
- Heavy rain briefly turned the wady into a rare Sinai stream.
- The success confirmed the light horsemen's effectiveness in desert operations.



# May 1916

- On 27 May, the 1st Brigade relieved the 2nd at **Romani**.
- With the railway reaching the area, the 52nd Infantry Division advanced and established a chain of posts from Mahemdia to Katib Gannit.
- Despite loose sand, extensive sandbags and timber created strong defensive positions, while the railway continued pushing east toward **Katia**.



# May 1916

- In early May 1916, the 6th and 7th Light Horse Regiments carried out a long reconnaissance to Bir el Abd, spending nearly twenty-seven hours in the saddle. Soon after, a second reconnaissance to Bir el Bayud exposed the troops to extreme heat. With only one quart of water each, many men and horses were quickly overcome by dehydration. Some collapsed, and the foul water at nearby wells had to be guarded to stop desperate men from drinking it.
- Medical officers from Romani brought ambulance camels and water, finding stragglers near Katia barely conscious beside their exhausted horses. Many troopers lay around the hods at Katia and Oghratina until sand-carts arrived to take them back. No lives were lost, but several officers and dozens of men were hospitalised, and hundreds of horses were temporarily unfit. Despite the ordeal, the reconnaissance succeeded and provided valuable information on terrain and water sources.
- Later in May, the Commander-in-Chief praised the light horse for their consistently excellent work.
- The Bayud incident led to improved water arrangements: two bottles were eventually issued to each man, later supplemented by water-bags. Troopers also became more proactive in managing their own desert survival.



# 1 June 1916

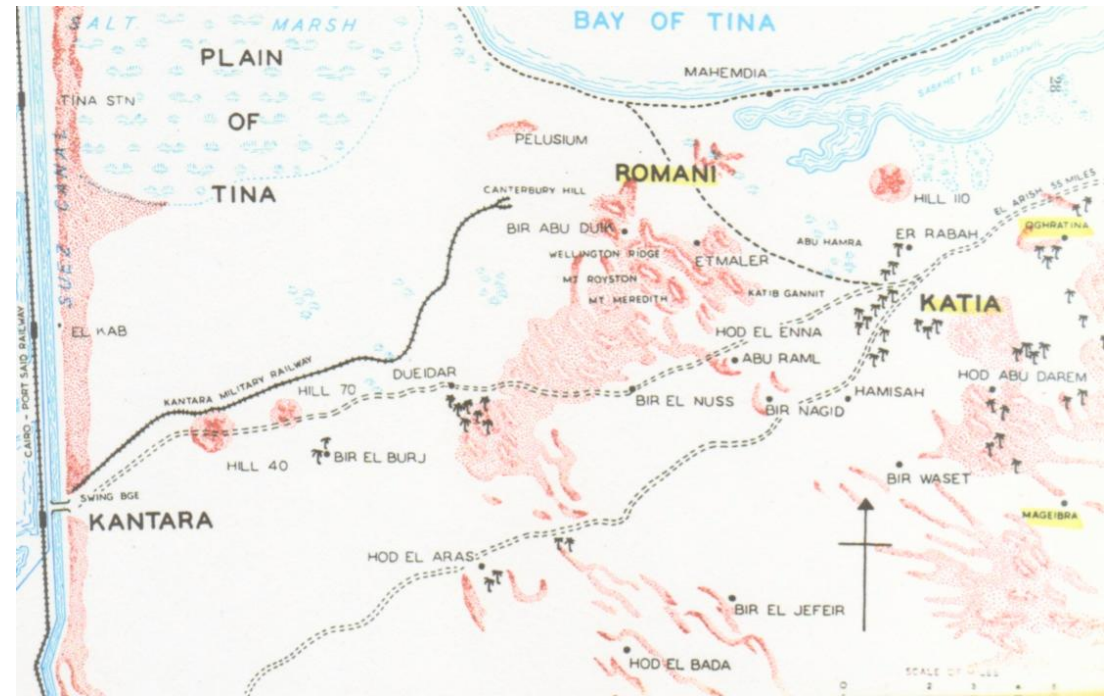
- The 1st Light Horse Brigade reached Romani on May 30th, and occupied the congested camp evacuated by the exhausted troops of Rylie's brigade.
- At half-past 6 on the morning of June 1st an enemy aeroplane flew over the camp and dropped eight bombs.
- Most of the bombs fell among the troops and their horse-lines.
- The horses had not previously been under fire, and they immediately stampeded, broke their ropes in large numbers, and scattered at the gallop over the sand-hills.
- Eight men were killed and twenty three wounded, and thirty-six horses killed and nine wounded.
- The horses, frantic with fear, galloped for many miles: a few reached Port Said, nearly thirty miles away, and some were never recovered.



Romani 1 June 1916 bombs falling on B Squadron, 3rd Light Horse Regiment tent lines.

# June 1916

- In June 1916 the 1st Light Horse Brigade and the New Zealanders steadily reconnoitred the water country east and south of Romani.



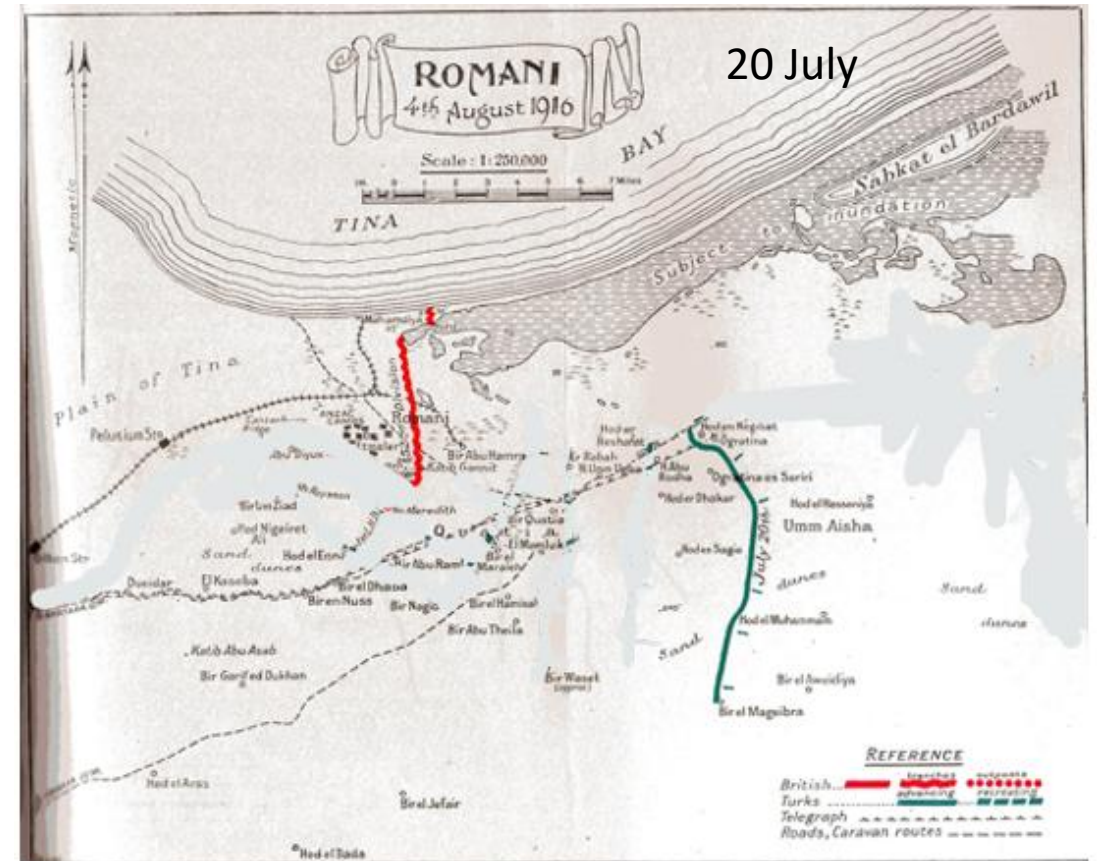
# 19 July 1916

- By 18 July the area was believed clear, but the next afternoon Chaytor, flying over the desert, discovered large hidden Turkish forces—several thousand men and camels concentrated around Bayud, Bir Jameil, and Bir el Abd. They had crossed fifty miles of near-waterless country from El Arish, marching by night to avoid detection.
- That night Australian patrols clashed with the enemy near Oghratina, confirming the Turks were now entrenched on the high ground.



# 20 July 1916

- The Anzac Mounted Division immediately prepared for action: leave was cancelled, stragglers recalled, and supplies pushed forward. Despite weeks of exhaustion, the men were suddenly fit for duty on July 20 as the enemy hurried to fortify the Oghratina ridge.





# 21 July 1916

- Each night they returned to Romani, leaving behind silent officer patrols to watch Turkish movements in the dark.
- The work was punishing. Horses neighed in the stillness and drew fire; patrols often found themselves cut off and had to slip through enemy lines.
- The alternating brigades kept up constant movement, snatching only brief sleep between marches, stable duties, and the fierce desert heat.
- Both men and horses deteriorated under the strain.



Etmaler, Sinai. c. 1916. The horse lines of A Squadron, 8th Australian Light Horse Regiment, at a site near Romani.



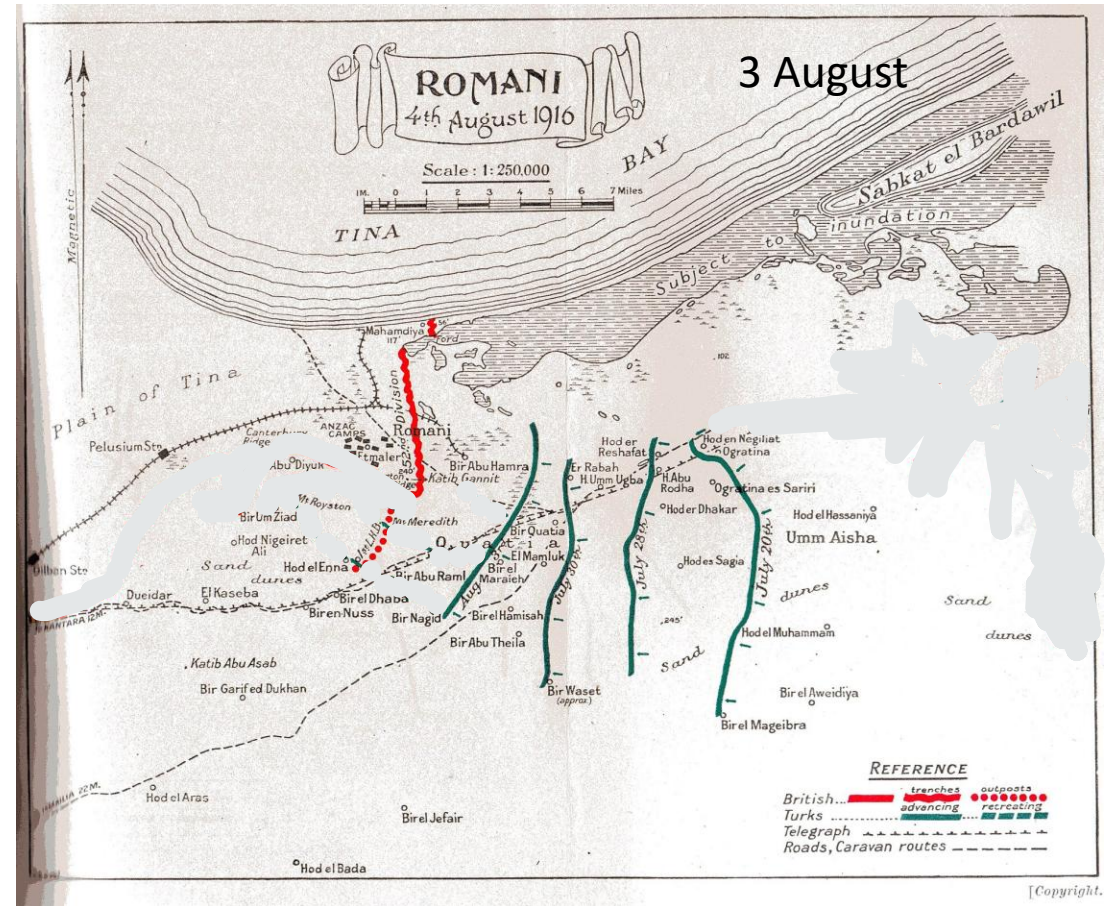
# 30 July

- By late July the Turks were nearly 100 miles from their railhead, short of supplies and dependent on brackish wells.
- Prisoners were already footsore and demoralised.
- British commanders Murray and Chauvel expected the enemy to swing south of the infantry line and then strike north toward Romani.
- Chauvel therefore surveyed the ground south of Katib Gannit and selected a defensive outpost line, convinced the Turkish attack—when it came—would come by night.

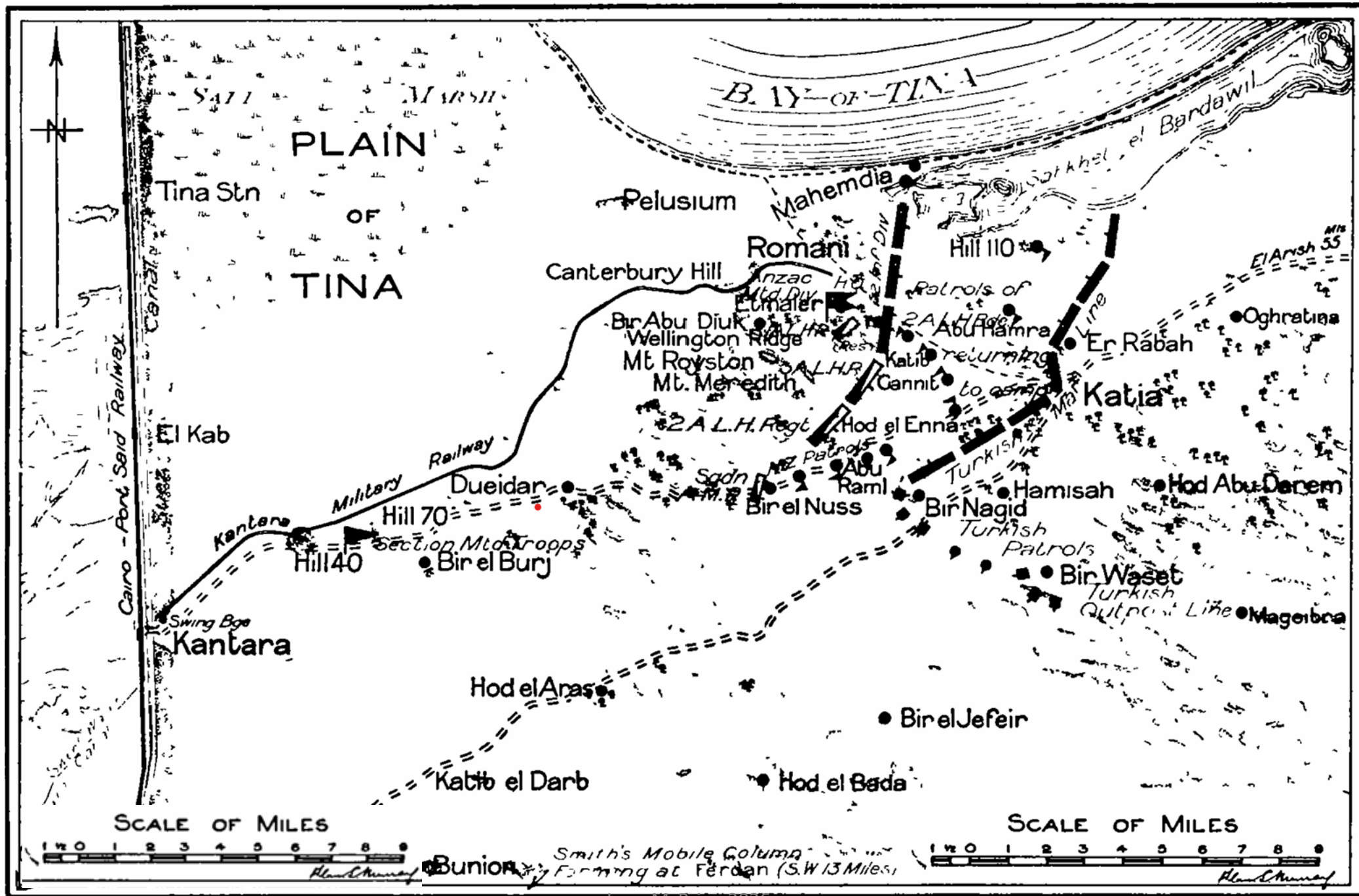


# 3 August

- On August 2nd, the 1st Light Horse Brigade, supported by horse artillery, drove the enemy from Hod um Ugba and held it through the day.
- Elsewhere, however, the Turks blocked ground that had been open the previous day, holding strong positions south of Katia and threatening the vital Holy Family Well.





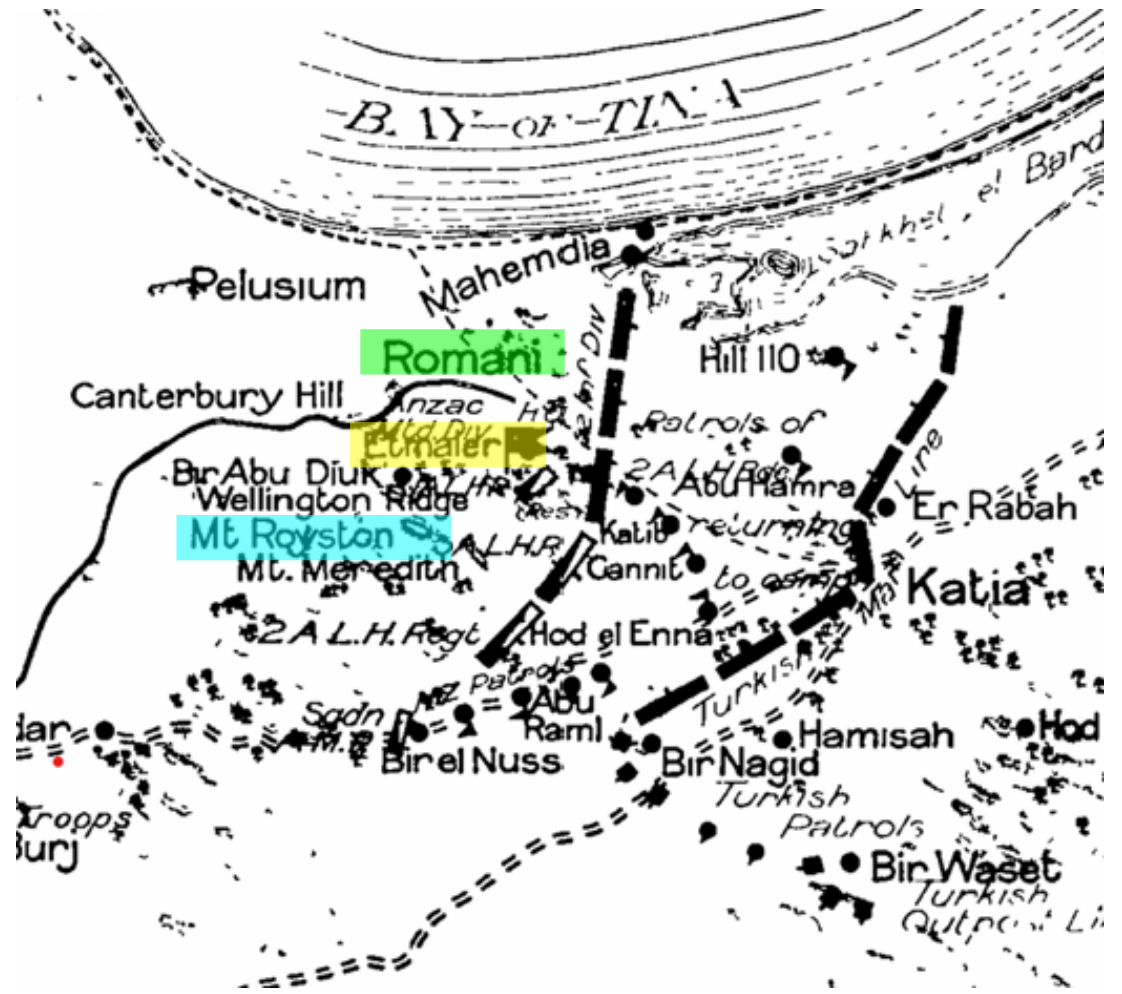


ROMANI—POSITION AT DUSK, 3RD AUGUST, 1916.

Jerry McBrien 2026

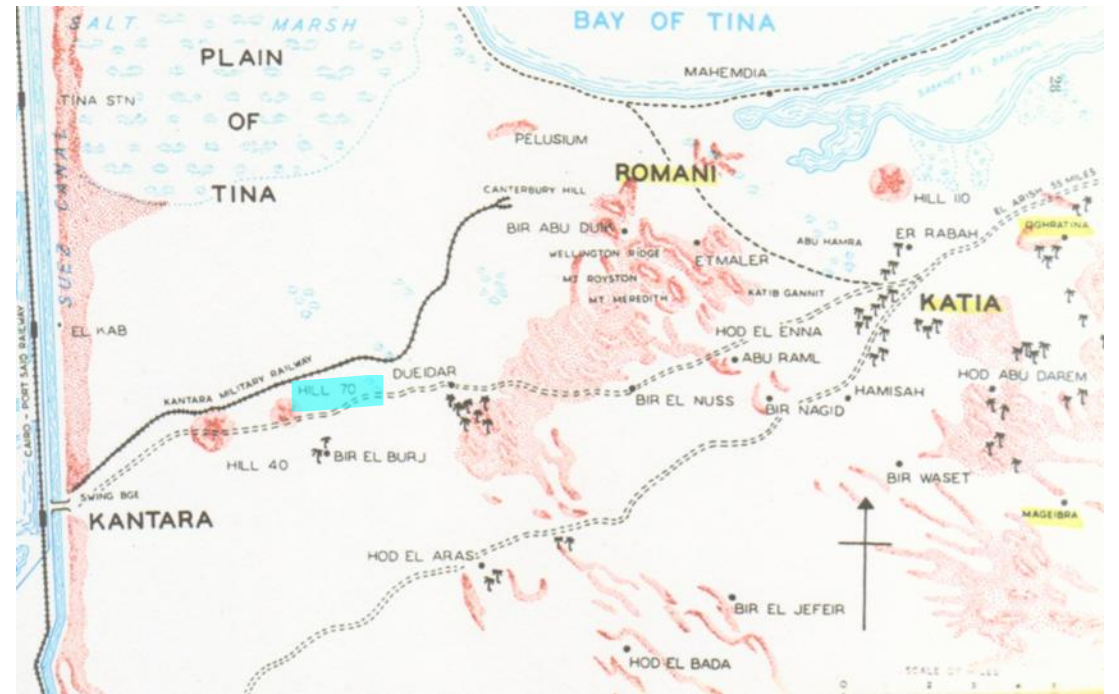
# 4 August 1916

- At dawn on 4 August 1916, Chauvel held back his only reserve—the 2nd Light Horse Brigade—until daylight revealed the true danger.
- The main Turkish thrust was not against the 1st Brigade's front but sweeping west between Etmaler and Mount Royston toward the railway.
- Chauvel sent the 6th and 7th Regiments to block this flanking move, the Australians advancing on foot under heavy enfilade fire but taking few early casualties.
- Turkish pressure intensified rapidly. Machine-guns, artillery, and bombing aircraft hammered the light horse line as the two brigades fought desperately to hold Wellington Ridge.
- British batteries, coming into action after sunrise, disrupted Turkish machine-guns and slowed the advance, but the enemy's superior numbers and wide turning movement steadily pushed forward.



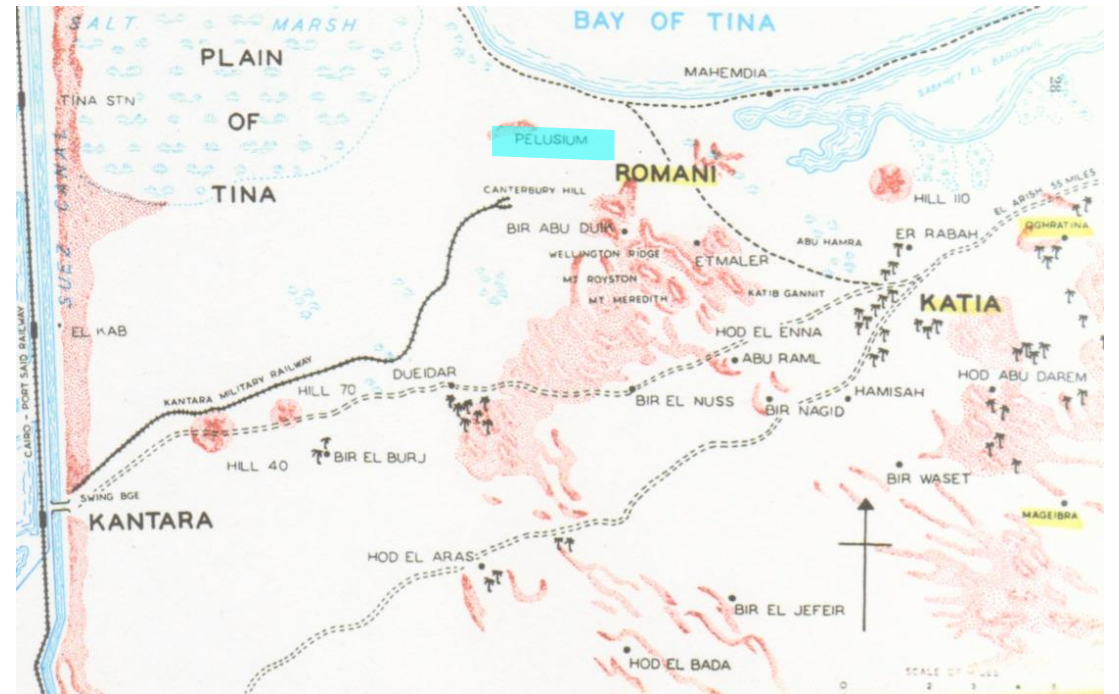
# 4 August 1916

- The heat and deep sand now worked against the Ottomans.
- Their enveloping attack progressed only slowly, and every yard gained exposed their flank to Chaytor's force assembling at **Hill 70**.
- Chauvel, calm and deliberate, conducted a controlled withdrawal, knowing the Turks could not long endure without capturing the water at Romani and Etmaler.



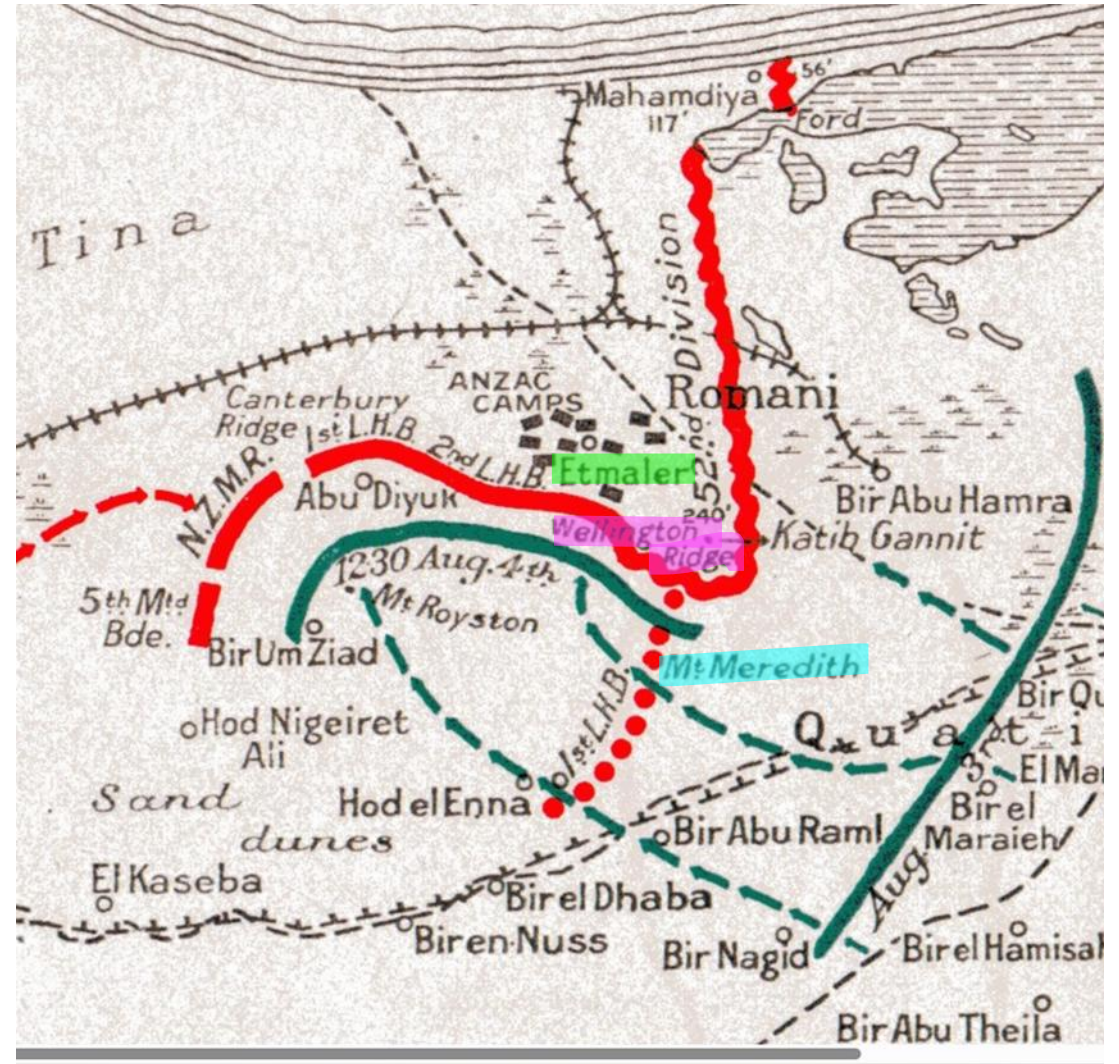
# 4 August 1916

- Meanwhile, the 5th Light Horse, sent to locate the enemy's extreme left, found two battalions moving north and drew their fire before withdrawing.
- Their report reassured Lawrence that no further threat lay to the west, allowing him to push the 42nd Division toward **Pelusium**.



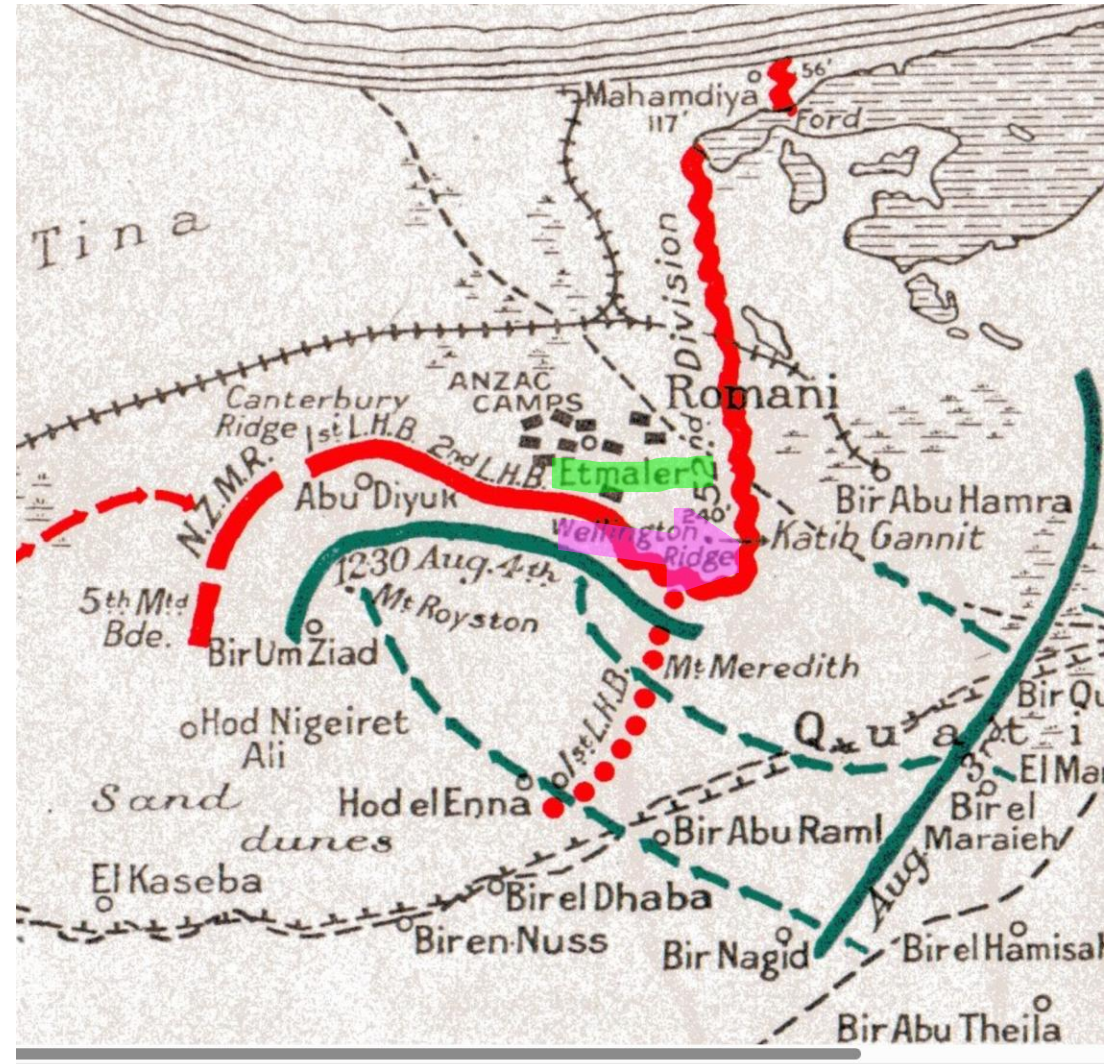
# 4 August 1916

- Soon after daylight, a strong Turkish body rushed behind **Mount Meredith** and reached cover close to **Wellington Ridge**.
- Under punishing shrapnel and machine-gun fire, the Australians fell back steadily, the 3rd, 6th, and 7th Regiments and the Wellingtons holding the line by alternating squadrons.
- Acts of bravery marked the retreat; all wounded were carried back through the sand, and several men, including Corporal Curran, were killed performing this work.



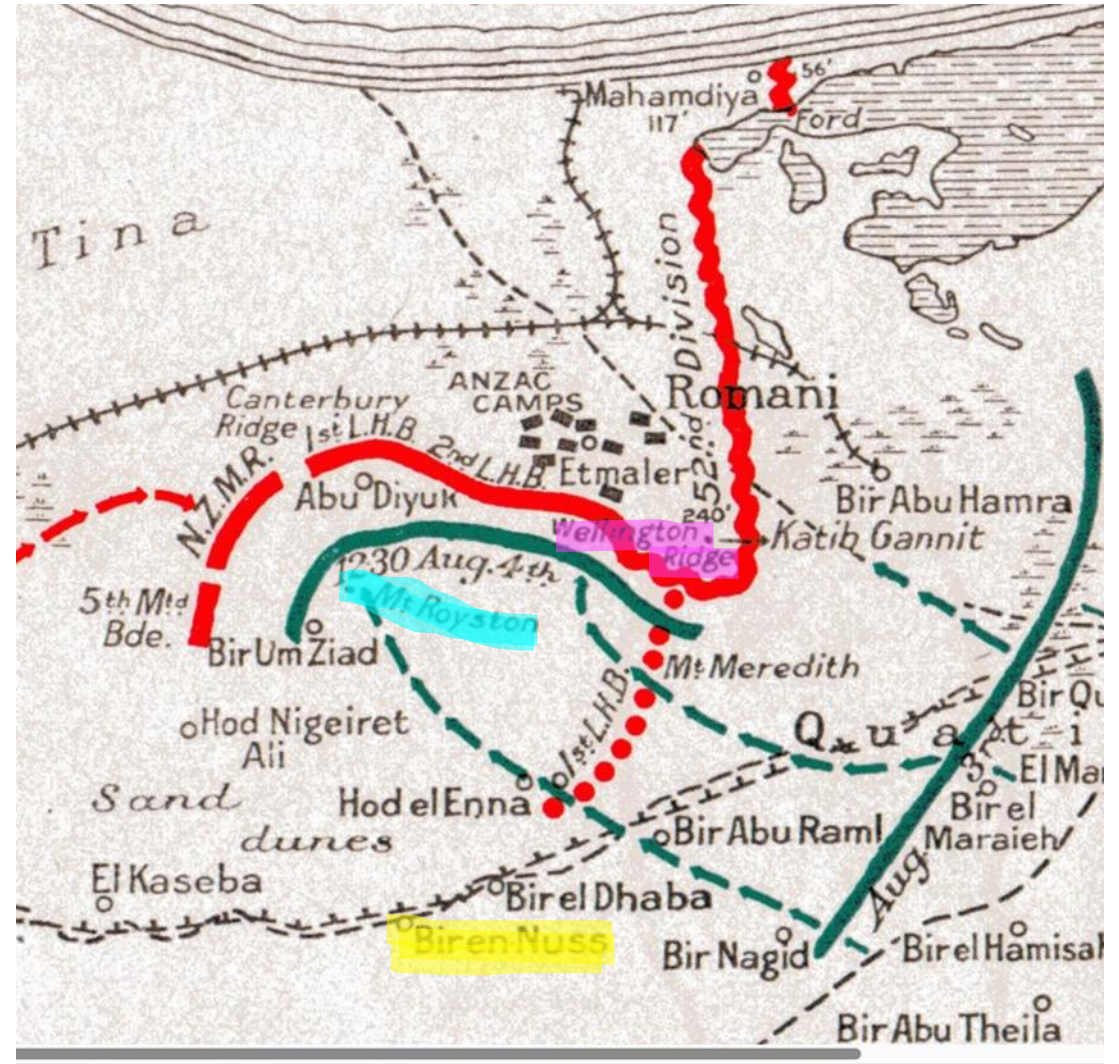
# 4 August 1916

- By 7 a.m. the Turks seized Wellington Ridge, only 700 yards from Etmaler camp.
- Exhaustion halted their advance at the crest, giving Chauvel a vital hour.
- When Turkish riflemen finally appeared on the skyline, British guns immediately swept the ridge, clearing it and preventing further movement until late afternoon.



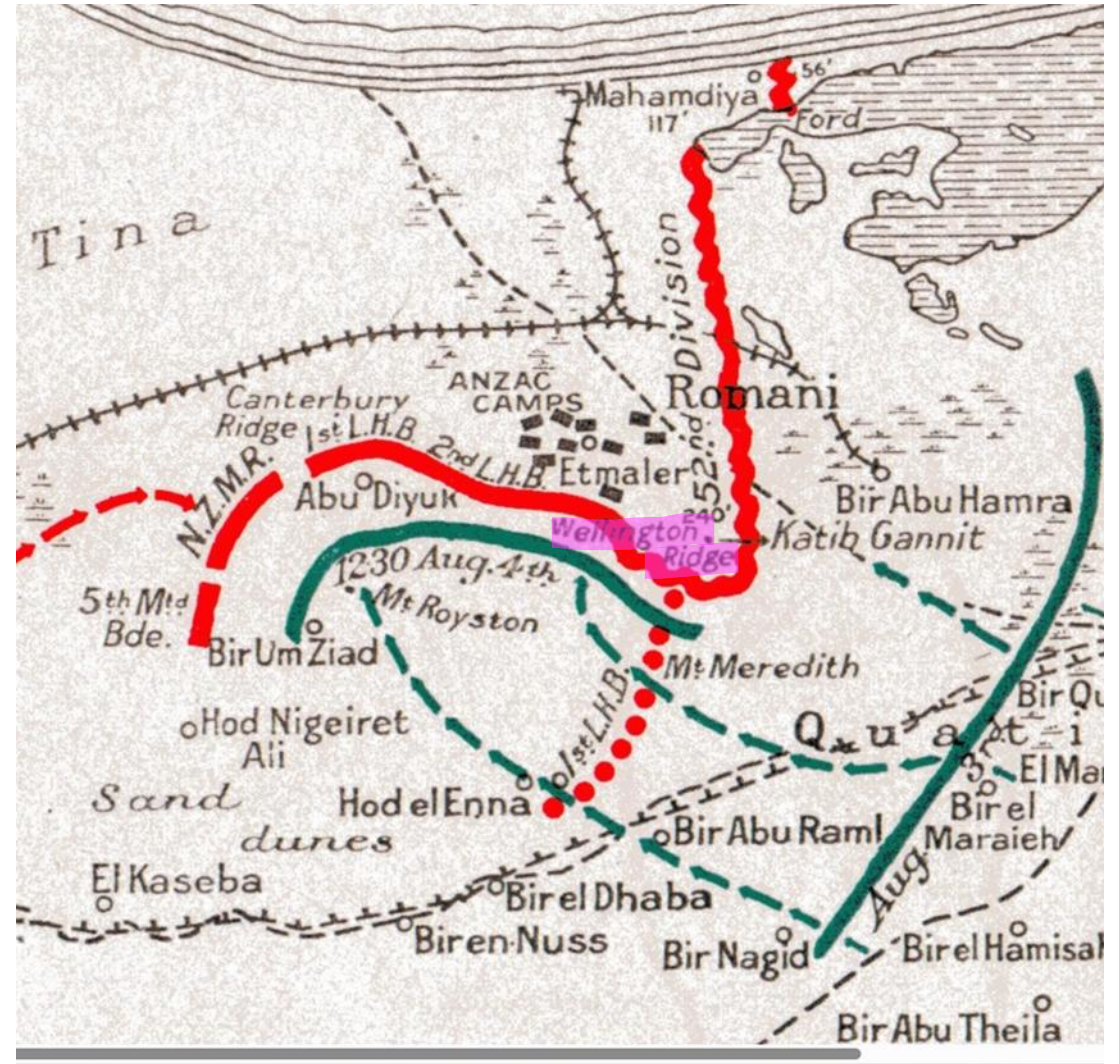
# 4 August 1916

- On 4 August 1916, with the Turks held on Wellington Ridge and their flank exposed near Mount Royston, the moment was ideal for Chaytor's counter-stroke.
- But Chaytor, under Lawrence's direct control, could not be quickly reached—Romani's telephone line to Kantara had been cut, and the Port Said line was too slow.
- Only after a long delay could Chauvel inform Lawrence of the situation and request orders for Chaytor to advance on Mount Royston and Antill on Bir el Nuss.
- By then, Chaytor had already been redirected twice before finally being sent toward Mount Royston, while Antill—through no fault of his own—did not reach the district before the day's fighting ended.



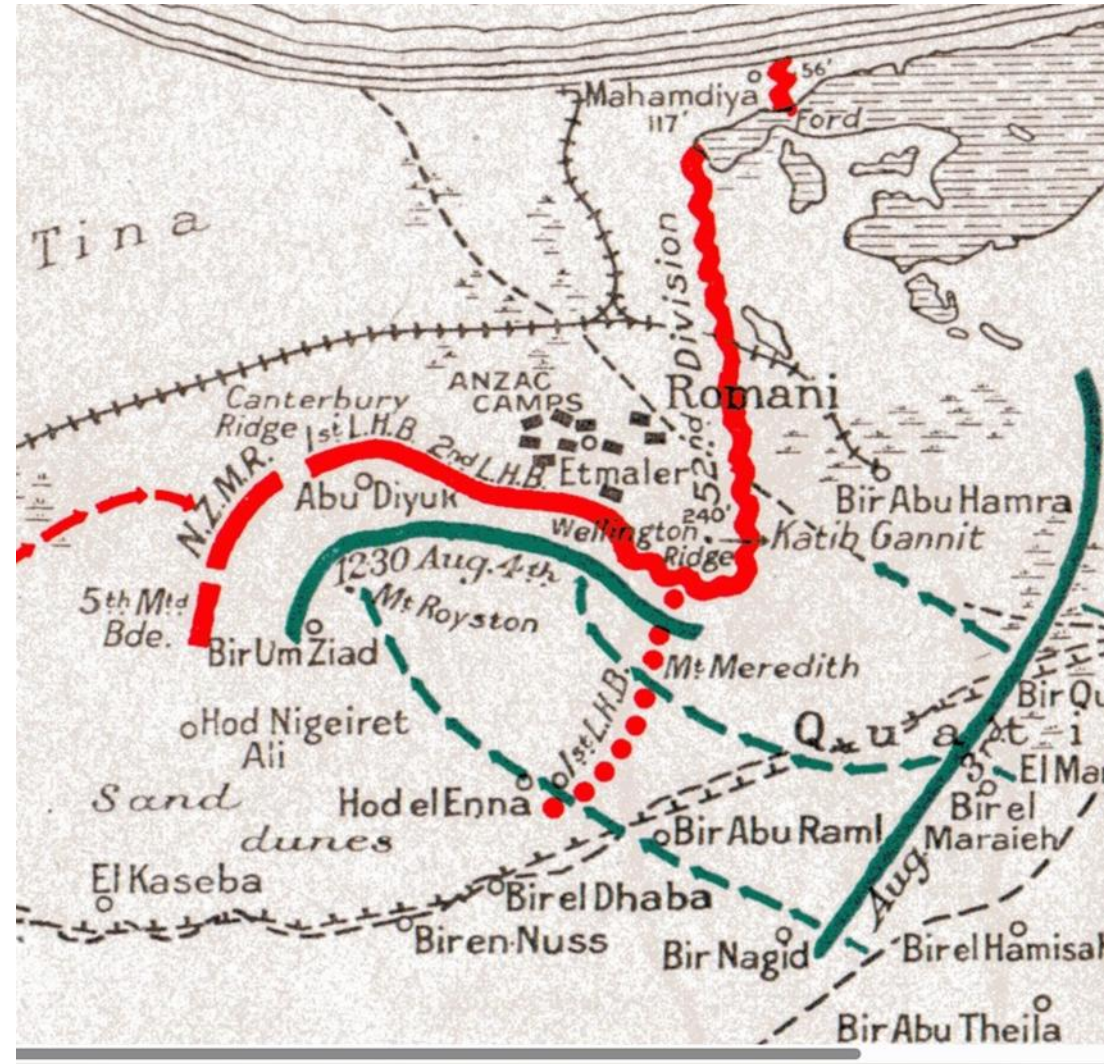
# 4 August 1916

- Soon after 7 a.m., a strong Turkish force advanced between Mount Royston and Etmaler, threatening General Royston's right.
- A squadron of Gloucesters from the 5th Mounted Brigade gave the first support from the west, engaging the enemy flank.
- As the Australians withdrew from **Wellington Ridge**, a battalion commander of the 52nd Division extended the infantry line to support Chauvel, who soon requested and received two more companies at a critical moment.



# 4 August 1916

- By mid-morning, the Anzac line stretched from the infantry north of Wellington Ridge to the sand-hills near Mount Royston, with the Wellington Mounted Rifles on the left and the 1st Light Horse in reserve.
- The front stabilised, and it became clear the Turkish attack would fail unless reinforced with great vigour.
- Their bombardment continued, striking both infantry and light horse positions.



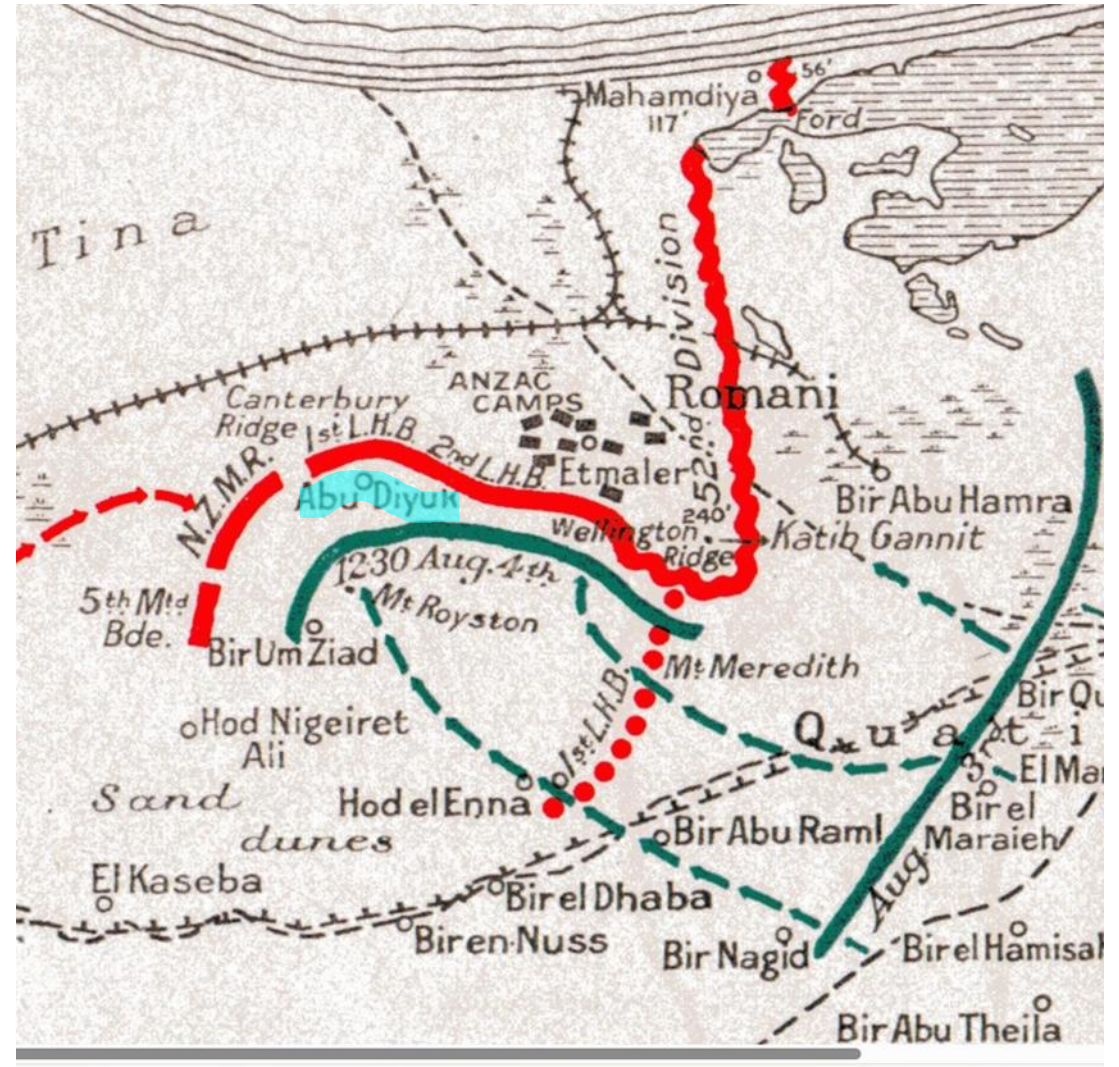
# 4 August 1916

- Around 11 a.m., the New Zealand Brigade established contact with the 5th Yeomanry Brigade, confirming that Chaytor—despite earlier delays—would arrive in time to counter-attack.
- Plans were made to assault Mount Royston, now strongly held.
- The Ayrshire Battery opened fire, and the 42nd Division pushed forward an advanced brigade from Pelusium.
- Photo: Australian signaller with heliograph in Egypt in 1916



# 4 August 1916

- Chauvel sent the 6th Light Horse to the extreme right, where they were heavily shelled and bombed as they engaged about 2,000 Turks at close range.
- After inflicting heavy casualties, they were forced back 700 yards.
- The 3rd Regiment moved to support them, but the Turks continued to envelop the flank until the Australians, holding higher ground, checked their advance.
- The enemy halted and dug in.



# 4 August 1916

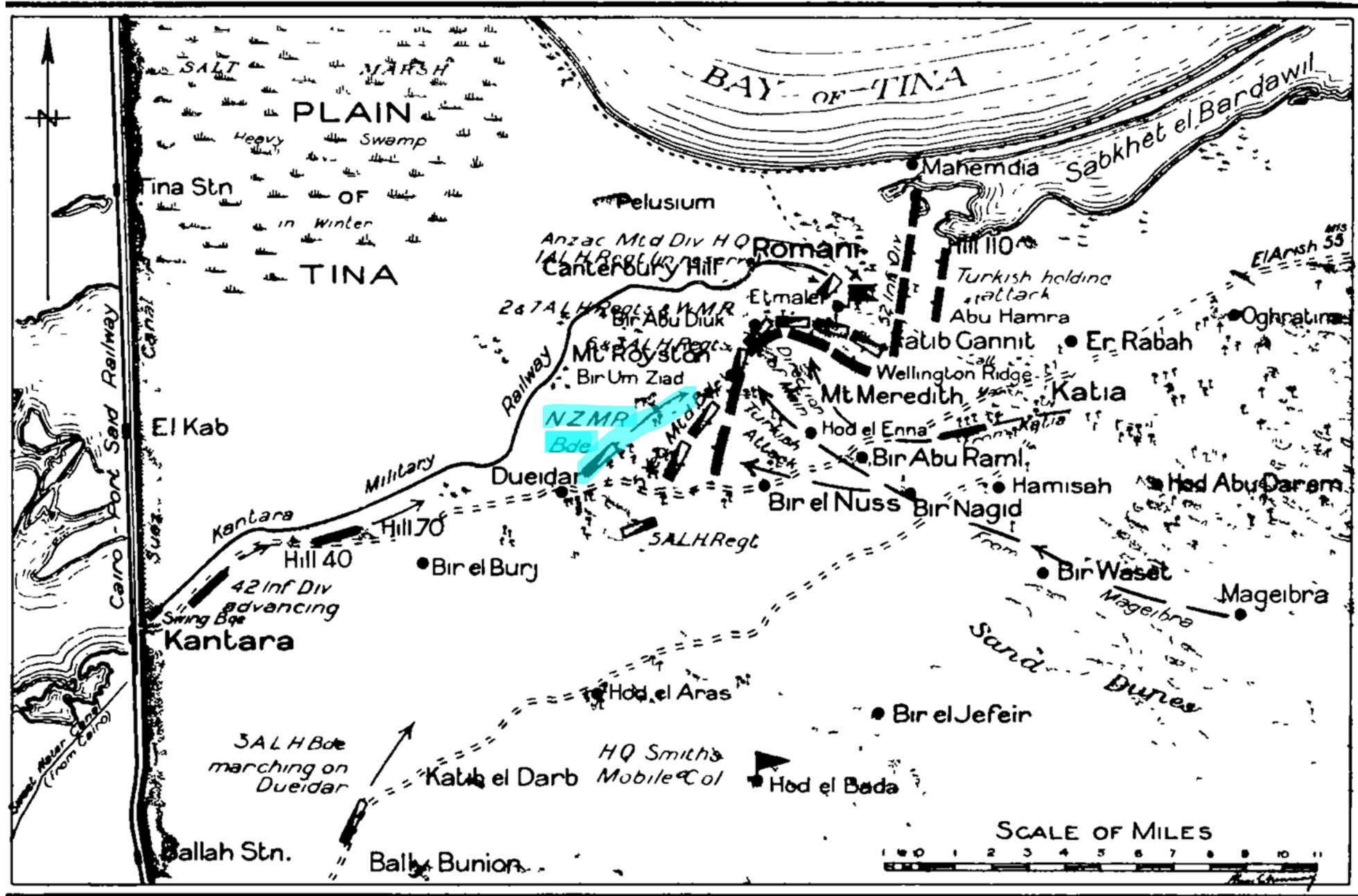
- The Gloucesters, positioned west of Mount Royston, reported the Turks making no attempt to pass them.
- Major Whyte signalled an approaching force by heliograph—“Who are you?”—and received the welcome reply: “Chaytor.”
- After giving the positions of both sides, Whyte asked if they would attack Mount Royston.
- The answer came back: “Advancing to attack Mount Royston.”



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART02704

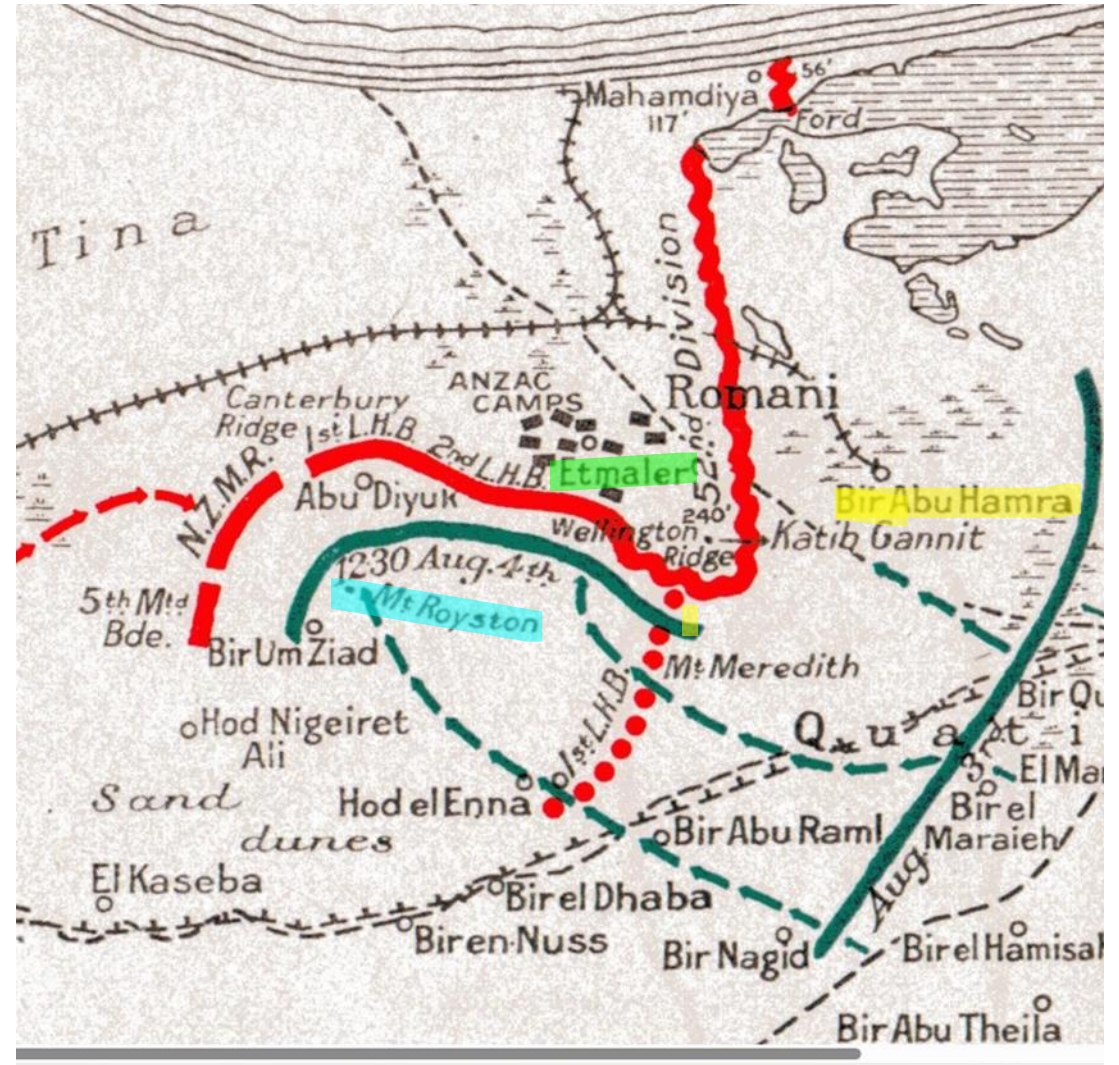
Romani, Mount Royston in background



ROMANI—POSITION AT 4 P.M., 4TH AUGUST, 1916. (CERTAIN ADVANCED UNITS OF THE 42ND DIVISION WERE ALSO NEAR PELUSIUM AND ROMANI.)

# 4 August 1916

- Chauvel's line on Wellington Ridge was left thin as units shifted, yet the 7th Regiment held so close to Etmaler that cooks served tea under fire.
- The Turks reinforced the crest but made no real move to advance, and a mountain battery that shelled Etmaler was quickly silenced by the Ayrshire guns.
- Enemy demonstrations continued around the infantry posts, but the New Zealand advance made Mount Royston the centre of the battle.
- Chauvel's artillery, joined by two 18-pounder batteries, shelled the hollows around the mount and checked further Turkish movement.



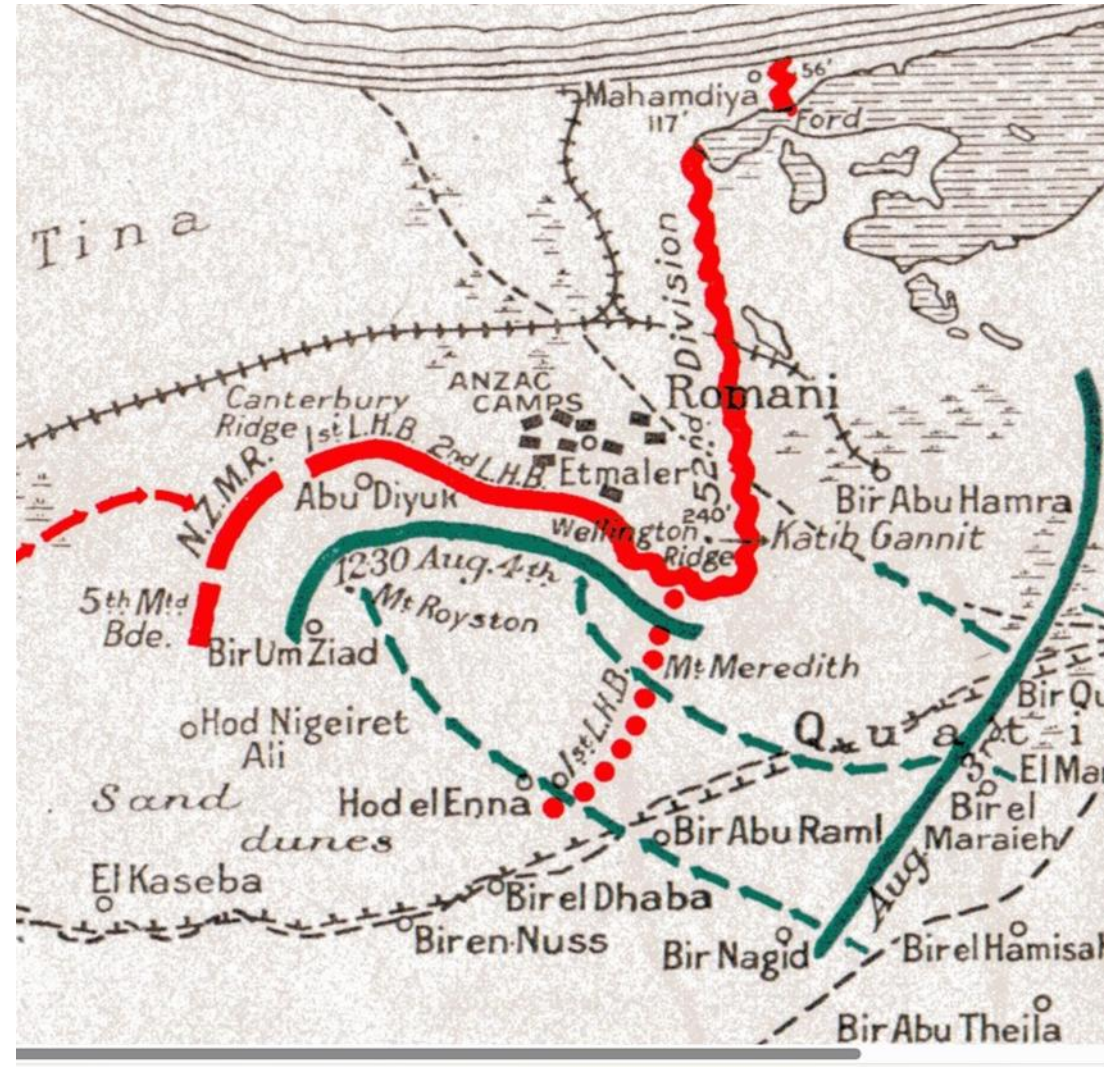
# 4 August 1916

- Chaytor approached Mount Royston with a reduced force, hoping the 127th Infantry Brigade would arrive in time to support his flank attack.
- He met the tireless Royston of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, a veteran whose fearless riding and booming encouragement kept the men steady under fire.
- Nearly sixty and heavily built, “Galloping Jack” raced along the line all day, urging officers to keep moving and telling the men they were making history.
- To a hard-pressed troop on the naked flank he cried: “We are winning now. They are retreating in hundreds.” “And,” said one of the light horsemen later, “I poked my head over the top, and there were the blighters coming on in thousands.”
- Photo: Chaytor Commander of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade



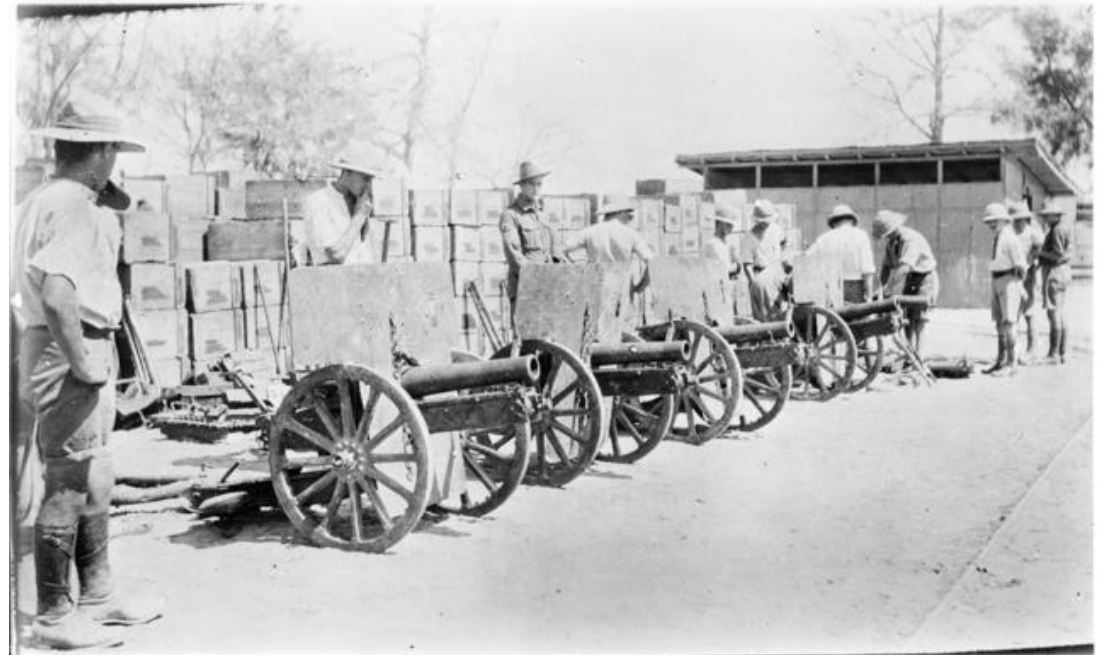
# 4 August 1916

- About 2,000 Turks held the flank around Mount Royston, opposed by the 6th and 3rd Light Horse and harassed by British guns, now including the Somerset Battery.
- The New Zealanders and Yeomanry advanced dismounted through heat and heavy sand, meeting stubborn Turkish resistance.
- A Turkish attempt to push over Wellington Ridge was broken up by shrapnel, though the planned infantry assault by the 156th Brigade never developed.



# 4 August 1916

- Through the afternoon the New Zealanders and Yeomanry steadily closed in.
- At 6 p.m. the Turks raised the white flag, surrendering in large numbers.
- By 6:30, around 500 prisoners and the earlier-silenced mountain battery were in Allied hands.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A00982

Australian soldiers inspecting Turkish 75 mm M04 Mountain guns, which were captured during the battle of Romani. Ammunition boxes are in the background.

# 6 August 1916

- After the exhausting fighting of 4–5 August, the Anzac horses and men were too spent to continue the pursuit on the 6th.
- Only the fresher brigades—the New Zealanders, 3rd Light Horse, and Yeomanry—pushed ahead at dawn, finding Katia abandoned and making contact with a stubborn Turkish rear-guard near Oghratina.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00153.018

Horses and troops of the 1st Australian Light Horse Regiment at a well.

# 7 August 1916

- On 7 August the New Zealanders probed the enemy again while the 3rd Light Horse attempted to turn their flank, but the reorganised Turks held firm.



Four man mounted section of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, in action one man in four was assigned to hold their horses.

# 8 August 1916

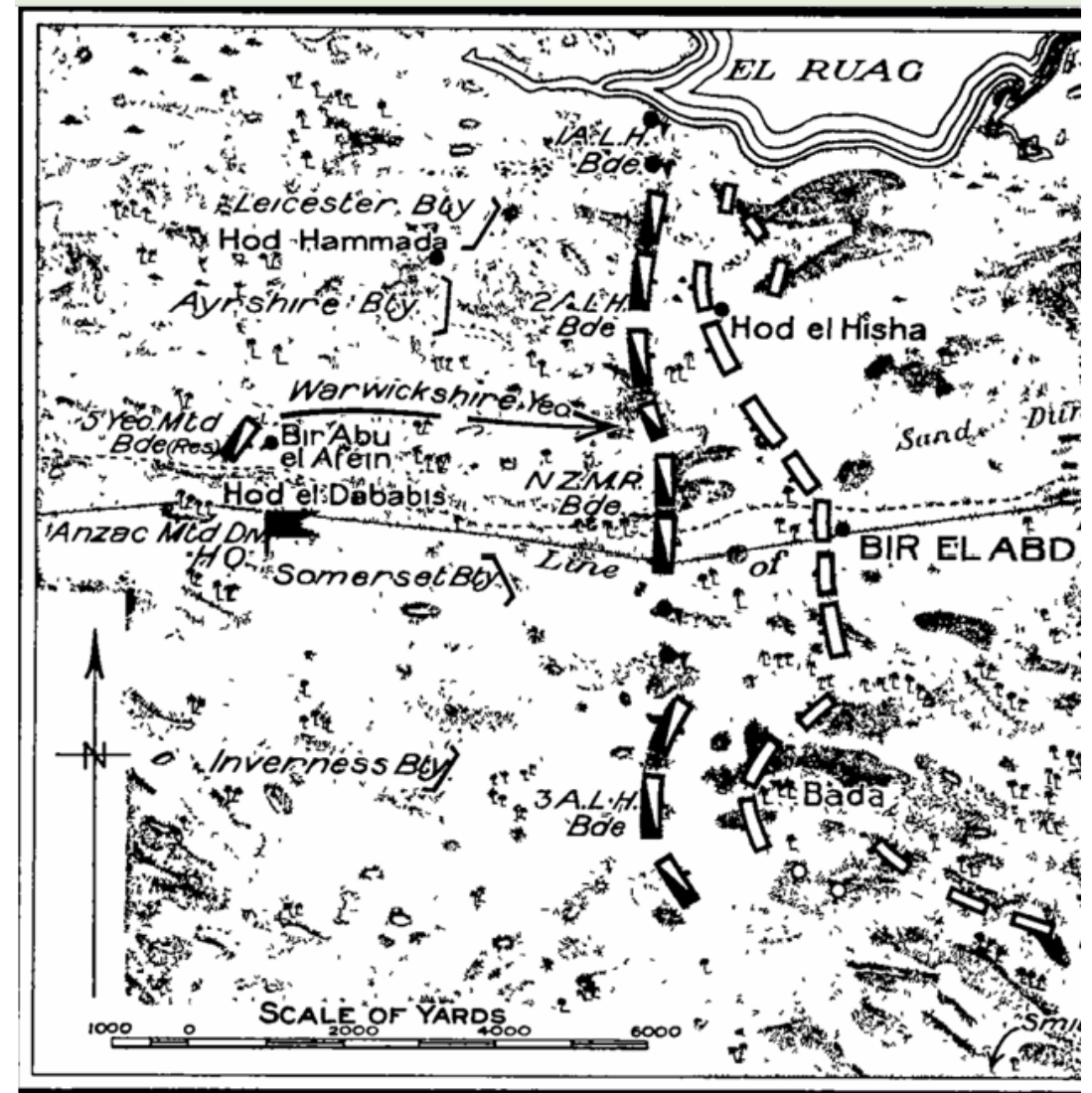
- By the morning of the 8th Oghratina was empty, and patrols located the main Turkish rear-guard entrenched around Bir el Abd.
- With infantry unable to reach so far, Lawrence ordered a mounted assault for the next day.
- Chauvel concentrated his brigades overnight, the New Zealanders advancing directly on Abd while the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Light Horse manoeuvred to strike from the north and east.





# 9 August 1916

- Despite their efforts, the enemy's rear-guard held its ground, and the attempt to break them failed.
- On no part of the long line did the Turks in their counter-attack, succeed in making contact with the bayonet.
- Chauvel's casualties for a brief engagement with mounted troops were heavy, 73 killed, 243 wounded and six posted missing.



# August 1916

- Troops gather for the sale of officers' clothes and belongings.
- The officers were killed at the battle of Romani and money raised was generally sent home to bereaved families.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00153.012

# August 1916

- As the brigades advanced on the 10th and 11th, they found the Turks still on the field, trading scattered long-range fire.
- By dawn on the 12th, the New Zealanders discovered Abd abandoned, but the enemy had regrouped in strength at Salmana, where the three brigades and horse artillery engaged them at distance.
- That night the Turks withdrew toward El Arish.
- The British, fighting defensively, had halted the assault, shattered much of the enemy force, and driven them back into the barren desert between Salmana and El Arish.
- The victory revealed new strategic possibilities in the region and belonged largely to Chauvel and his Anzacs.



# 21 December 1916

- On 21 December 1916, after a 30-mile night march, Chauvel's Anzac Mounted Division entered El Arish, finding it abandoned as the Ottoman forces withdrew to Magdhaba.
- Though uneventful, the movement marked a turning point. The mounted troops finally left the harsh Sinai sands for the firmer ground on the edge of southern Palestine.
- After months of blistering heat, sandstorms, scarce water and relentless work, the night ride felt almost miraculous.
- Under a brilliant December sky, the horses stepped off the dunes onto the solid flats of the Wady el Arish, their shoes striking sparks on the stones.
- General Cox later recalled it as the most wonderful night of the campaign, the men laughing with relief as they sensed Sinai behind them.
- By dawn the 1st Brigade reached the Mediterranean coast east of El Arish, completing the encirclement.
- The long ride across twenty-three miles of unknown desert showed the remarkable mastery the Anzacs had gained over the terrain.



# 21 December 1916

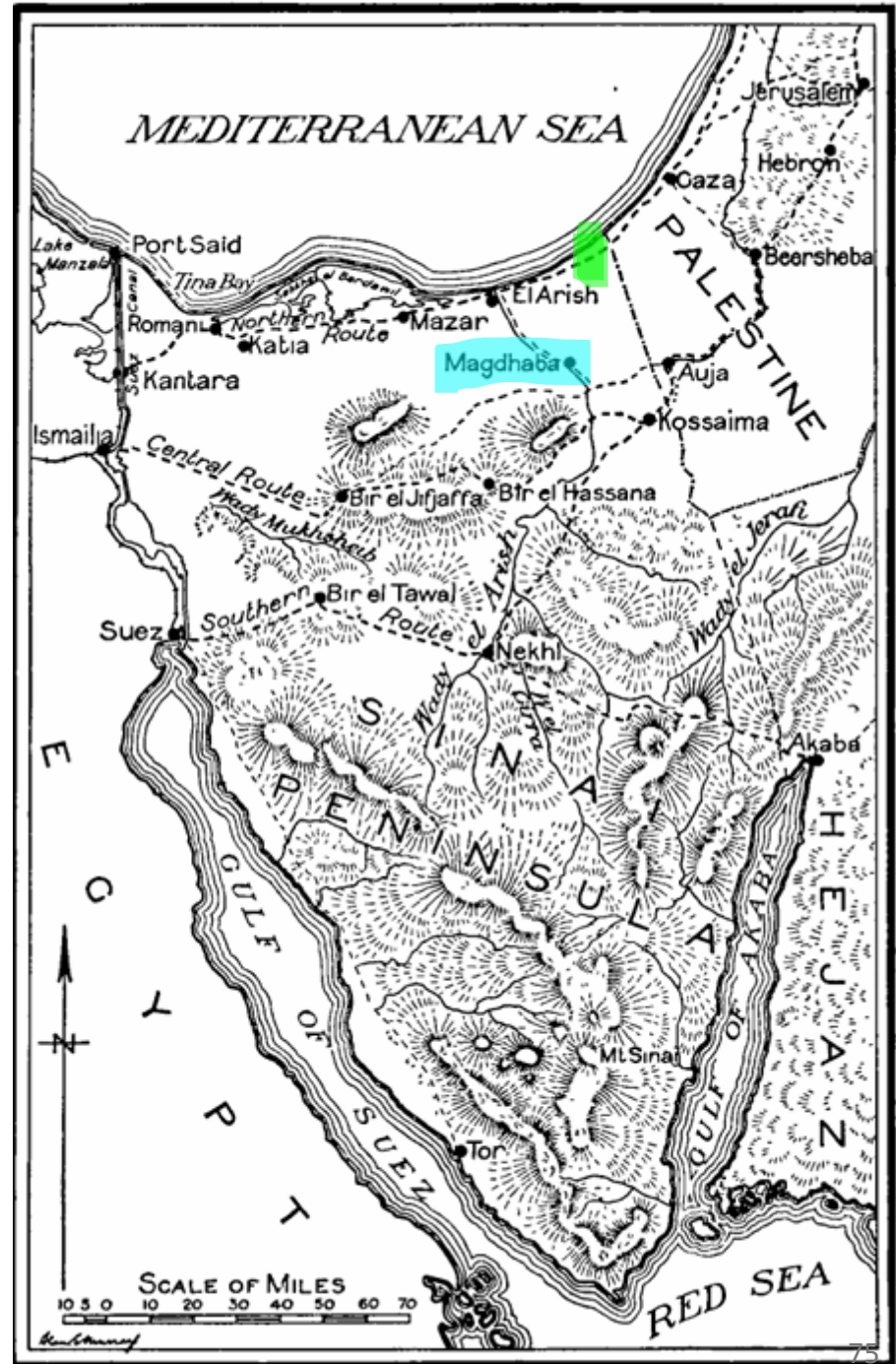
- In late December 1916, air patrols reported a growing Turkish force at Magdhaba, south along the Wady El Arish.
- Chauvel sent patrols to confirm the threat and search for water.



An aerial reconnaissance camera of 1916 as operated by the pilot of a B.E.2c

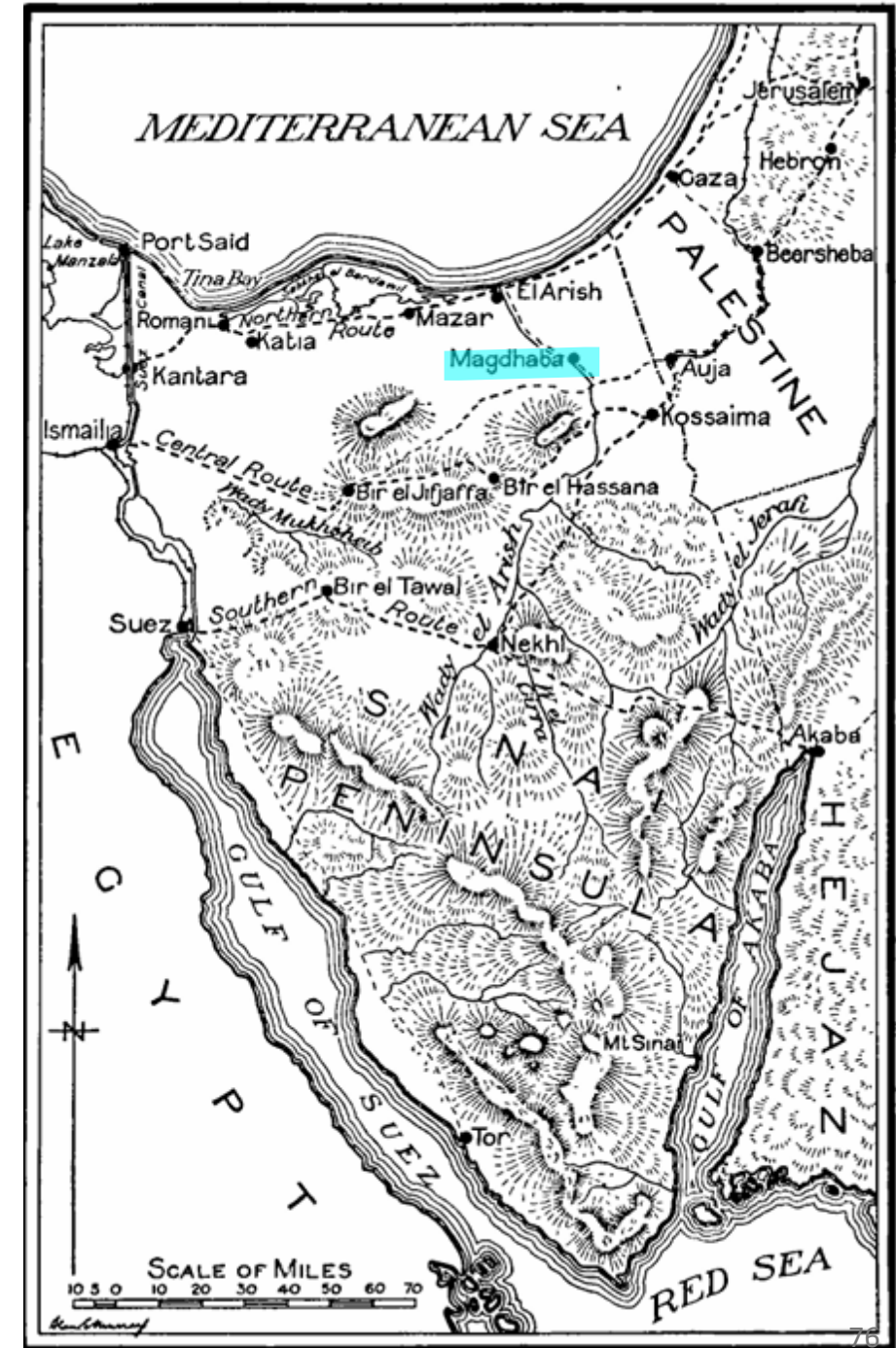
# 22 December 1916

- The Turks had split their El Arish garrison, fortifying **Magdhaba** and **Rafa**.
- When Chetwode arrived at El Arish on 22 December, he ordered an immediate pursuit, supported by supplies arriving by sea and rail.
- Australian airmen raided Magdhaba, confirming a strong, well-armed garrison, prompting Chetwode to commit all mounted troops to the attack.



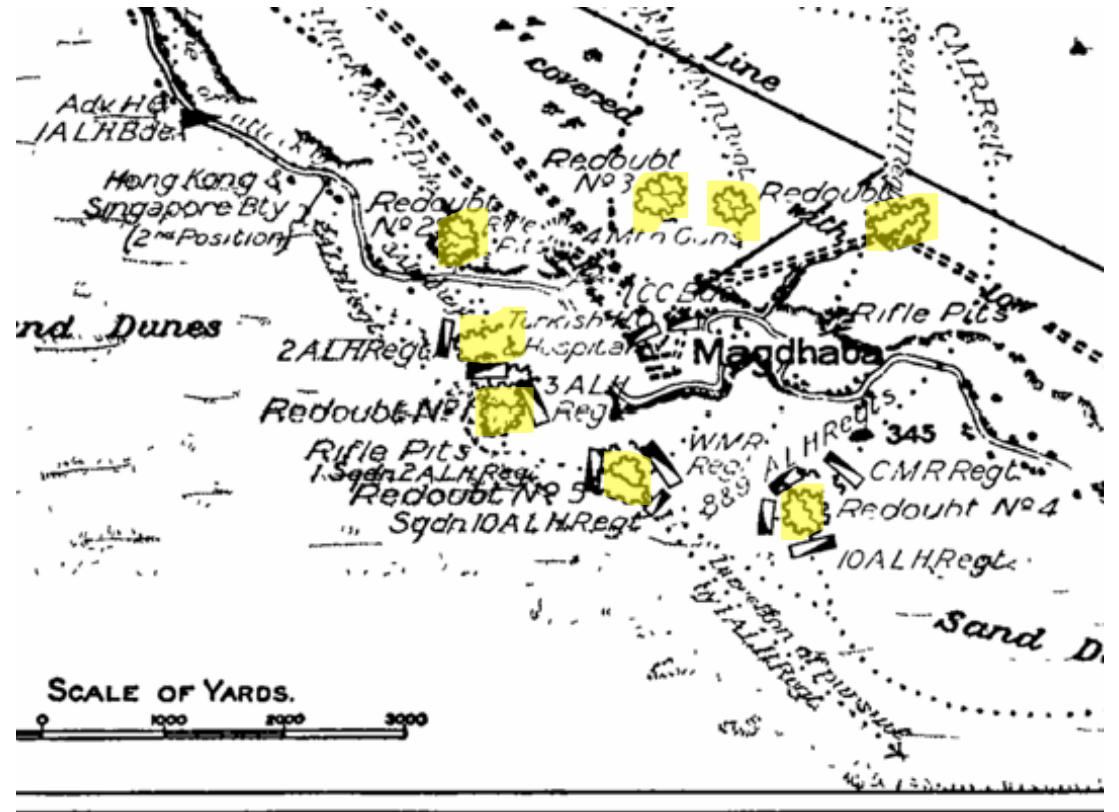
# 23 December 1916

- Before dawn on 23 December, the Anzac Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps began the nineteen-mile night ride up the wady, moving silently through dust and bitter cold.
- Each hour was divided into forty minutes' riding, ten minutes' leading, and ten minutes' halt.
- Near 4 a.m., the glow of Turkish campfires appeared, and the column halted four miles short of the position.
- As dawn broke, smoke obscured the valley, delaying reconnaissance until aircraft arrived.



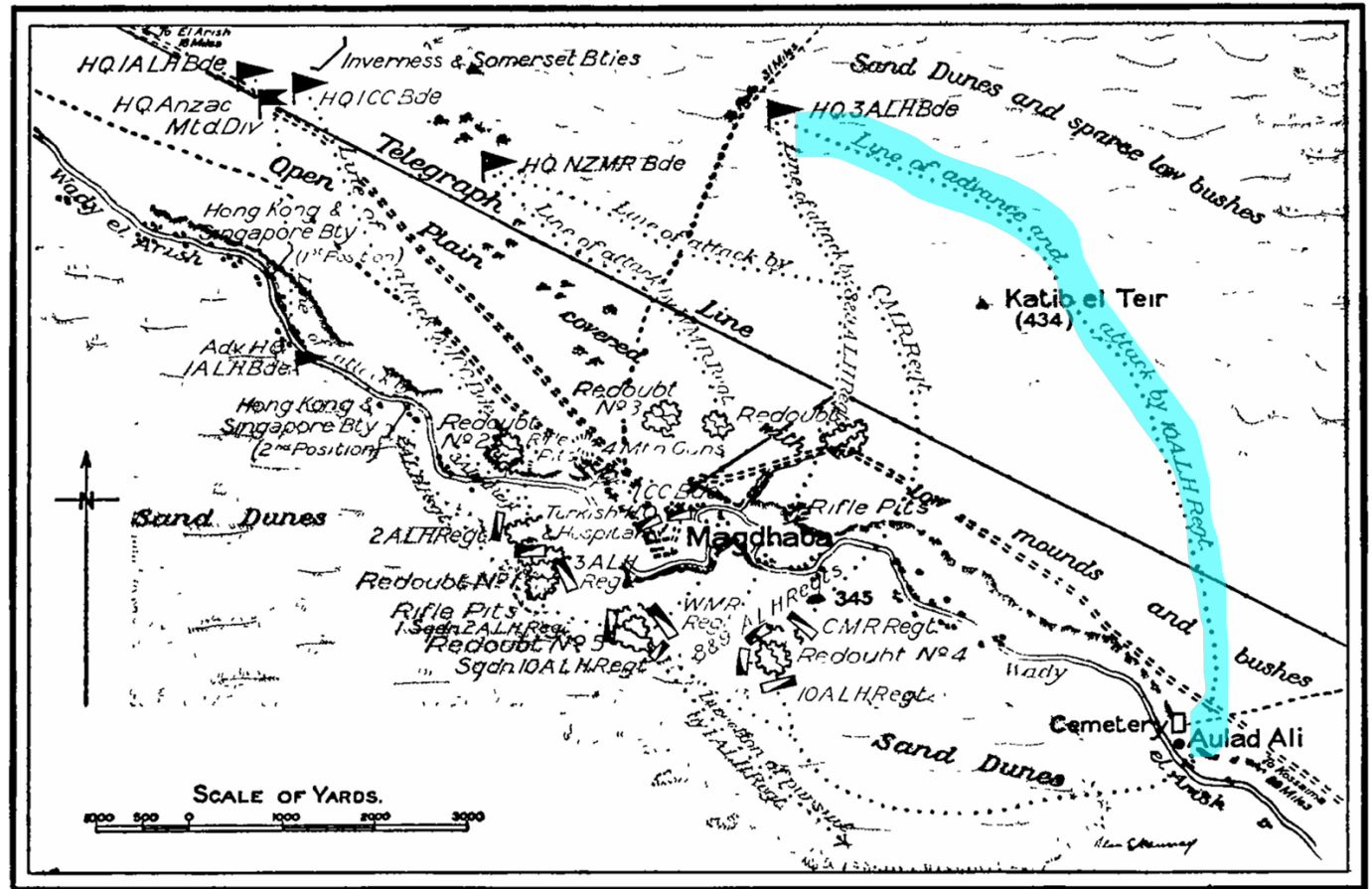
# 23 December 1916

- Flying low, the airmen drew Turkish fire, revealing the ring of redoubts protecting the central buildings.
- The Turks had destroyed nearby wells, knowing the attackers depended on water twenty-three miles away.
- Chauvel ordered a rapid, determined assault: the Camels advancing from the north, New Zealanders and the 3rd Light Horse from the east, and Cox's 1st Light Horse in reserve. Batteries opened fire to signal the attack.



# 23 December 1916

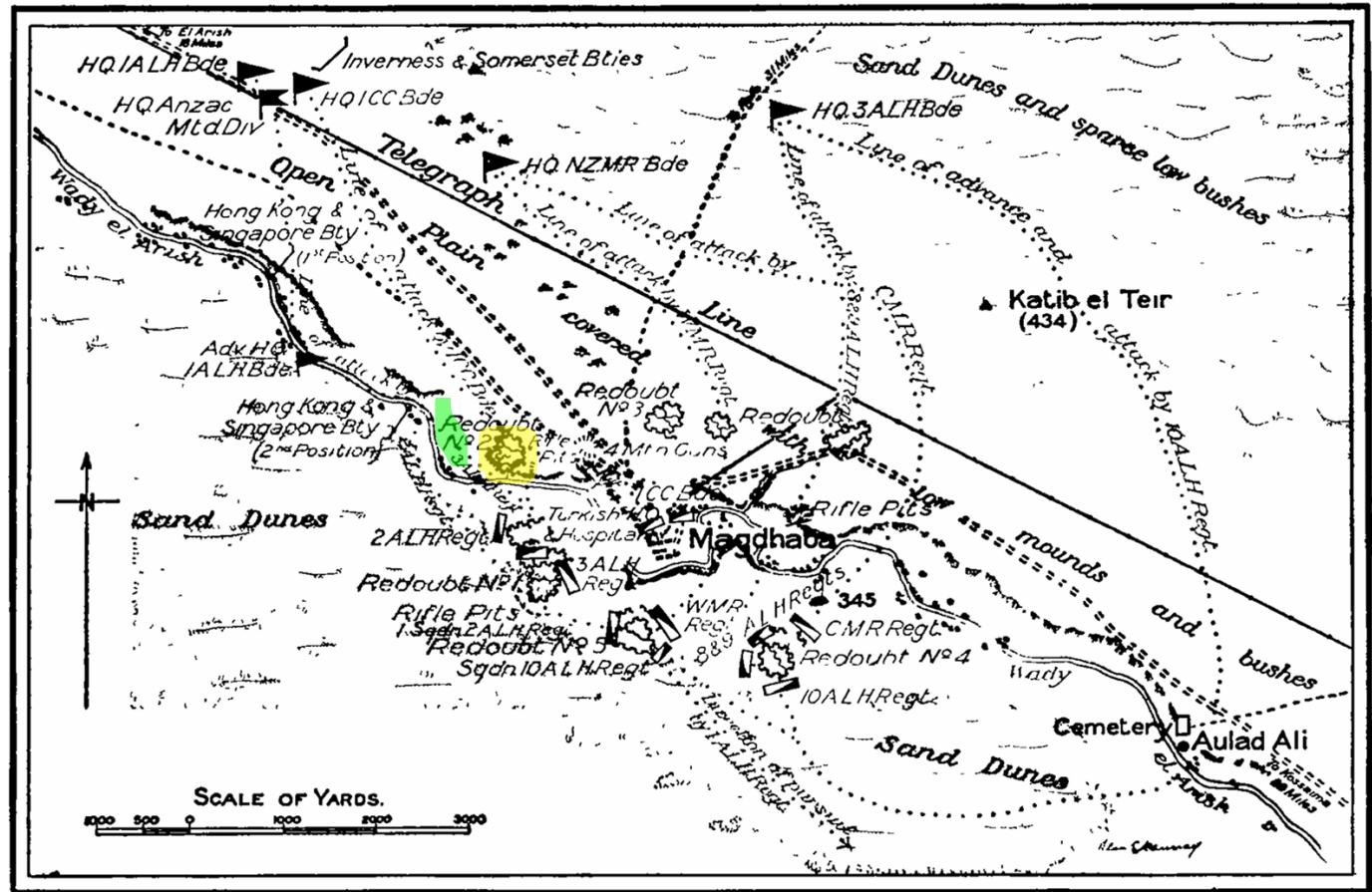
- As the brigades moved, airmen reported Turks escaping south.
- Royston led the 10th Light Horse in a **sweeping gallop** that intercepted a retreating column of 300, who surrendered in confusion.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

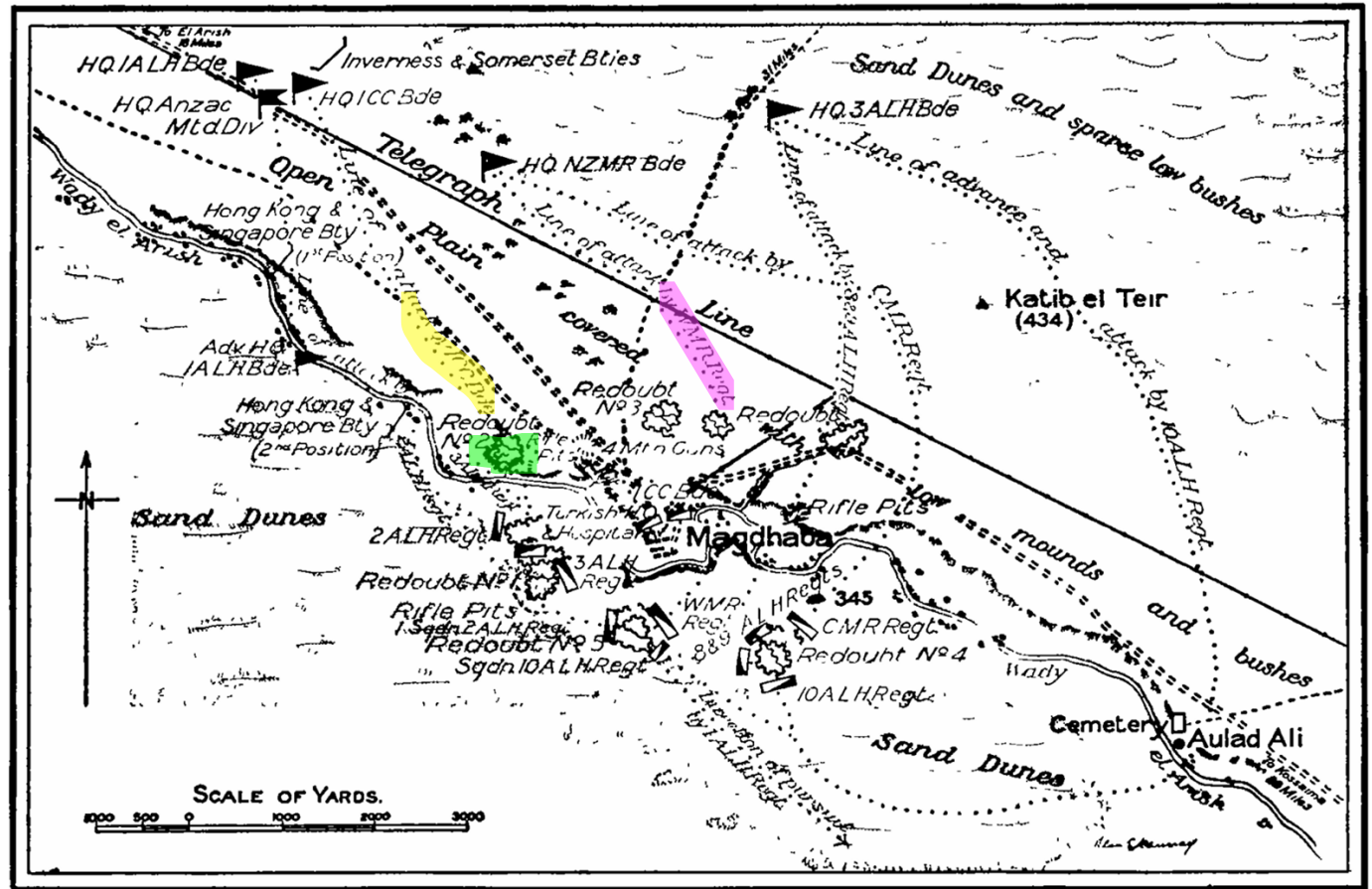
- By late morning the attack was still slow.
- The New Zealanders were checked by crossfire, and the Camels struggled across open ground.
- Cox sent the **3rd Light Horse Regiment** forward dismounted to support the assault on **Redoubt No. 2**.
- Artillery and machine-guns gradually suppressed the Turkish fire, allowing the light horsemen to push across the exposed wady floor and close to within 100 yards of the trenches by mid-afternoon.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

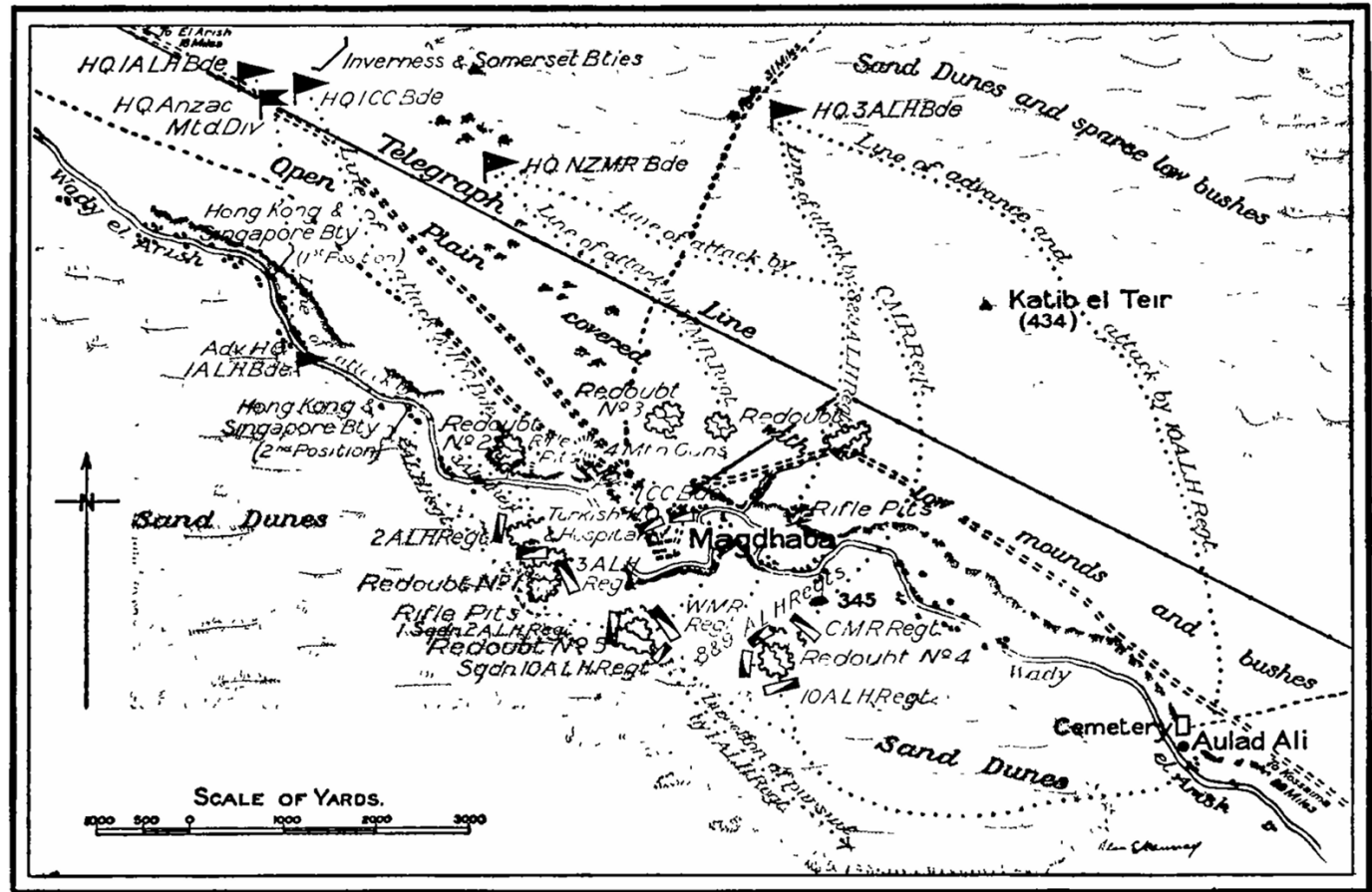
- the Camel Brigade and the 3rd Light Horse closed on the Turkish redoubts, their advance supported by **New Zealanders** moving openly on the flank and unsettling the defenders.
- After a short pause, the 3rd Light Horse and **Australian Camel Companies** charged with bayonets; the Turks resisted briefly before surrendering en masse.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

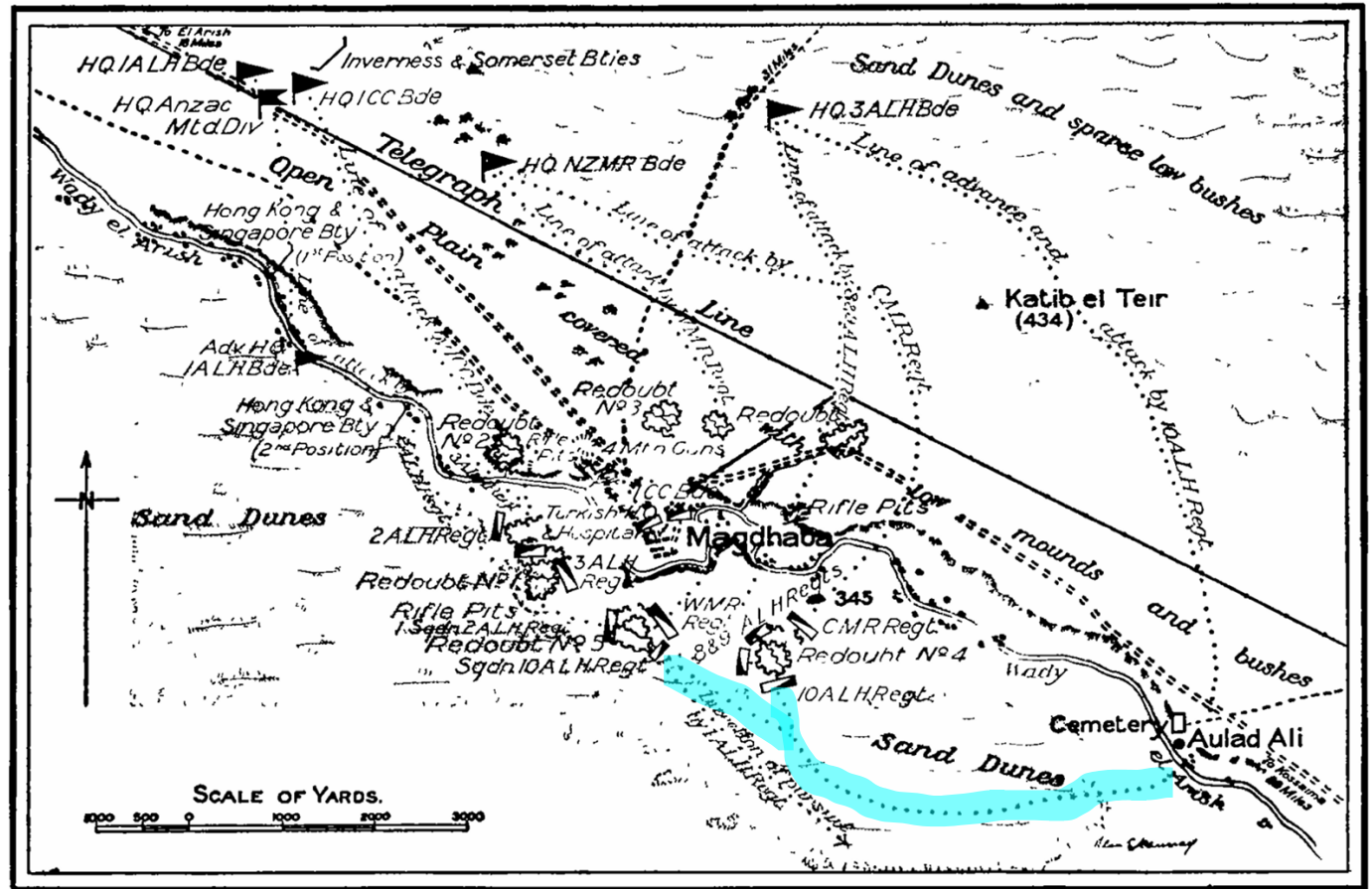
- Fulton pushed machine-guns forward and swept the next redoubt, enabling the Light Horse and Camels to continue their advance.
- On the left, the 2nd Camel Battalion linked with the New Zealanders and the 8th and 9th Light Horse, who were gaining ground across a broad front.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

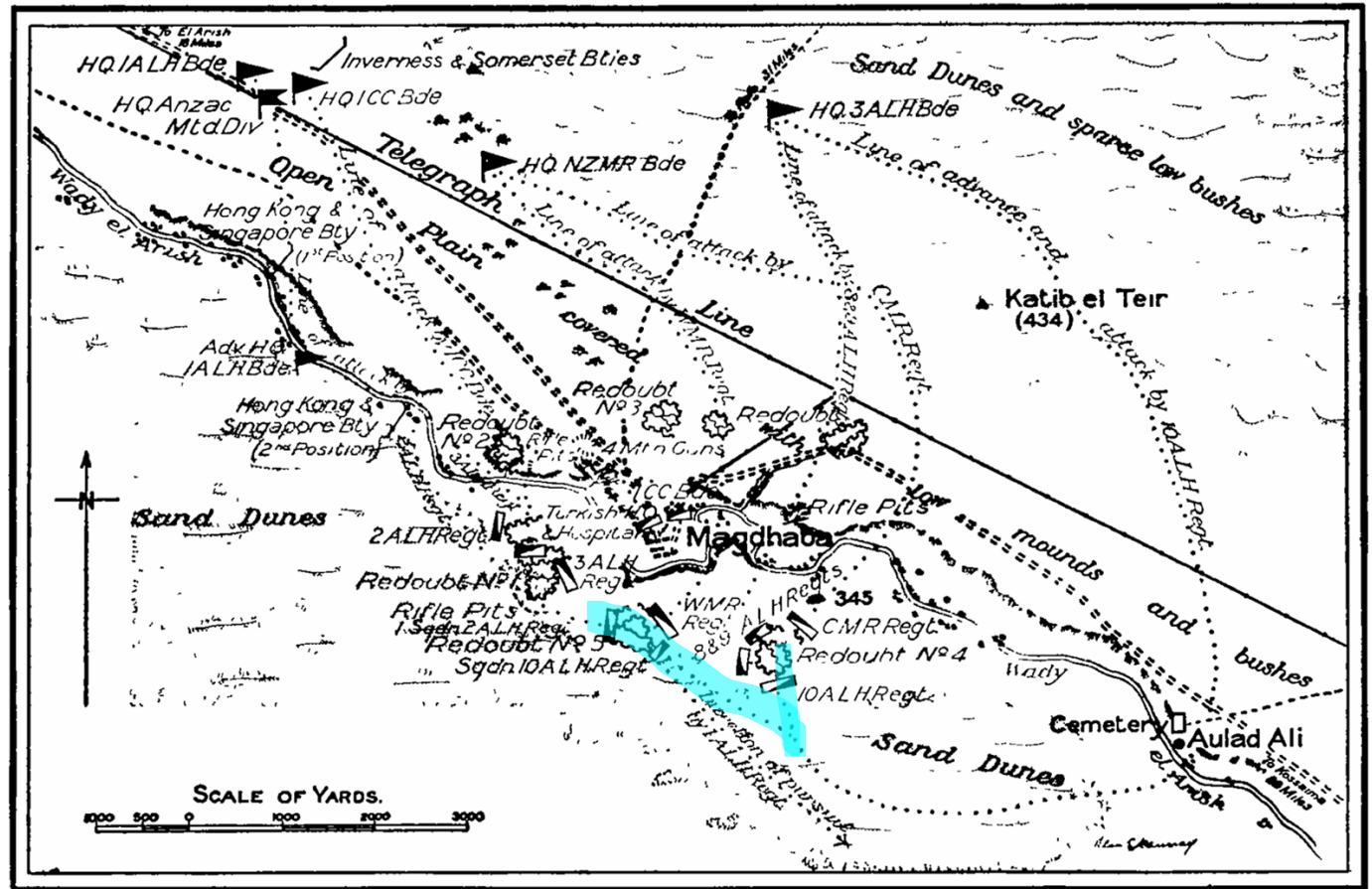
- Crossing the wady, **Robertson** swung north, cutting off the Turkish escape route.
- His squadrons pressed in from the rear, using the broken ridges for cover as they advanced in mounted rushes, dismounting only long enough to fire before pushing on.
- Machine-guns and Lewis guns kept the Turks pinned.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

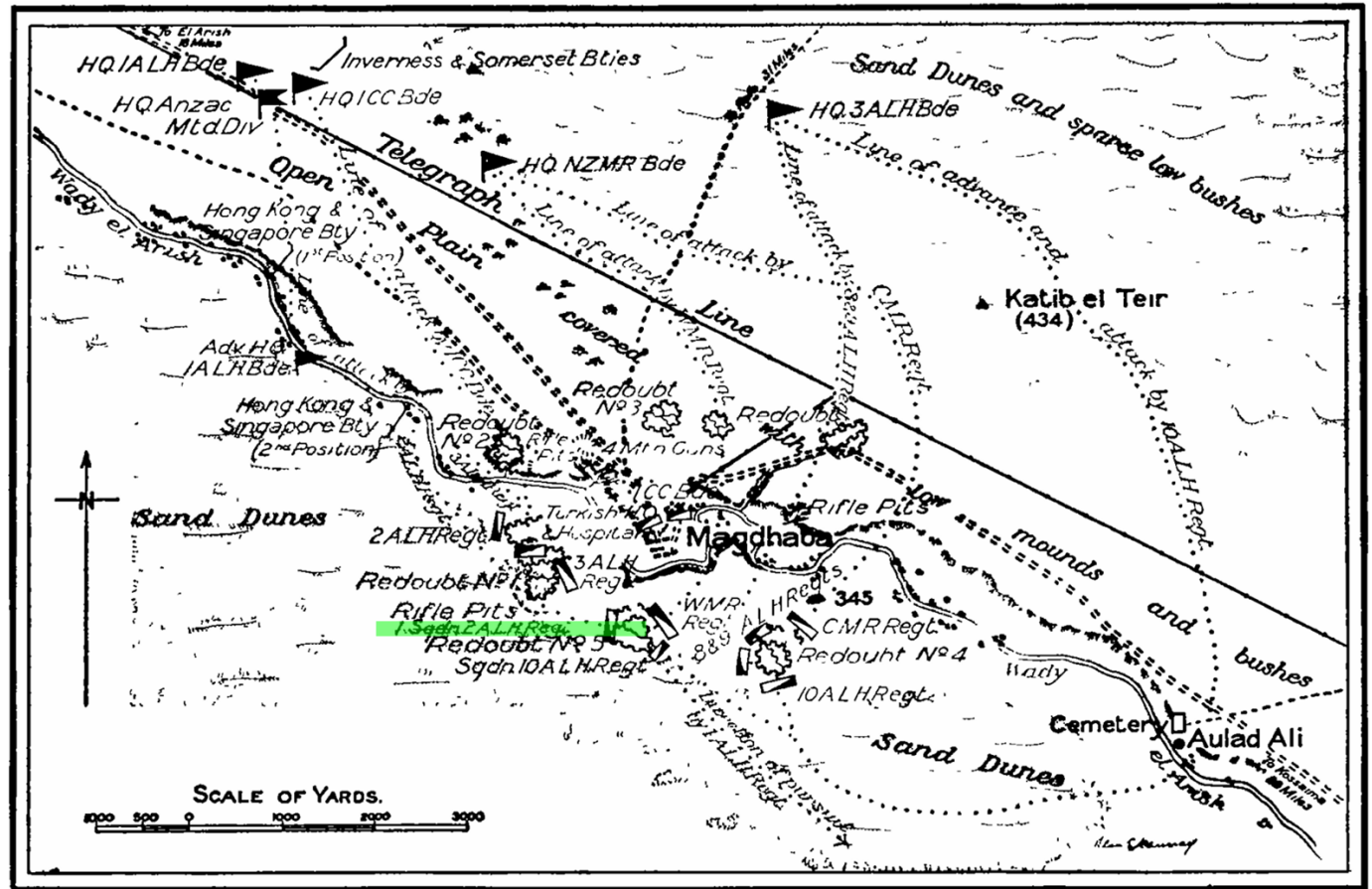
- Cox and Martin, leading on the left, galloped straight at a large redoubt despite being outnumbered ten to one.
- They rode through the trenches under heavy fire; Martin's horse was shot, and Cox later returned under intense fire with Sergeant Gwynne to rescue him.
- Royston, charging about the battlefield, bluffed a trenchful of Turks into surrendering by shouting at them in Zulu.
- The 10th Regiment ultimately captured 722 prisoners.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

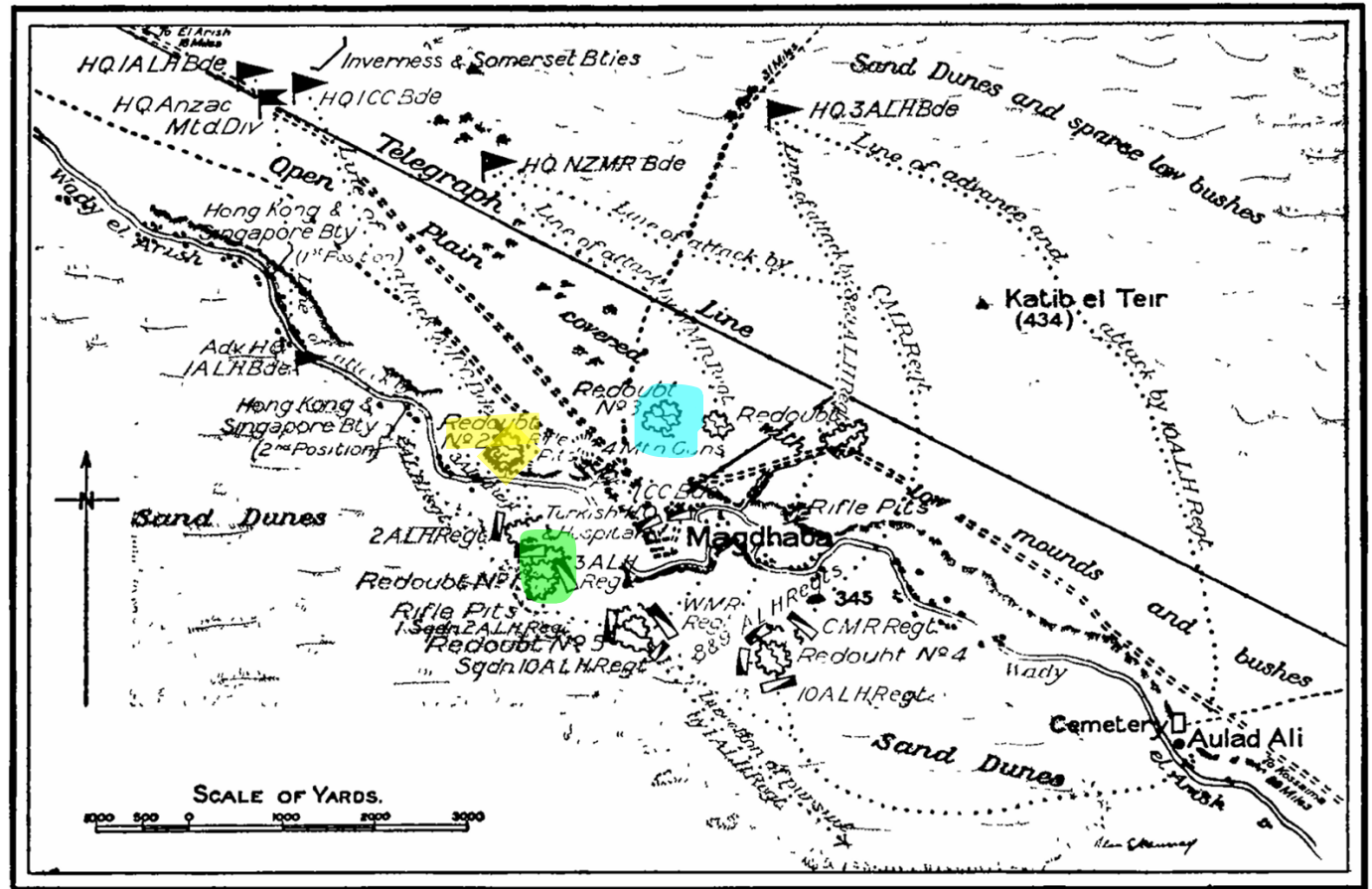
- Major Birkbeck's squadron then appeared unexpectedly behind the same redoubt Cox and Martin had ridden through.
- Charging over ground littered with casualties, they galloped into the position, firing from the saddle until the Turks broke again, yielding another hundred prisoners.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

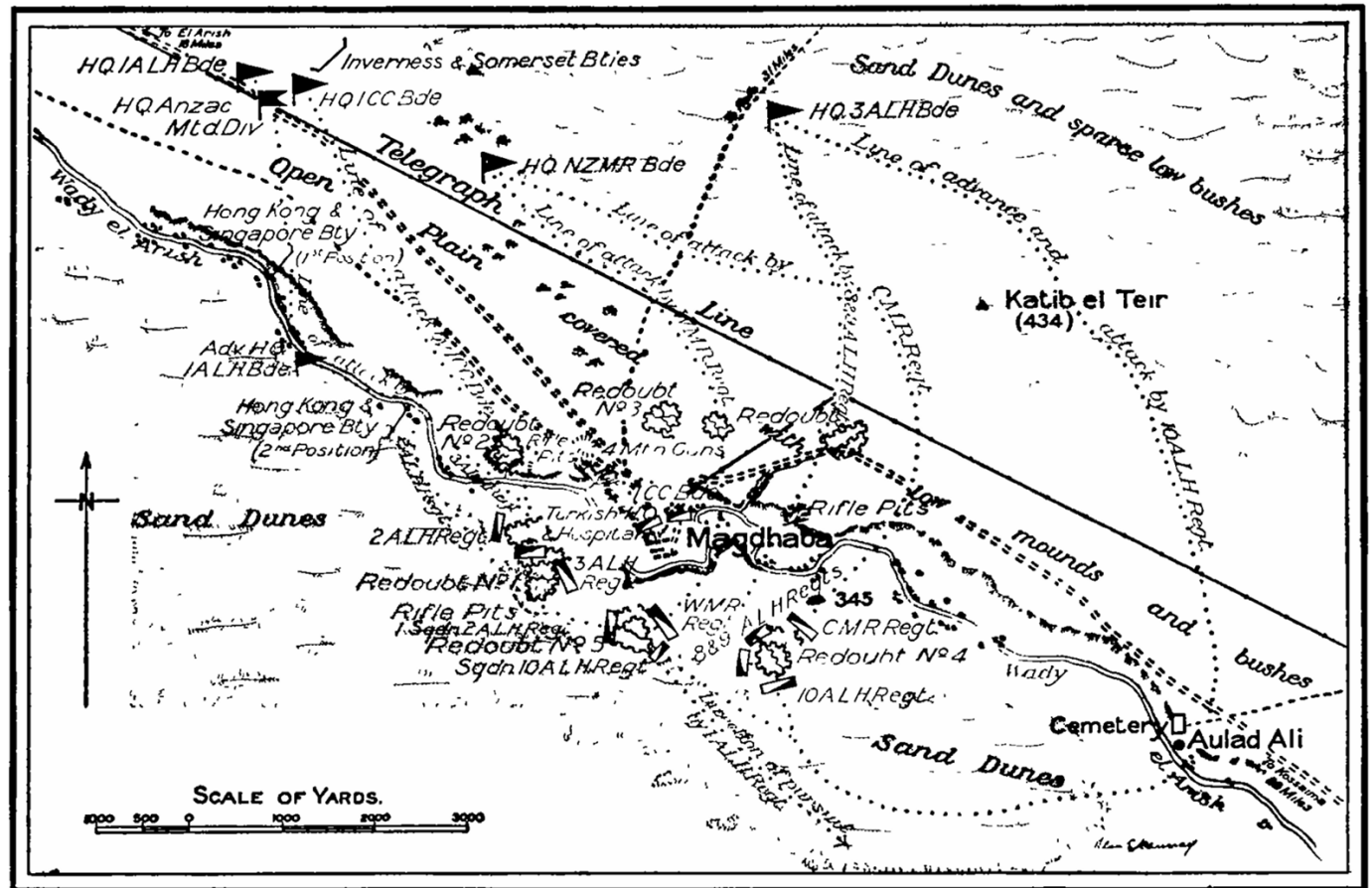
- Meanwhile, the 3rd Regiment and the Camels pressed rapidly on **No. 1 Redoubt**.
- Fighting was now at close quarters, and Chauvel ordered the guns silent.
- As the Australians approached with bayonets, the Turks again surrendered; **No. 3 Redoubt** soon followed, and Khadir Bey was taken prisoner.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

# 23 December 1916

- Elsewhere, the 8th and 9th Light Horse advanced between the Wellington and Canterbury regiments.
- Under growing rifle fire, they moved forward in short bounds until within 500 yards, then fixed bayonets and charged.
- After fierce hand-to-hand fighting, the Turks surrendered, and the Australians pushed on to seize a second position, taking 250 prisoners.



MAGDHABA—POSITION AT DUSK ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1916.

This was the first engagement in which the men carried two bandoliers, and the innovation added so much to the fire-strength of the regiments that it was adopted during the remainder of the campaign.

# 23/24 December 1916

- In the chaotic aftermath of the final charge at Magdhaba, mixed units spent hours regrouping, watering exhausted horses at crowded wells, and collecting prisoners.
- Brief flares from matches revealed weary but cheerful Australians, sullen Turkish captives, restless horses, and indifferent camels, while scattered fires across the dark marked the wounded awaiting rescue.
- Granville's small detachment cleared the battlefield as Chauvel and the brigades began the long, sleepless ride back to El Arish, meeting camel convoys with water and rations along the way.
- Many men slept in the saddle after three or four nights without rest.
- By dawn on 24 December, the scale of the victory was clear: almost no Turks escaped. Ninety-seven enemy dead were buried, roughly 300 wounded were left behind, and 1,282 prisoners taken, along with guns, rifles, ammunition, and transport animals.
- Australian losses were light by comparison.
- Supplies were already being landed at El Arish, including via a pier built by the Naval Bridging Train.

# 5 January 1917

- As the army pushed its services forward toward firmer country, air reconnaissance became essential.
- On 28 December, aircraft reported the Turks withdrawing to the Gaza–Beersheba line.
- Early January brought violent sandstorms and rain, grounding aircraft only on the worst days.
- When the weather cleared on 5 January, No. 1 Squadron observed several thousand Turks digging new defensive works at Rafa.



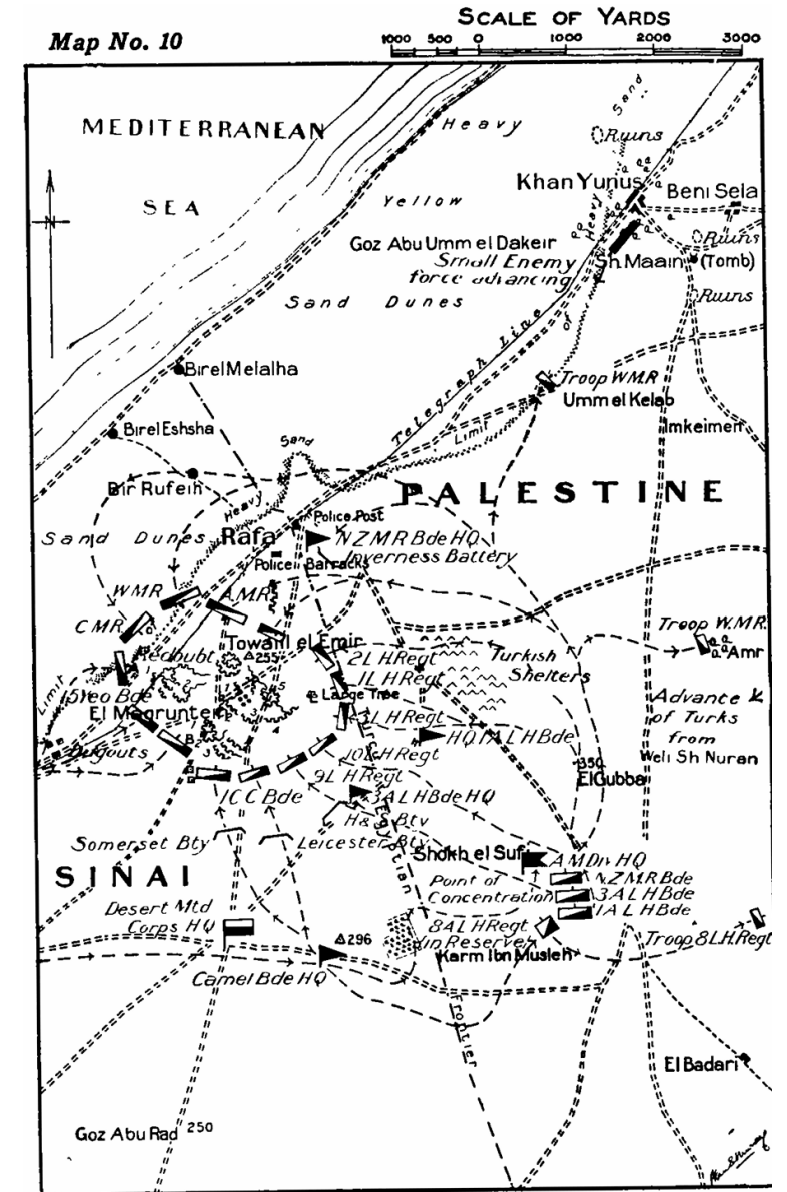
# 8 January 1917

- On 8 January 1917, Desert Column rode out from El Arish to strike the Ottoman garrison at El Magruntein, too distant for infantry to reach.

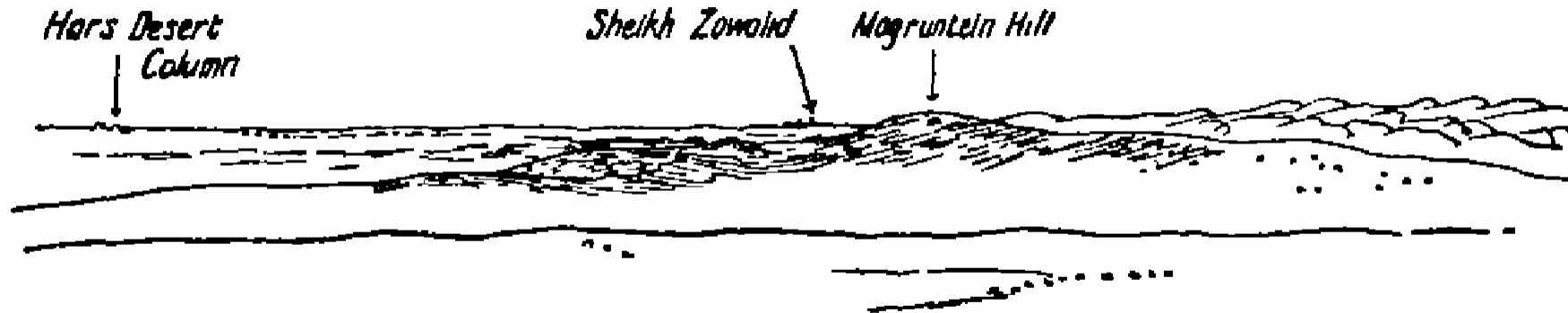


# 9 January 1917

- By dawn on the 9th the mounted force had encircled the bare, exposed position and began closing in. Early Turkish attempts to escape were cut off by a swift Canterbury Regiment charge that overran a machine-gun post and captured its garrison.
- By mid-morning all brigades were engaged, pushing forward under steady fire. Small outlying trenches were taken, but by early afternoon the ring around the position had stalled, and with daylight fading the commanders considered withdrawal. Reports then arrived of Ottoman reinforcements approaching from the east and north-east.



# 9 January 1917



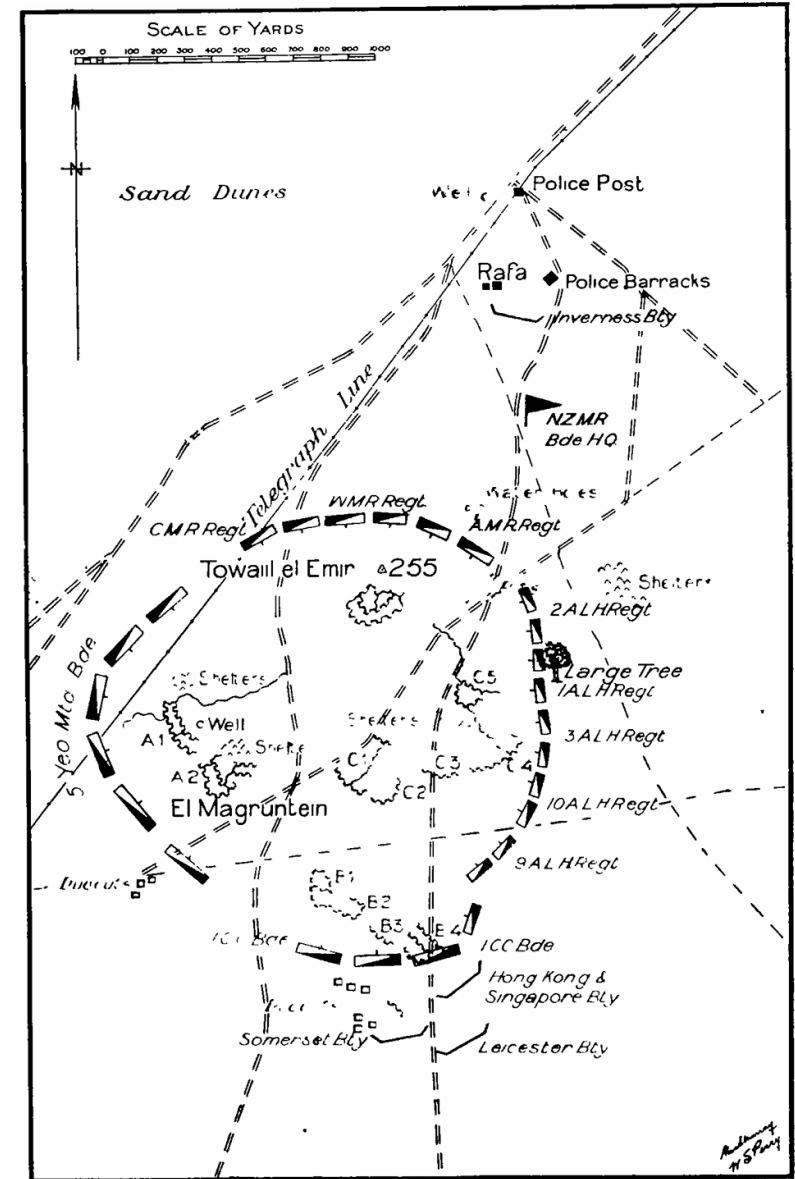
The battlefield of Rafa from N.Z.M.R. Brigade Headquarters.

Despite heavy fire, the New Zealanders pressed on, charging the main slope in two rapid rushes and breaking into the trenches, where the defenders quickly surrendered.

On the southern flank Major Huddleston and the Camel Corps stormed another key work; the Turks raised white flags just as the attackers reached the parapet. With these positions lost, Ottoman resistance collapsed.

# 9 January 1917

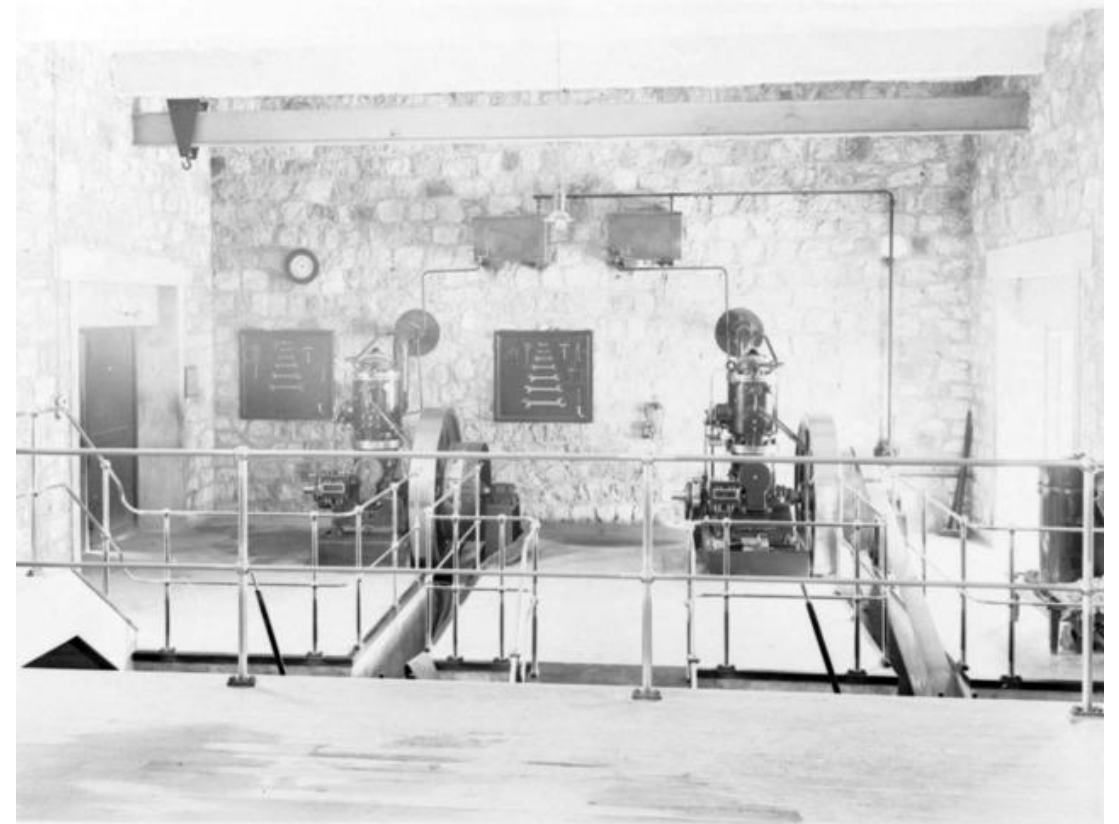
- Aircraft with wireless sets directed the battle throughout the afternoon and bombed Beersheba later in the day.
- By nightfall the fortified post and the town were in Allied hands.
- The attackers suffered moderate losses; the garrison lost heavily, with most survivors captured.



RAFA—ATTACK BY N.Z.M.R. BRIGADE AND I.C.C. BRIGADE.

# End of February 1917

- By the end of February 1917, 388 miles of railway (at a rate of 1 kilometre a day), 203 miles of metalled road, 86 miles of wire and brushwood roads and 300 miles of water pipeline had been constructed.
- The pipeline required three huge pumping plants working 24 hours a day at Kantara, near a reservoir of 6,000,000 gallons. The pumps forced the water through a 12 inch pipe across the desert from pumping station to pumping station.
- With the railhead at Rafa, Gaza was by then just twenty miles away, five to six hours for infantry and mounted units at a walk and 2 hours distant for horses at a trot.



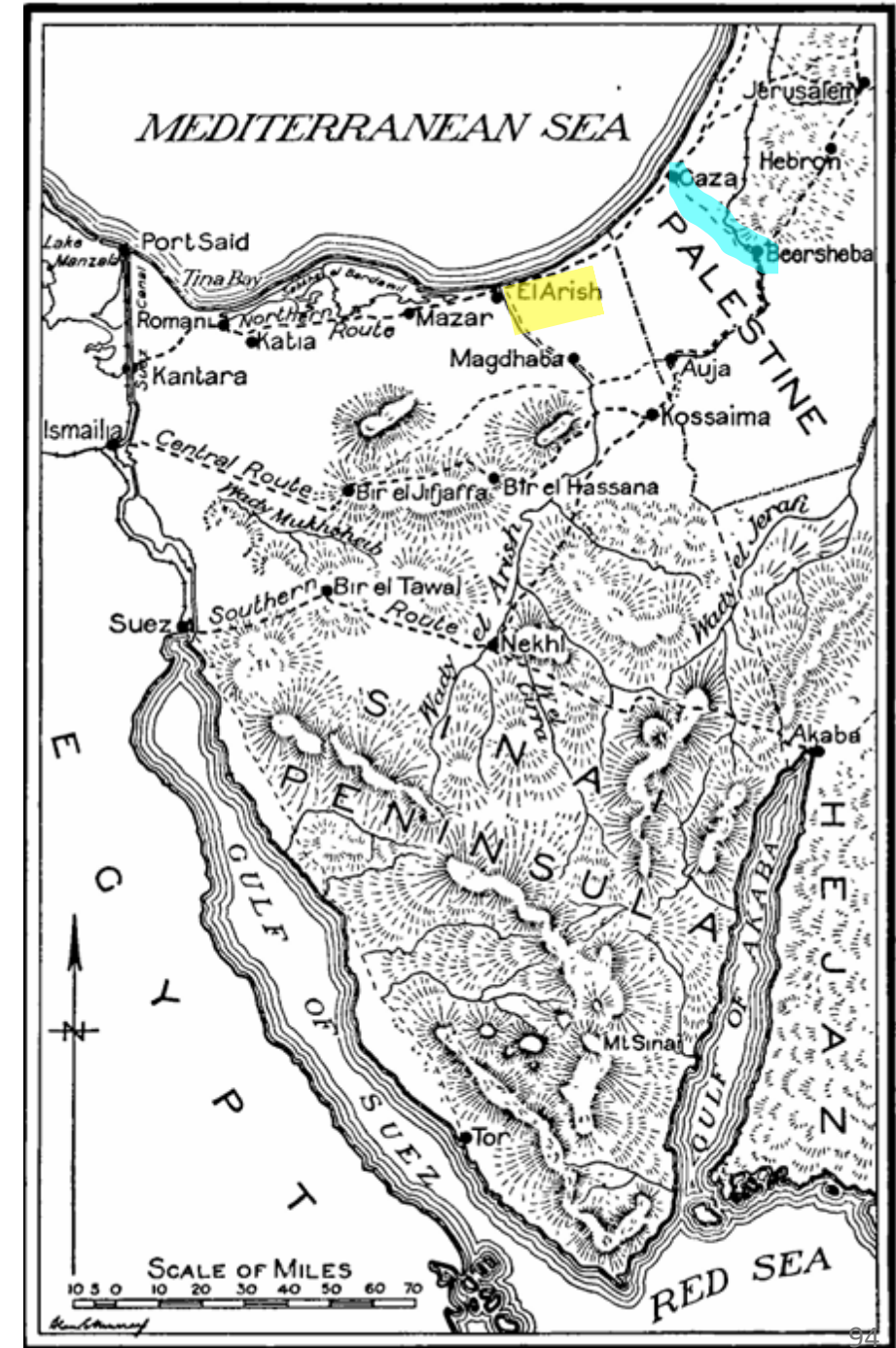
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

B03017

An interior view of the pumping station at Kantara, on the Suez Canal.

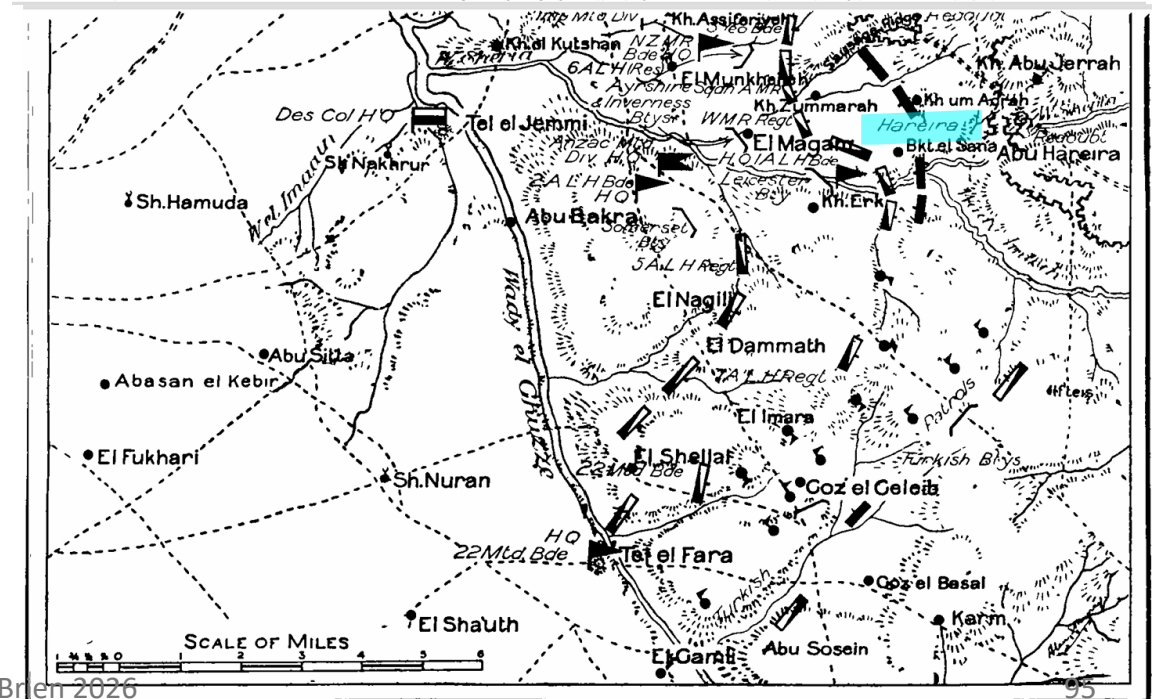
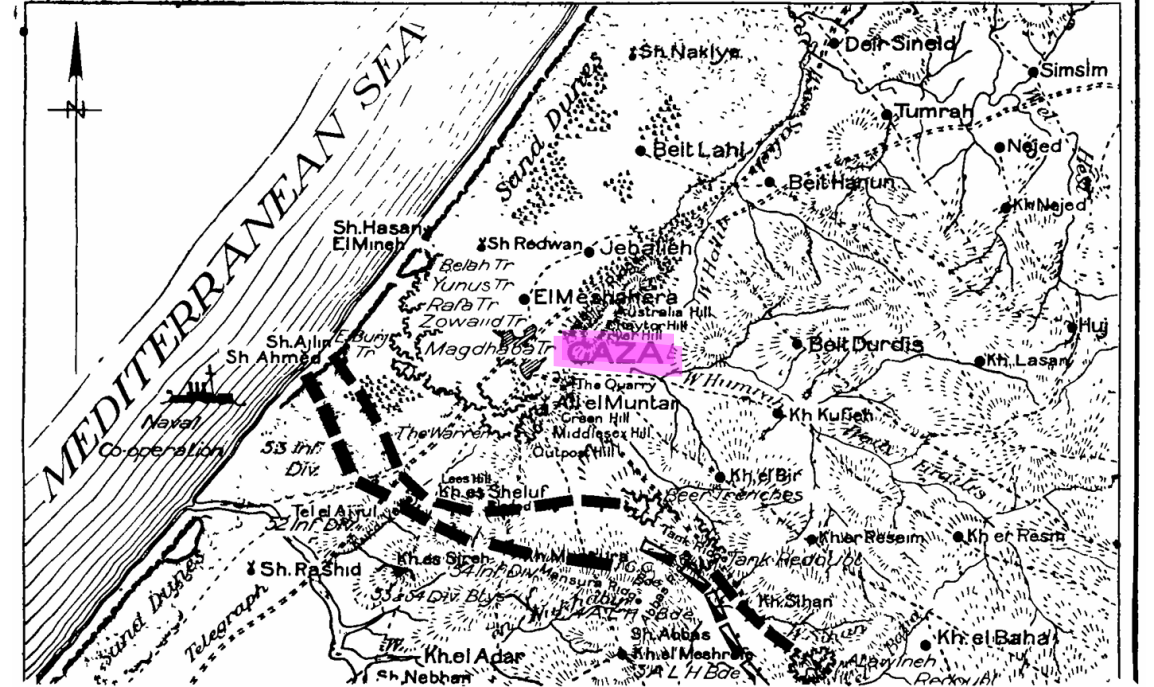
# March 1917

- In early March the Ottoman force near Shellal withdrew, opening the country from **El Arish** toward Gaza.
- Murray pushed infantry along the coast and mounted patrols inland while the 53rd Division prepared forward posts at Sheikh Zowaiid.
- By March he was ready to attack Gaza.
- On 26 March the 53rd Division attacked Gaza; with Anzac support the assault gained ground, but night halted progress and a withdrawal was ordered despite success.
- London believed a major victory had been won and urged Murray toward Jerusalem, though Gaza still held.



19 April 1917

- The Ottomans rapidly strengthened **Gaza** and the line to **Hareira**.
- The Second Battle of Gaza (17–19 April) was a frontal infantry attack supported by tanks and gas shells, but the defences held.
- The EEF's strength was now decimated. Dobell reported his casualties as 5,900.
- The British Command was now focussed on defence. Digging and wiring commenced on the night following April 19th and continued without a pause for some weeks.



# June 1917

- Edmund Allenby (portrait) was appointed in June to command the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.
- He 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



# 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."

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.

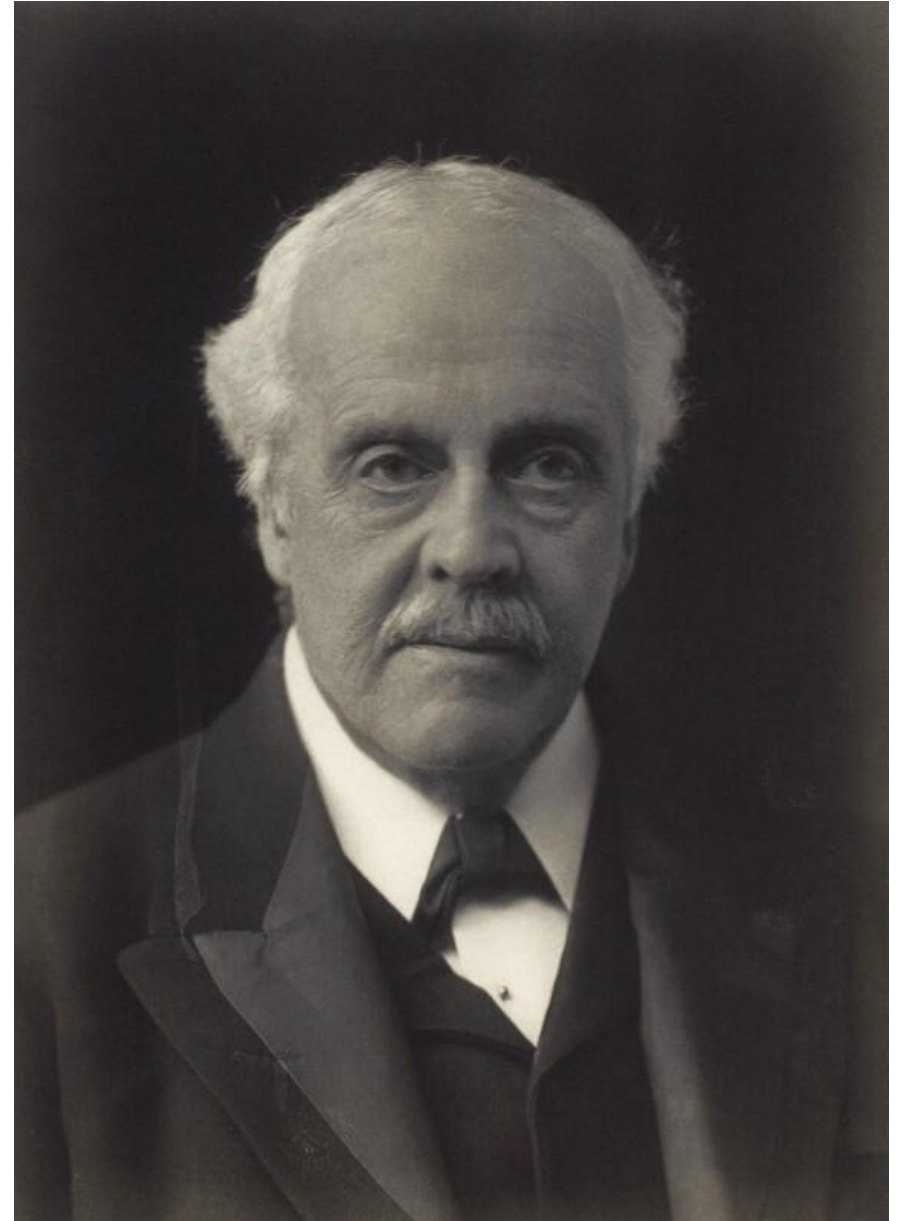
Enclosure to (1).

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.

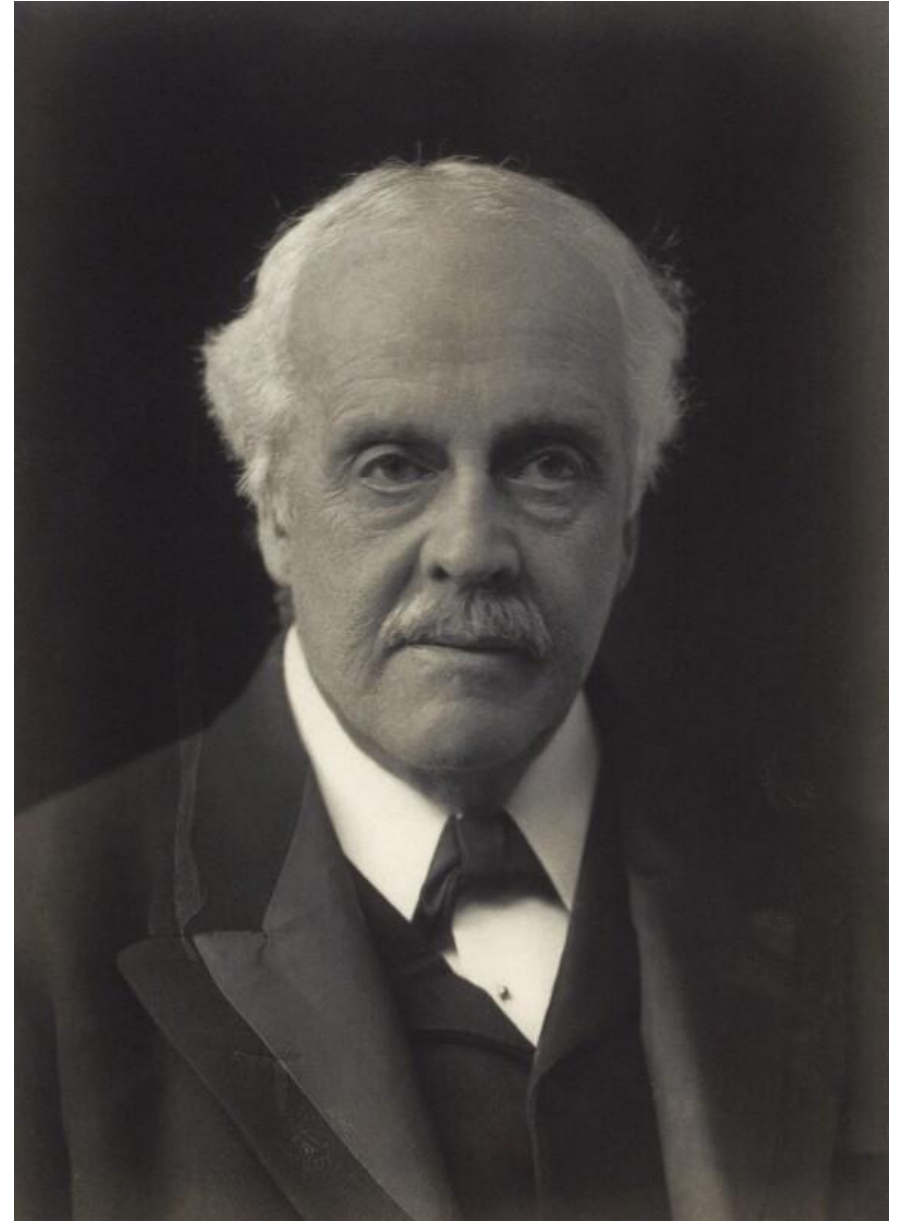
# 3 September 1917

- A month after the receipt of the much-reduced 12 July draft from Rothschild, Balfour proposed a number of mainly technical amendments.
- On 3 September 1917[Balfour (photo)] pointed out (to the War Cabinet) that the matter (Support for Zionism) might be postponed but 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."



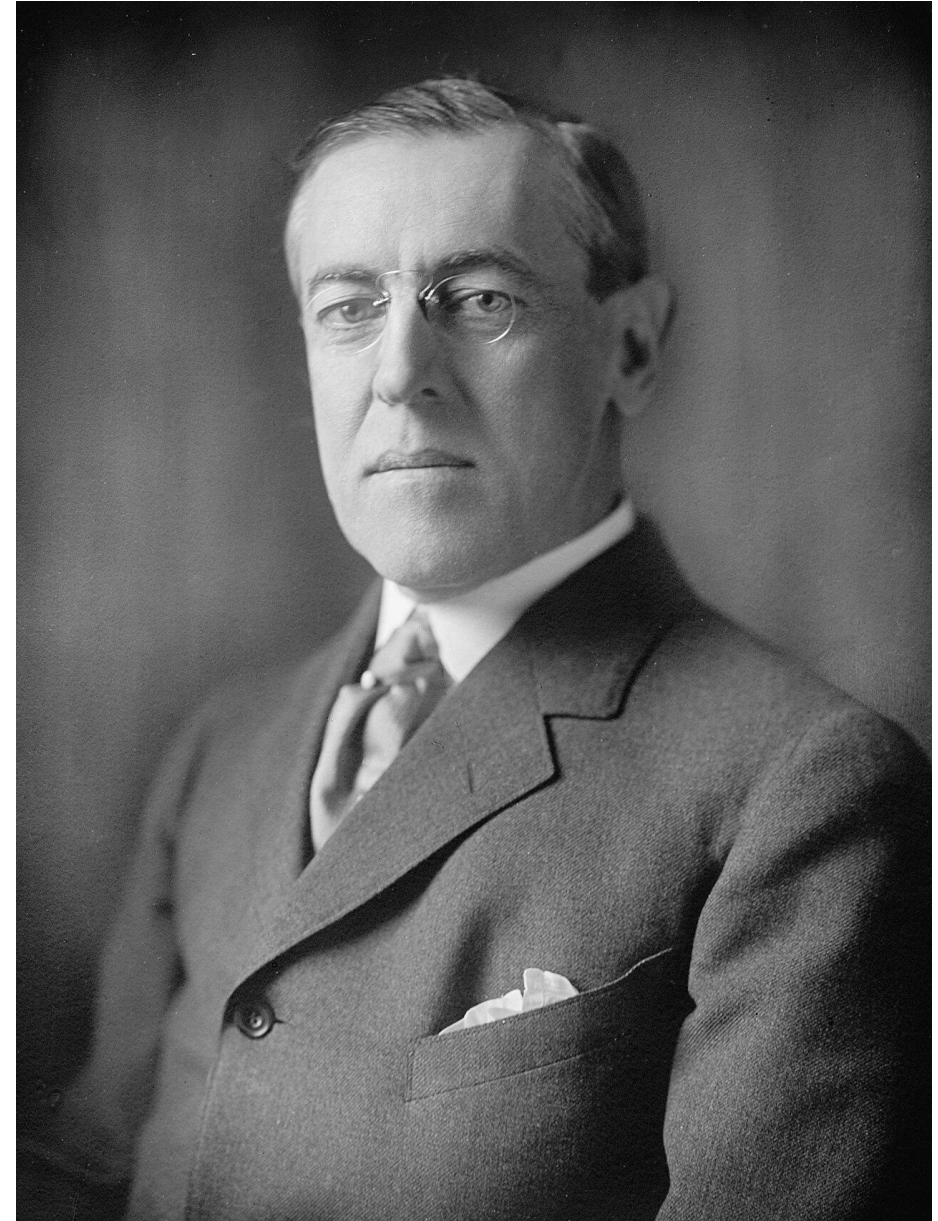
# 4 October 1917

- [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."



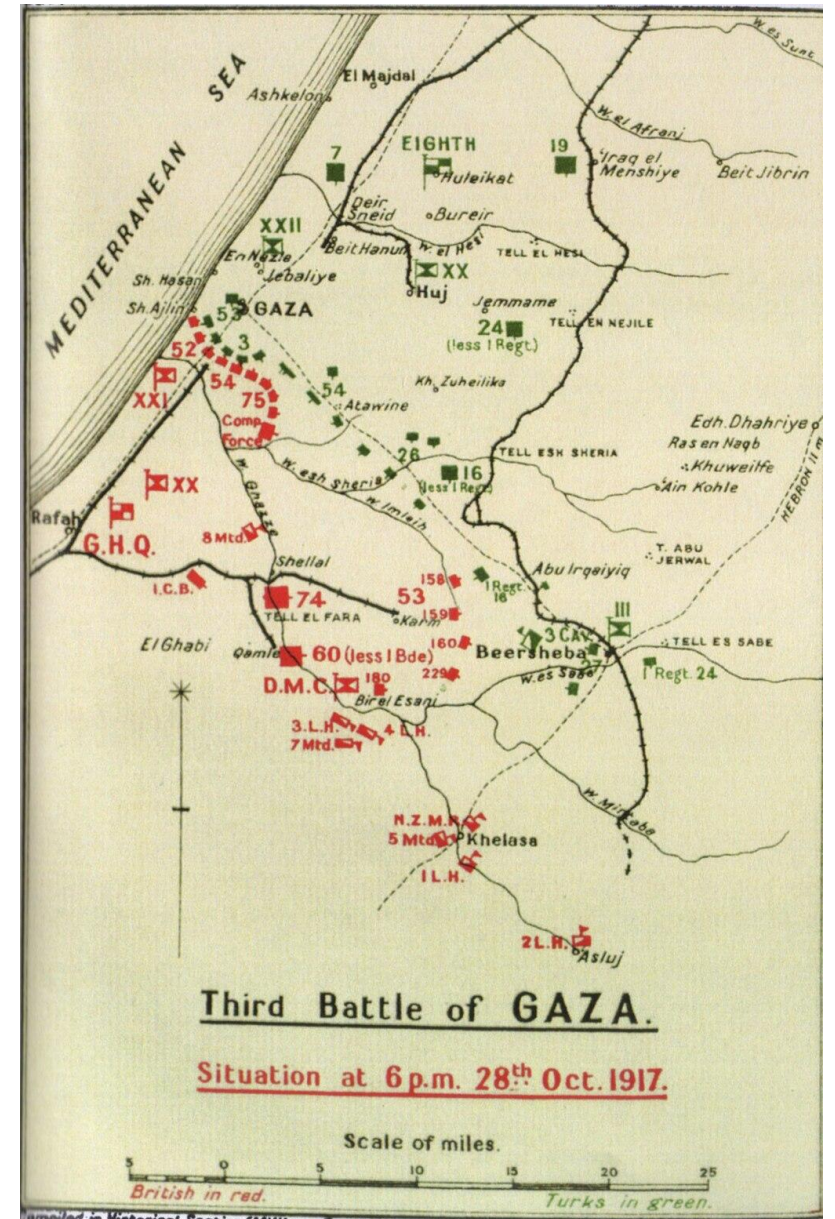
# 6 October 1917

- 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

- On 22 October 1917, Allenby ordered a feint against Gaza while the real blow would fall on Beersheba.
- Chetwode was to attack from the south-west and Chauvel from the east on 31 October, with absolute insistence that Beersheba be taken that same day.
- Chauvel's mounted divisions had to reach the eastern approaches unseen, with horses watered and ready for a full day's work, then strike toward the Hebron–Jerusalem road and threaten Turkish communications.
- Water remained the critical challenge.



# 29 October 1917

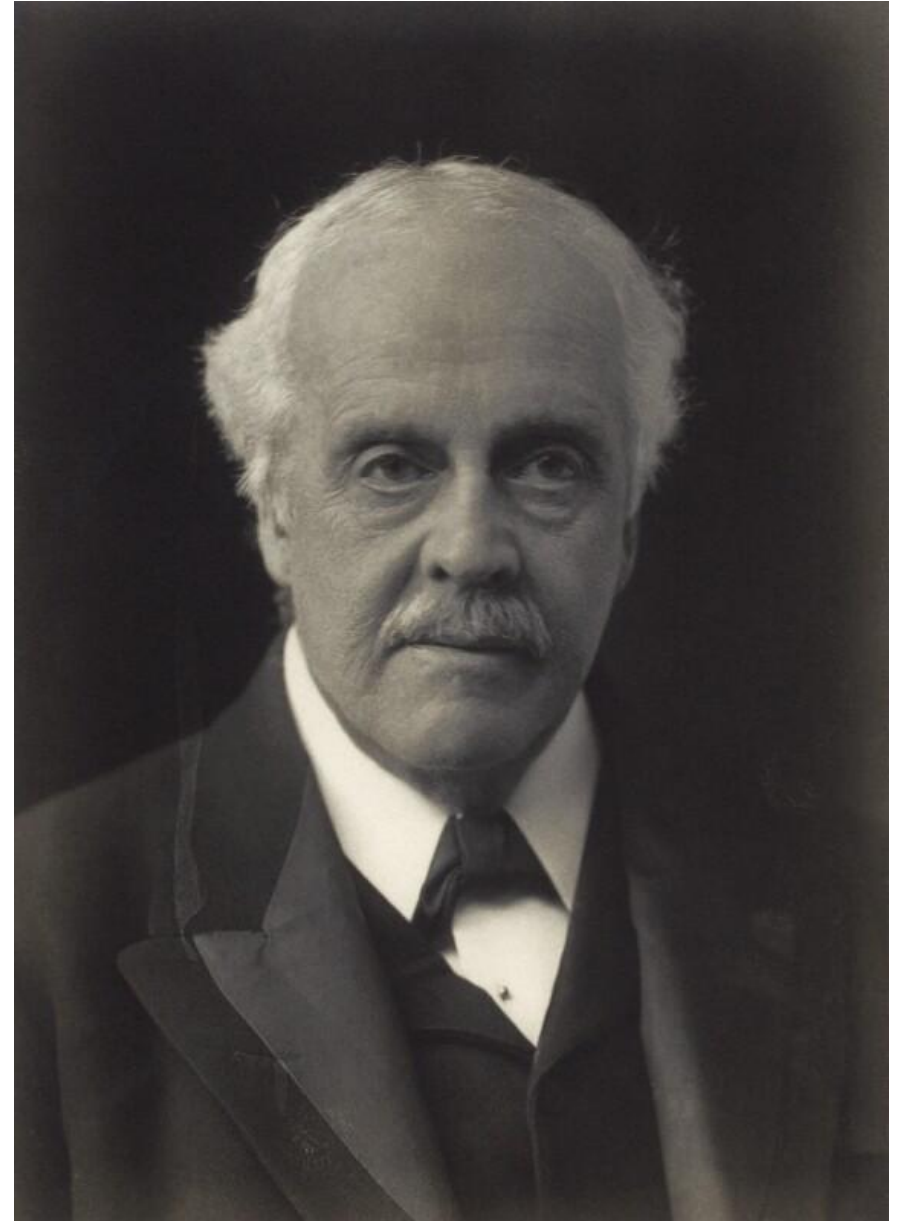
- On 27 October, the Gaza bombardment began—heavy guns ashore and naval fire offshore—growing in intensity to mask the Beersheba movement.
- By 29 October, even as the Turks noticed some outflanking activity, they still believed Gaza remained the main target.



The 14 inch gun monitor HMS Raglan

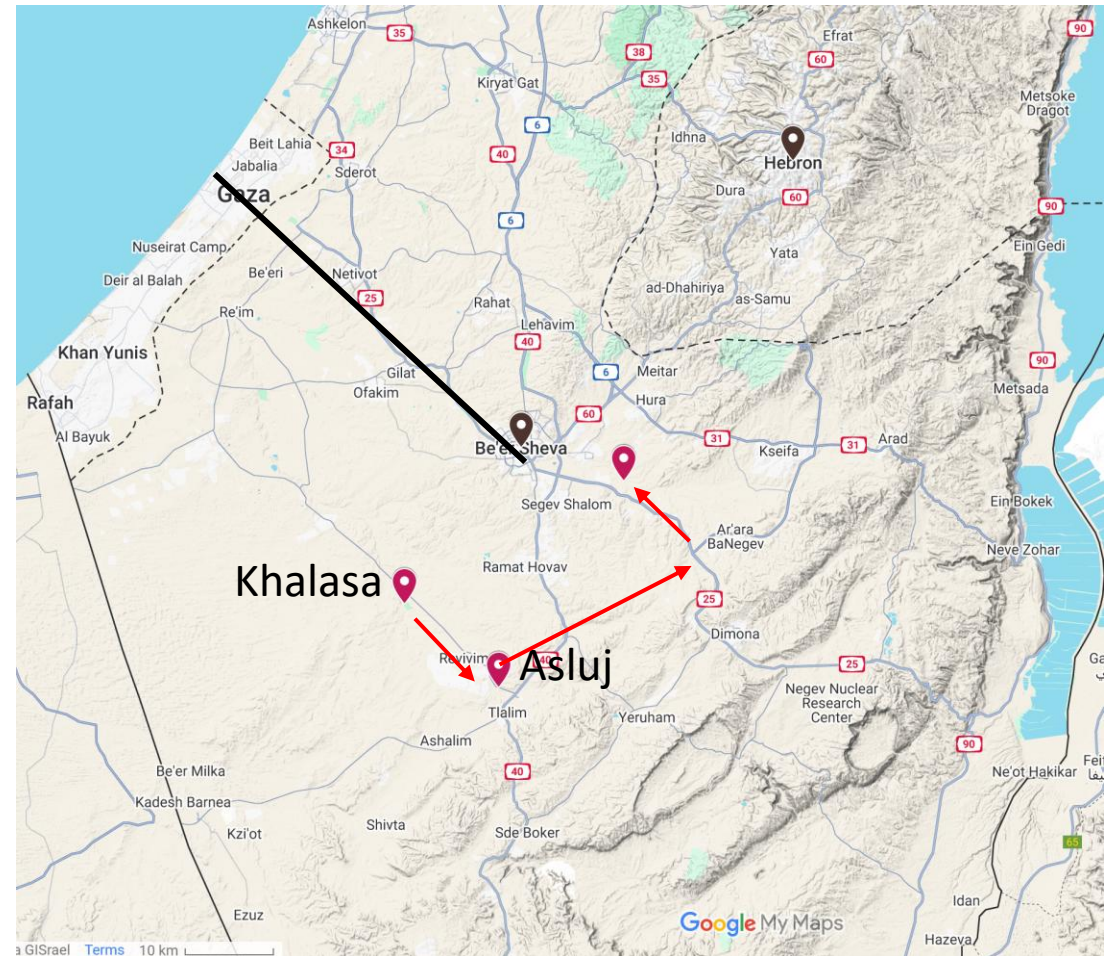
# 31 October 1917

- "[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

- Through the night of 30–31 October, the Anzac and Australian Mounted Divisions marched from Asluj toward Bir Arara, moving silently with three days' rations.
- Chauvel aimed to block the Hebron road and then take Beersheba.
- Ryrie's 2nd Light Horse pushed on to cut the road while the main column, led by the Wellingtons, turned toward the town.



# 31 October 1917

- Before dawn on the 31st the Wellingtons reached El Shegeib and advanced past Iswaiwin, with the Anzacs following.
- Hodgson's Australian Mounted Division swung left and waited in reserve.
- At 5.55 a.m. Chetwode's artillery opened a heavy bombardment on Beersheba's outer defences, smoke quickly obscuring the Turkish lines.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A02788

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

# 31 October

- Ryrie's brigade reached Bir el Hamani soon after 7 a.m., scouting towards Tel el Saba.
- From the high ground they saw Beersheba and water in the wady after overnight rain.
- The New Zealand Brigade concentrated at Khashm Zanna and soon secured Bir Salem-Abu Irgeig.
- Beersheba appeared from the hills like a small Australian township, apart from its new German-built mosque.

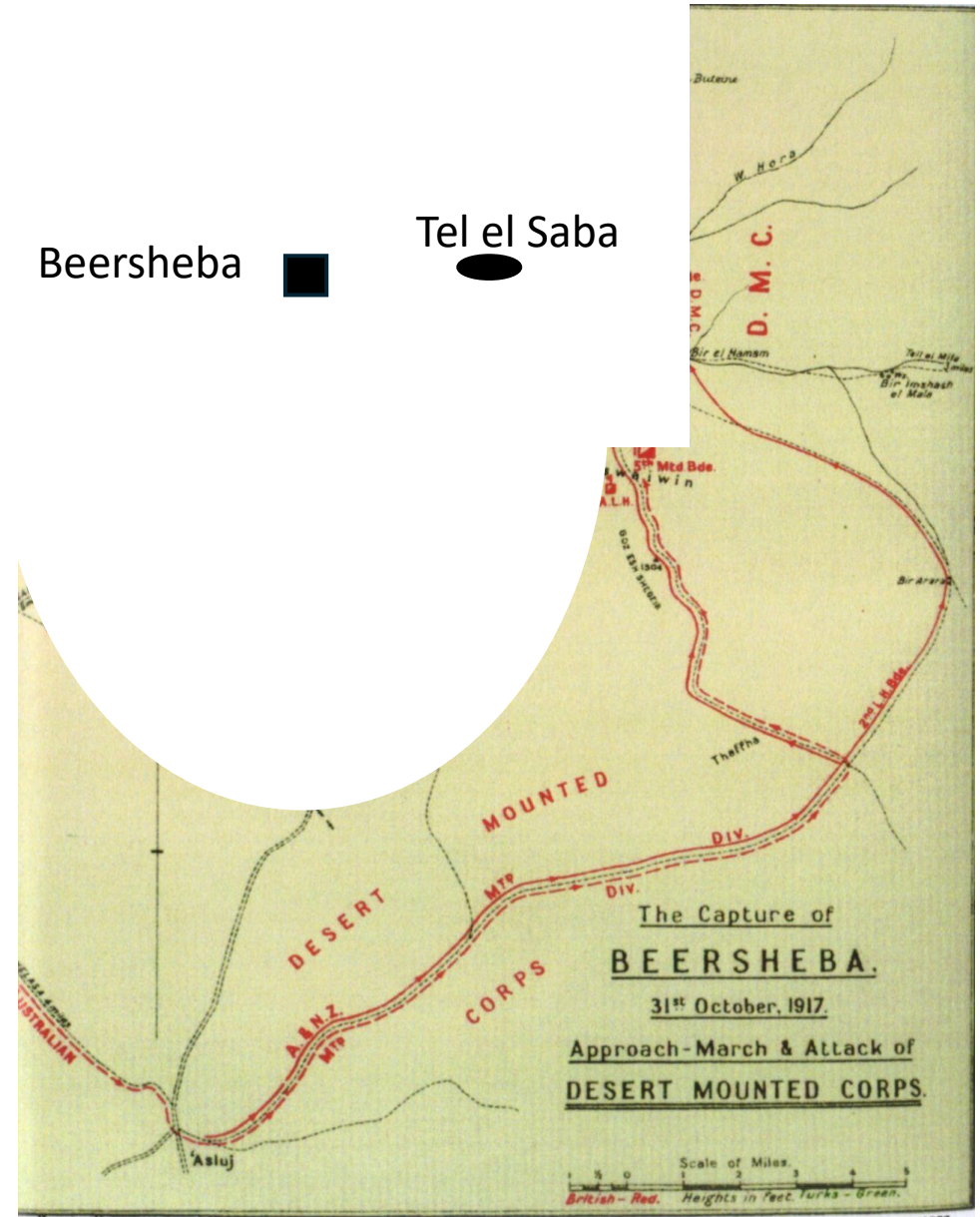


Arial photo of Bethsheeba from 1917



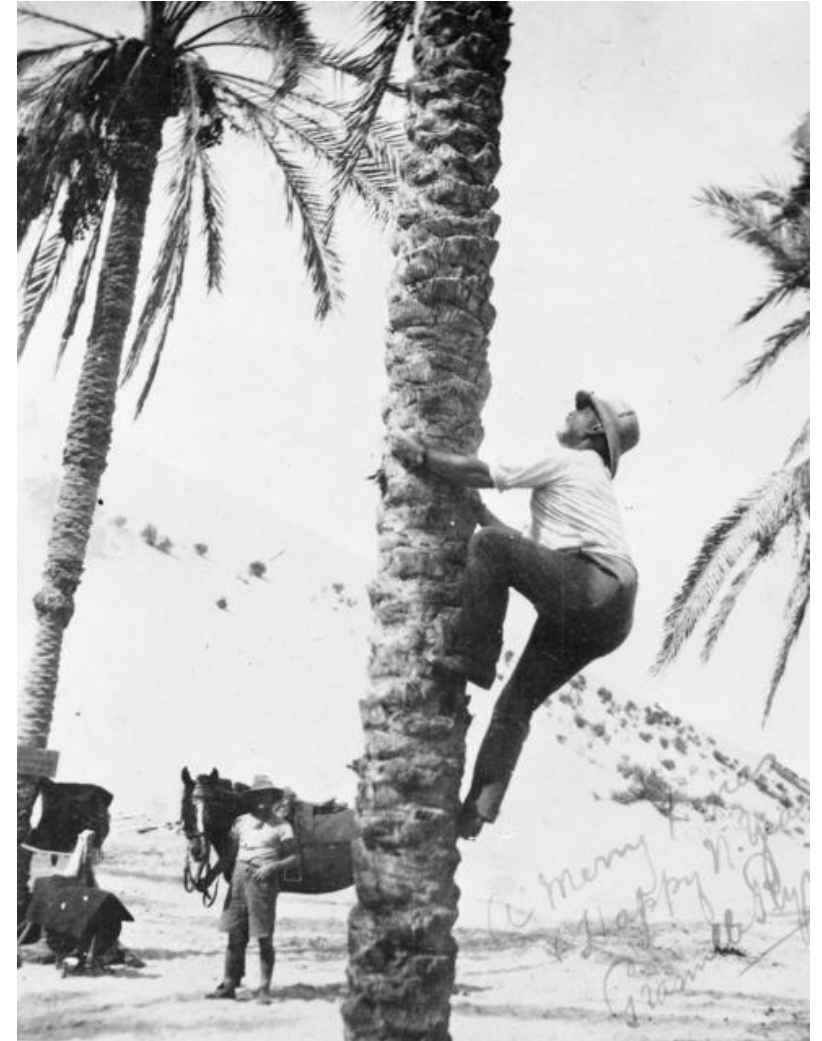
# 31 October

- The key to Beersheba's eastern defence was Tel el Saba, a steep, boulder-covered mound dominating the Wady Saba.
- Its trenches and machine-gun pockets made any mounted approach impossible and a dismounted advance across the bare plain equally grim.
- By 9 a.m., the mounted brigades prepared to seize the Hebron road at Sakati and capture the tel. Enemy troops were seen reinforcing the redoubt, while Turkish cavalry and transport streamed out of Beersheba along the Hebron road.



# 31 October

- At 9.30, Ryrie's brigade moved off at speed, Onslow's 7th Regiment leading a galloping advance through a Bedouin encampment under ineffective shrapnel fire.
- 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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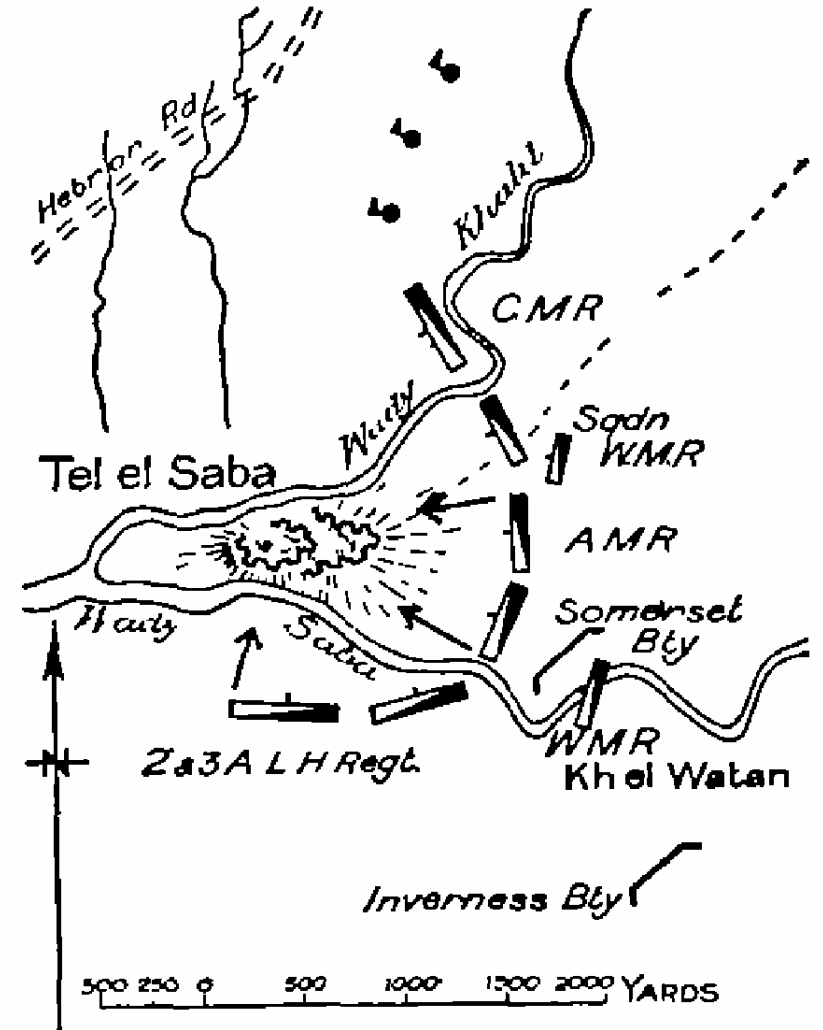
# 31 October

- Reaching the Hebron road, Onslow's screen captured a Turkish convoy, but enemy guns and rifles on the heights ahead forced the regiment to take cover in a wady, where the brigade remained for the day.



# 31 October

- Meanwhile, Chaytor sent the New Zealanders and the 1st Light Horse Brigade against Tel el Saba.
- Artillery opened at 3,000 yards as the New Zealanders advanced north of the wady and the 3rd Light Horse moved over open ground to the south, dismounting 1,500 yards from the position.



# 31 October

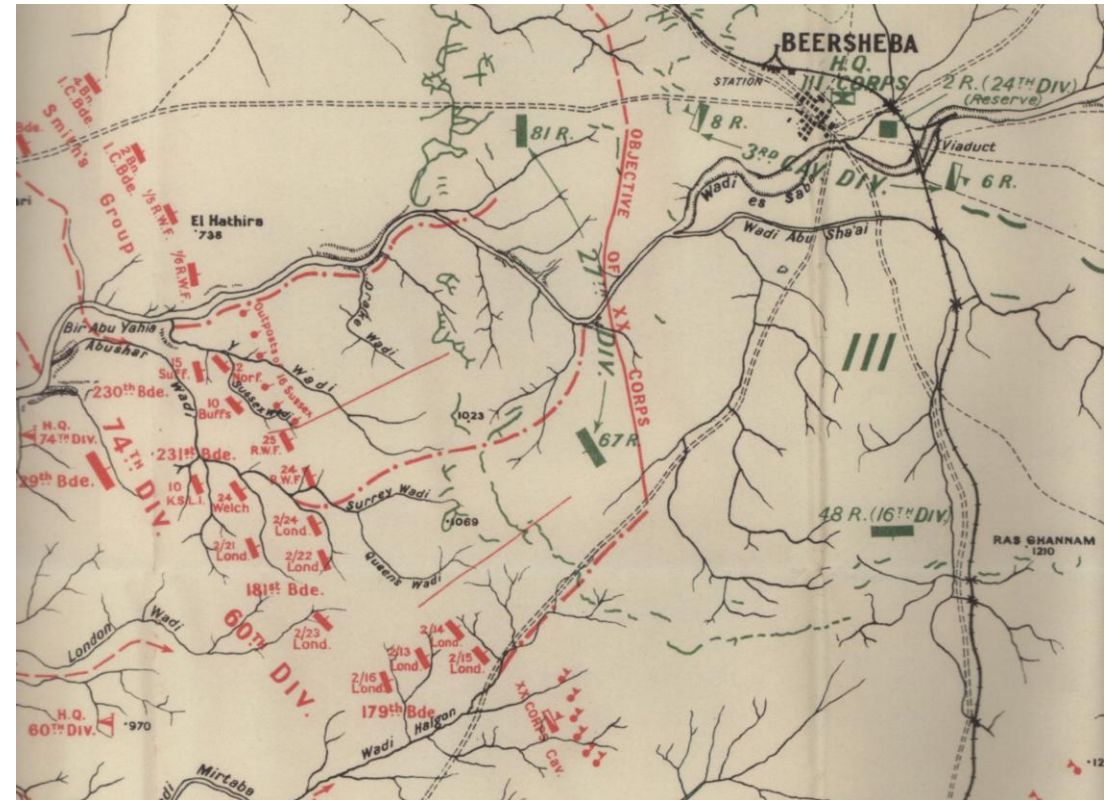
- Batteries pushed forward boldly, but their fire had limited effect on entrenched defenders, and both Australian and New Zealand lines came under heavy punishment as they crept closer, Hotchkiss guns gradually finding targets on the tel's face.



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

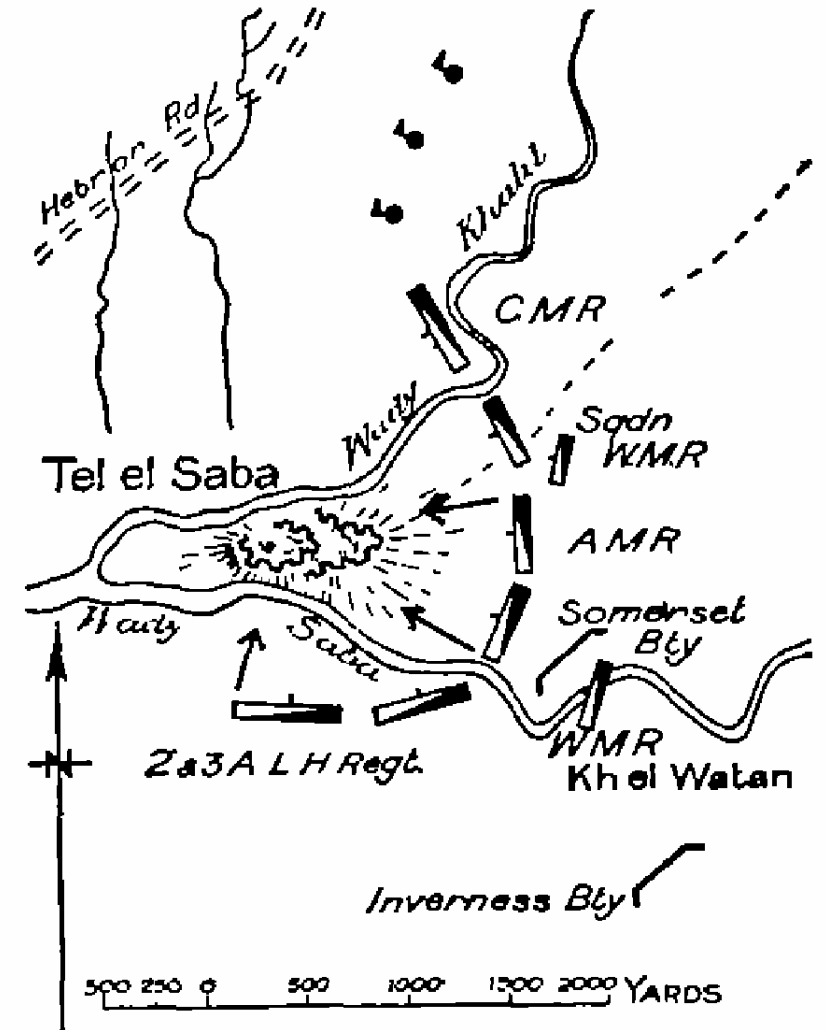
# 31 October

- At 12.15, Chetwode launched the main infantry assault.
- Advancing cleanly through dust and wire, the British brigades quickly secured their objectives between the Khalasa road and the wady, with the 74th Division taking the last northern defences soon after.



# 31 October

- By early afternoon on 31 October, Garvie's machine-gunners and the 3rd ALH Regiment pressed close enough to pin the Turks on the tel, giving the New Zealanders room to work in from the east and north.
- Cox sent in the 2nd ALH at the gallop, and the speed with which the men dismounted fooled the Turks into shelling the horses while the riflemen advanced almost unopposed.
- Chauvel then swung the 3rd ALH Brigade and two batteries around to reinforce the New Zealanders.
- Their mounted arrival helped break the defenders' resolve.
- By mid-afternoon the 3rd ALH had reached the wady opposite the tel, the Wellingtons had joined the Aucklanders, and converging fire smothered the position.
- At 3 p.m. the New Zealanders charged with the bayonet while a squadron of the 3rd ALH crossed the wady.
- The Aucklanders reached the trenches first; 132 Turks surrendered and the rest fled toward Beersheba, pursued by the 2nd and 3rd ALH.



# 31 October 1917

- With Tel el Saba taken, orders went out at 3.30 for the final push on Beersheba.
- The 3rd Brigade was to strike north of the town, the 1st Brigade to advance on its left.
- The ground was rough, daylight short, and the enemy still strong around the town.
- Infantry could not be used, lacking water and committed to later operations, so the moment had come for the mounted troops.
- At Chauvel's headquarters, Hodgson, Grant, and FitzGerald argued for a mounted assault.
- With time running out, Chauvel agreed: the light horse would go in. "Put Grant straight at it," he ordered.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

B00754

Brigadier General Grant of the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade

# 31 October 1917

- At 4.30 p.m. on 31 October 1917, the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments formed up north of Hill 1280 for a desperate mounted assault on Beersheba.
- The ground ahead was an open, gently sloping plain, broken only by rain-cut tracks, with Turkish trenches somewhere ahead—unwired, cleverly concealed, and impossible to pinpoint.
- With no swords or lances, the Australians rode with bayonets in hand.

Pattern 1907 Bayonet blade 17 inches long.

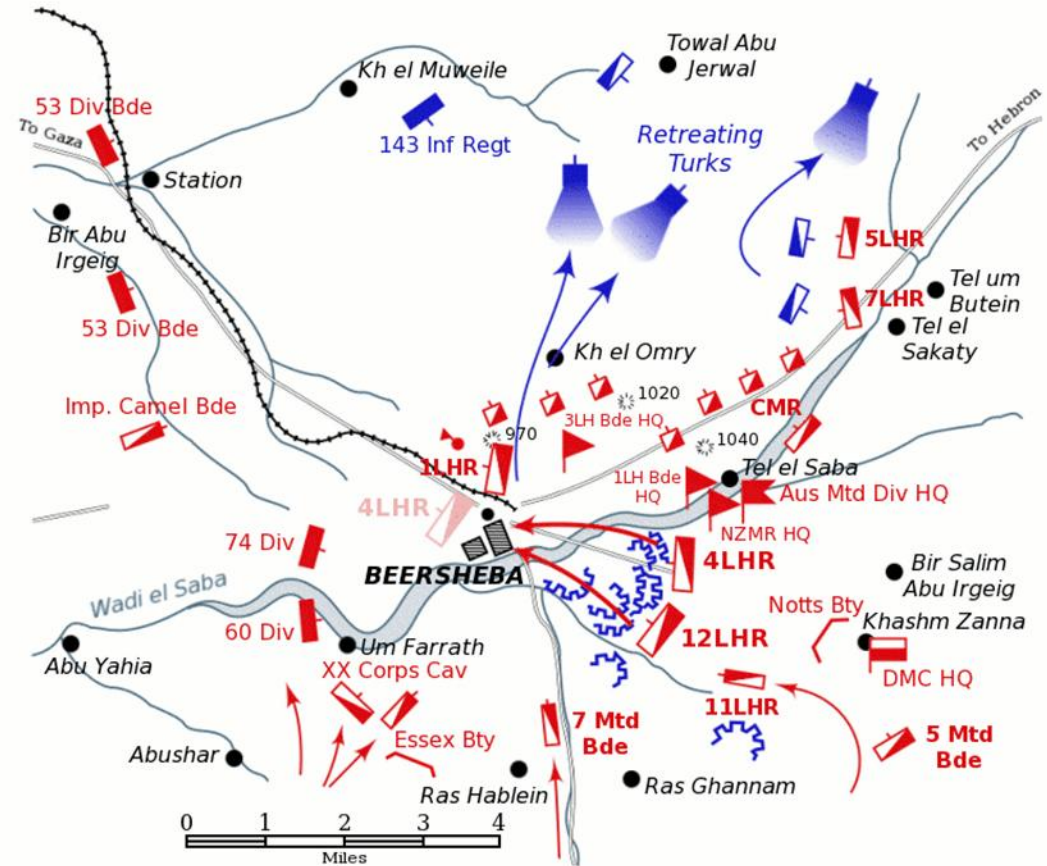


Pattern 1907 bayonet fitted to SMLE rifle.



# 31 October 1917

- The regiments advanced at the trot, quickly extending their line before breaking into a full gallop.
- Turkish guns opened fire, but the scattered formation and sheer speed kept casualties light.
- When machine-guns on Hill 1180 joined in, the Essex Battery silenced them almost immediately.
- As the horsemen closed in, Turkish rifle fire intensified, dropping horses in the leading line, yet only driving the charge faster.



# 31 October 1917

- Half a mile from the trenches the firing suddenly passed overhead—the Turks, stunned by the audacity of the attack, had failed to adjust their sights.
- The 4th Light Horse leapt the first shallow trench and then the deep main line, dismounting among tents and dugouts.
- They stormed back into the trench with bayonets, overwhelming the defenders; after thirty to forty were killed, the rest surrendered.



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 12th Light Horse met similar success. Major Hyman's (photo) squadron struck a small redoubt and fought fiercely, killing sixty before the survivors yielded.
- Most of the regiment had ridden through a gap and were already galloping for Beersheba—Captain Robey swinging wide to the north, Captain Davies leading others straight down the main street.
- Within minutes the Turkish forward line had collapsed, and the Australians were driving into Beersheba itself.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H01633

# 31 October 1917

- The Australian charge shattered the Turkish defence around Beersheba.
- As the leading squadrons broke into the trenches, the previously orderly garrison dissolved into panic.
- Officers and men alike fled toward the northern hills, dragging guns and transport in a desperate rush.
- Engineers abandoned their demolition charges, and resistance to the approaching British and Australian brigades collapsed.
- As the Australians galloped toward the town, they overtook retreating troops and captured nine guns, some crews surrendering, others cut down at close quarters.
- The pursuit swept through Beersheba until enemy rifle and machine-gun fire from the hills forced a halt.



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

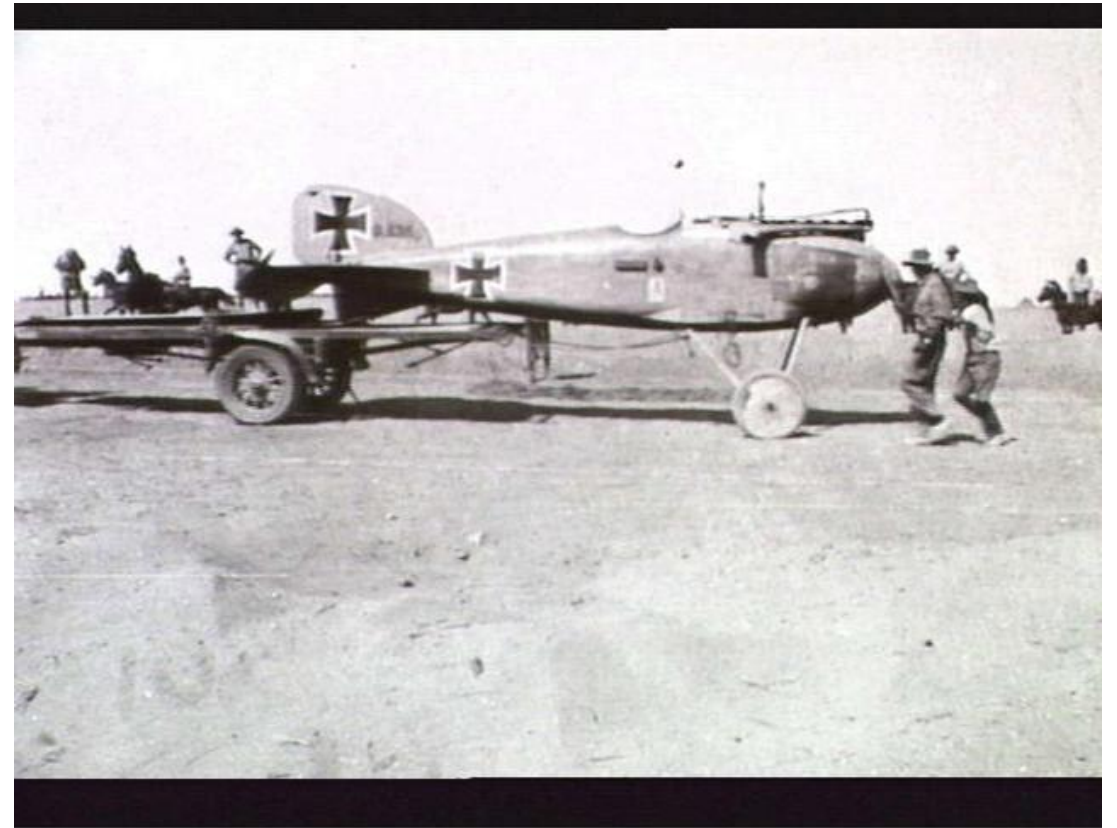
- Two scouts of the 4th Regiment, O'Leary and Healey, rode ahead of the line.
- O'Leary cleared the trenches and charged alone into the town, later found calmly sitting on a captured gun with its Turkish crew holding his horse.
- Healey dismounted at the trenches and was first among the enemy with the bayonet.
- Elsewhere, Armourer-Sergeant A. J. Cox single-handedly bluffed a machine-gun crew into surrender, taking forty prisoners.
- 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.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL  
REL43757.001

# 31 October 1917

- The day was marred by heavy bombing from German aircraft.
- One attack on the 9th Regiment and the machine-gun squadron killed thirteen men, wounded twenty, and destroyed many horses, with further losses inflicted on the New Zealanders.
- Even the headquarters of Chauvel and Chaytor came under repeated air attack and shell-fire.
- After nightfall the prisoners were gathered, and General Grant arrived as the exhausted horses—many without water for thirty hours—were finally led to the wells.
- Across the front, messages celebrated the fall of Beersheba, a success won just in time to prevent Allenby's wider plan from faltering.



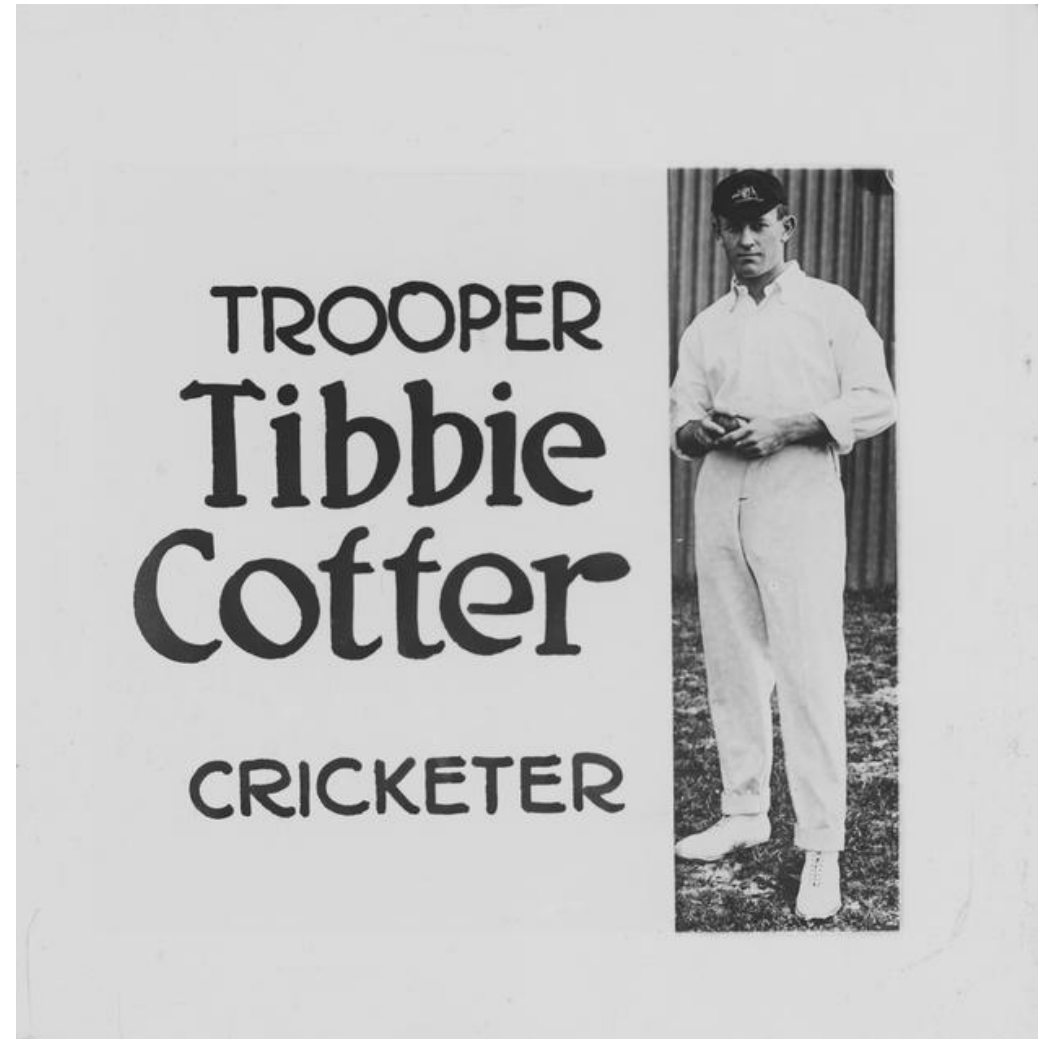
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00730.018

Palestine. 8 October 1917. A German Air Force D III Albatros Scout aircraft had been shot down, practically intact, into AIF Light Horse lines near Beersheba. The aircraft is being towed to the No 1 Squadron airfield with wings removed.

# 31 October 1917

- The two charging regiments captured thirty-eight officers, seven hundred men, nine guns, and large quantities of equipment.
- Turkish commanders had fled minutes before the Australians entered.
- Casualties in the charge were surprisingly light, most occurring at the trenches.
- Among the dead was Private Albert “Tibbie” Cotter, the famed Australian fast bowler, who had served with fearless distinction since 1915.
- In a nine-year international career Cotter played 21 Tests, taking 89 wickets for an average of 28.6.
- He had joined the AIF in April 1915, aged 31.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P04366.001

November 2nd, 1917.

## 2 November 1917

- A late August draft by Lord Milner reduced the geographic scope from all of Palestine to "in Palestine", and
- a second from Milner and Amery in early October added the two "safeguard clauses".

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.

Y. v.  
Amery B. Amery



Thanks for your attention

Jerry Mæhlen 2026